I. INTRODUCTION

India with its many wonders was a very popular subject in the ethnographical literature of classical antiquity. Much of this old literature on India is gone for ever, but so much is preserved – mostly in fragmentary form – that it has been studied with great interest both by classical philologists and indologists. Up to the beginning of the 19th century these classical descriptions were the main source of knowledge on ancient India and were therefore eagerly studied in order to cull out at least some idea of the subject. Often these classical sources were preferred to contemporary, albeit meagre, descriptions gained by direct knowledge of India itself. In the 16th century Henri Estienne (Stephanus) in his *De Ctesia historico antiquissimo disquisitio*[1] ridiculed those who wanted to correct a well-known classical author (Ctesias, of all people!) from the travel accounts of mere unlearned soldiers and traders.[2]

But in a time when Indian languages and literatures were unknown in Europe there were few alternatives. As a typical example of an early scholar who was interested in India we may take Hadrianus Reland(us), who in the early 18th century tried to show that the ancient Indian language was related to Persian (as in fact it is, but not as closely as he thought). He collected all the "Indian" words mentioned in Greek and Latin sources and compared them with the modern Persian language, the only Indo-Iranian language well known to him and his age. He was only doing his best, but unfortunately there was an unhappy aftermath. Of course most of his etymologies were false, but they, as well as those of Tychsen, were still quoted in 1882 by McCrindle[3] without even mentioning their true antiquity. The very method of comparing ancient Indian words with modern Persian had already been rejected with good reason by Lassen,[4] but from McCrindle these etymologies have sometimes crept into more recent literature.

After the discovery of Sanskrit literature in Europe, many scholars eagerly sought confirmation of classical accounts. A beginning had already been made by such pioneers of Indology in British India as Sir William Jones and, on a much inferior level, Francis Wilford. But in many respects this search was bound to be a failure. When we look at the most important 19th century studies on this subject – like those by Heeren, Lassen, Bohlen, Wilson, Schwanbeck, Weber and McCrindle[5] – they have relatively little to

[1] Republished in Baehr 1824, 25–31. See esp. p. 27.

[2] In this he had a worthy model in Strabo who stated (15, 1, 4) that οἱ νῦν δὲ ἐξ Αἰγύπτου πλέοντες ἐμποριϰοὶ τῷ Νείλῳ ϰαὶ τῷ Ἀραβίῳ ϰόλπῳ μέχρι τῆς Ἰνδιϰῆς were ἰδιῶται ϰαὶ οὐδὲν πρὸς ἱστορίαν τῶν τόπων χρήσιμοι.

[3] See Reland 1706, Tychsen 1796 and McCrindle 1882, *passim*.

[4] Lassen 1852, 559.

[5] See e.g. Heeren 1818, 249ff. and 1843, Lassen 1827, 1839, 1840, 1847 and 1852, Bohlen 1830, Wilson 1832, 1836, 1841 and 1843, Schwanbeck 1846, Weber 1853, 1857, 1871 and 1890 and Mc-

say, if we discard the information culled from the then modern travel books and ethnographic studies. Several scholars like Wilson, Lassen and Weber already had very considerable learning in Sanskrit literature, but the number of parallels they could offer to the classical accounts on India was remarkably small. An attempt to study this discrepancy between Indian and classical sources was made by Otto Franke,[6] but his theory did not meet with approval and seems to me untenable, although it contains some valuable ideas.

In the 20th century scholars have been able to gain more information from the Sanskrit sources, and new sources have become available. Stein's and Breloer's studies on Kauṭilya and Megasthenes are good examples of more recent research.[7] But we are still faced with the same disappointing conclusion: the bulk of classical accounts on India does not deal with the same country and culture we know from Sanskrit literature. It is a task of the present study to examine this circumstance by concentrating upon the earliest Greek sources. In their case, the discrepancy is most apparent and can be explained with greater clarity.

The last hundred years have seen a change in Graeco-Indian studies. The 19th century still belongs to a period when classical learning was common in the West, and most Indologists could easily consult the sources in their original languages. This is no longer the situation, a command of Greek and Latin belongs mostly to specialists, and they cannot be expected to be competent in Sanskrit too, not to speak of other Indian languages. The classical accounts on India have thus become a very special field studied from two alternative viewpoints, classical and Indological. Very often they have been marred by an ignorance of the other fields, though some very competent scholars have also appeared.[8] The last few years have seen some cases of fruitful collaboration between classical scholars and Indologists.[9] At the same time there have only been a few attempts at a general survey.[10] In the words of the great Swedish Indologist, the present writer aspires to be "a scholar, who possesses at least some knowledge of Ancient Indian lore and is not wholly at sea in classical studies".[11]

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Crindle 1877, 1879, 1882, 1885, 1896 and 1901.

[6] Franke 1893.

[7] Stein 1922 and 1932, Breloer 1929, 1934 and 1935.

[8] I refer only to the apt studies by Albrecht Dihle and F. F. Schwarz. For a survey of recent studies in the field see Schwarz 1972, Daffinà 1977 and Karttunen 1086a.

[9] André & Filliozat (1980) and Wirth & Hinüber (Hinüber 1985).

[10] For the classical literary sources the only comprehensive 20th century studies are Reese 1914 and Wecker 1916, all others are concentrated either on one author or on some other aspect than the literary (e.g. Alexander's campaign and the Indo-Greeks). The interesting doctoral thesis of Robinson (1961) remains unpublished.

[11] Charpentier 1934, 5.

The "early Greek literature" discussed in this study is defined practically, it forms the first phase of the Greek awareness of India. Its beginning could be defined as the beginning of Greek literature, but actually its oldest phase still contains nothing useful for us (see chapter IV), the first notices about India appearing only at the end of the sixth century B.C. Its ending is more difficult to decide, and needs some explanation.

Alexander's campaign in India is often and with good reasons chosen as the boundary between the early phase, mostly relying upon hearsay, and new, direct information.[12] In this study I shall go beyond this boundary for several reasons. Though the differences between our earliest sources and the historians of Alexander (together with Megasthenes) are clear, we can also see in the latter a marked tendency to continue a literary tradition. Earlier ethnographical literature was still often read and cited by them, and vast new amounts of information were often interpreted through it.[13] Nevertheless, these same authors afterwards came to be considered as a new standard, and subsequent information about India was interpreted through them.[14] This does not concern us anymore at present.

Another reason for including the historians of Alexander is geographical continuity. It was not India proper, but the Northwestern country, now belonging mostly to Pakistan, which had been an Achaemenian possession in the fifth century and was the field of Alexander's campaigns in India. This was the country dealt with in early ethnography as well as in the histories of Alexander and their accounts of India. The very word *India,* being derived from the Indus, was still often used to signify only this country.

Though some historians of Alexander (for instance Onesicritus) had a notion of India as a larger unit – and of course there was a time when Alexander himself eagerly cast glances over Hyphasis – a definite change took place only with Megasthenes, who already had a clear idea of the new Mauryan state. But even he wrote much about the Northwest, borrowing and sometimes polemizing the information given by his predecessors.

It is this Northwest India we must study in connection with the early Greek sources. This kind of study is rather complicated as there are no other direct sources than archaeological excavations. As can be seen from my text, I attempt to command both Greek and Indian materials. A long time ago the disciplines themselves have grown so extensive that it has become virtually impossible for one scholar to grasp all of them. Consequently I must immediately admit my limitations as an Iranist. To some extent I have tried to compensate for this by reading studies written by Iranists, but there must still be wide gaps in my knowledge and my linguistic ability includes here only some Old Persian and Avestan. This circumstance forms my personal frame of reference and is the main reason for the fact that I speak rather freely of Northwest India as more or less the same country that some scholars call Easternmost Iran. But then one of the ideas of this study is to show that this country was not a part of either India or Iran.

[12] Thus, for instance, Reese (1914) only dealt with the authors writing (at least partly) before Alexander's campaign.

[13] See Zambrini 1982, where Megasthenes is examined as the end of the early ethnographic tradition.

[14] See Dihle 1964.

There are other fields where I feel that I am an intruder. Some evidence is culled from other philological disciplines (like Assyriology) without any attempt to hide my great ignorance in them. And while it is perhaps to some extent permissible for a philologist to sojourn in the realm of history, the present study also involves evidence from such specialized fields as numismatics and archaeology. Here too I am a layman attempting to derive some evidence from the studies made by others, and having the temerity to select what may have some relevance for my present study. However, I still feel that this is often the only way to find out something.

On occasion, I have also paid attention to recent information, especially that which has been collected by anthropologists among the Nuristani and Dardic peoples. But here extreme caution is necessary as the time gap between our primary sources and present traditions is more than two thousand years. During those years there have been immense changes and though some features can evidently boast great antiquity, much is clearly later.[15] Therefore, I have restricted the number of my sources in this field to just a few representative examples, such as Jettmar's book.[16]

The northwest Indian/eastern Iranian borderland has a very complicated history. Even in prehistoric times it has had relations in all directions. Ethnically and linguistically it has probably always been variegated. There have been and for the most part still are many ethnic elements – Dravidians, Indo-Iranians including Nuristani, Burušos and others – and all have contributed their part. Often the boundaries are not clear. Iranian peoples did live in the country between the Hindukush and the Indus, but probably there were also Indo-Aryans living west of the Indus. East of the river there were certainly Indo-Aryans (perhaps including Dards), but still the river was not a cultural boundary. It was this country, comprising Pakistan, Eastern Afghanistan and a corner of India in a modern map, where Indo-Aryans and Iranians met each other, where features from both directions were combined with other, local and Central Asiatic traditions.

Here again my study suffers from my inability to deal with equal command the various kinds of evidence involved. I know no Chinese and cannot use independently Chinese sources on Central Asia and Northwest India. This shortcoming is somewhat relieved by chronological considerations, as most of the relevant Chinese sources – like the valuable accounts of Buddhist pilgrimages to India – are hopelessly late for our period. However, Chinese sources do contain much that is of interest, and in some cases the works of scholars more competent in this field[17] have added valuable information to my discussion. A further study of Chinese eviudence would certainly add to the subjects dealt with in chapters VII–VIII.[18]

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[15] See Jettmar's discussion of the Nuristani religious traditions and the antiquity of their militant isolation in Jettmar 1975, 173ff. While some scholars have attempted to trace the major part of their civilization as early as the early Vedic period of the Indo-Aryans, Jettmar dates the formative period (without denying some very ancient elements) only in the first century A.D. (ibid. 179ff.).

[16] Jettmar 1975.

[17] Like Laufer (1908, 1909, 1914 and 1919), Lévi (1915 and 1918), Lindegger(1979 and 1982), Przyluski (1914) and Tucci (1963 and 1977).

[18] Thus, for instance, the passage of Ctesias (F 45, 9) about a spring filled with gold can perhaps be connected with Nuristani traditions of magic lakes containing precious things (Jones 1974, 243ff./ 255ff.

Delving into fields with which one is not entirely familiar makes (or at least should make) one cautious. In addition to this caution one should also be aware that many of the ideas we do have are actually constructed on weak or erroneously interpreted evidence. It has become one of my purposes to find out how much we can actually say we know when the various hypotheses and fantasies are cleared away. The probable result is that I shall be considered hypercritical,[19] but I think I must take the risk. On the other hand, I have, especially in chapter VII.–VIII., something more constructive to offer than merely claiming that the sources do not allow us to infer this or that.

In this connection I must also mention my habit of frequently drawing from very old sources. One reason is that many misleading ideas are actually an inheritance of the 19th century (if not still older), although this is not always realized. But where more recent evidence has not changed the picture, some early scholars (like Lassen for whom I have great respect) demonstrate the excellence of their thinking.[20] Sometimes the same ideas have been proposed independently by younger generations. This may be disappointing. I have several times found that what I thought was an original idea has already been stated in some half-forgotten 19th century book. Yet in a study like this there would be no end of further potential sources – old and new – and there comes a point when a halt must be called. Otherwise I would have had to continue for countless years and years and the thesis would probably never have been finished.

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I shall not attempt any far-reaching reconstruction in this thesis. It is my task to study the early Greek accounts of India and some related problems and reach some kind of evaluation of these sources. But in order to understand the accounts properly, it is also important to know something of the world which they reflected, and the role India played within that scheme. Therefore the second chapter contains a rather detailed account of the historical setting including both the Near Eastern – Iranian background and the history of early Greek contacts with India. This enables us to observe more closely how exact and how easily available the information about India was, and to judge the shortcomings we so often meet with in our sources. Often I have simply summarized the studies of others, but there are also several important problems I have had to discuss once more.

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and Tucci 1977, 28f.) mentioned already by Songyun in the sixth century A.D. (Chavannes 1903, 399f.). Similarly, a combination of Chinese accounts about the treatment of criminals in Swat (Songyun in Chavannes 1903, 408; *Tang shu* (*T'ang-shu*) in Tucci 1977, 38) and traditions of modern Nuristan (mentioned by Tucci 1977, 38) might perhaps offer some clue about the drug ordeal described by Ctesias (F 45, 31). Schauffelberger (1845, 33) quotes a similar account from Faxian (Abel-Rémusat's translation), but I cannot find it in Beal 1884 (where Faxian is translated in I, XXIIIff.).

[19] Cf. Schachermeyr's (1973, 686ff.) discussion of "negierende Forschungsmethoden".

[20] In this I subscribe fully to the opinion of Baldson (1979, X) who states: "Scholars have grown no cleverer in the last hundred years; it is simply that they have more (particularly in the way of inscriptions and papyri) to be clever about."

The third chapter is devoted to a presentation and examination of the extant Greek sources. Only such sources where India is really dealt with are included. In the literature one often finds additional sources in which some connection with India is supposed. The fourth chapter tries to show where the line between real and useful information and more or less unnecessary hypotheses should be drawn. The fifth chapter is devoted to some general questions of early Greek sources. India is, of course, important in this chapter, but it is not the main thing. Still, what is said here, is often of essential value for our understanding of the sources and our evaluation of their possible yield for Indian history.

Thus far, I have mostly discussed the Greek evidence. In the sixth chapter we shall turn to the Indian side. As the chronology of Indian literary history is very complicated, it was necessary to give some evaluation of the sources most frequently used for reference on the Indian side. In a way there should be a similar chapter on archaeology, but to write one would have been arrogant on my part. Even with the literary sources I had necessarily to be brief and selective. Otherwise I would have had to write a whole history of ancient Indian literature, which is impossible in the present work. The seventh and eighth chapter form a whole divided into two only in order to prevent a single chapter from becoming disproportionate. These chapters are perhaps the most important part of the whole work as they contain cases where the Greek evidence can actually be connected with other sources we have on Northwest India.[21]

When we stop seeking convergences between the Aryan culture of India (Āryāvarta) and the Greek accounts of India and turn our attention to such instances where the parallel evidence found in Indian sources can be somehow linked with the Northwestern perspective,[22] we can find more solid ground. With varying degrees of success I have tried to find such Indian literary evidence which can be somehow connected with the Northwest, the India of the early Greek sources. On occasion, archaeological material has given further evidence. In this way we can both better understand the Greek sources and find information about Northwest India, whose independent position between several great cultures (Indian, Iranian and Central Asian) has only lately received sufficient attention from scholars. I shall take up several instances, present the evidence and discuss the problems involved. I shall proceed from the natural world through marvels to customs and religion. Some conclusions follow in chapter IX.

[21] For the benefit of my classical readers I would like to add that most of the additional Indian texts referred to in other chapters are later than those discussed in chapter VI. For instance, the classical texts of Indian medicine (Caraka and Suśruta) belong to the early centuries A.D., and classical Sanskrit poetry is still somewhat later. The Purāṇas are notorious for their textual unreliability (see Bakker *forthcoming*) and can be only used with utmost caution.

[22] The idea of the points of the compass is so vague in Indian sources that we can often include West and North as Northwest in our sources.