

IX. CONCLUSIONS

In the preceding pages an attempt was made at a comparative study of early Greek and Indian sources with special reference to Northwest India, the area which is now Pakistan and part of Afghanistan. It was seen that the information on India given in the early Greek sources is to a large extent directly related to this Northwestern country. Even the name *India* referred originally only to the southern Indus country. This is, or at least it should be, well-known, but instead of emphasizing the fact¹ it is often ignored. There have been many attempts to move everything not clearly recognized as strictly Northwestern further eastwards, sometimes even to South India. And yet the correspondence between Greek and Indian sources has been small enough, too small to be explained solely by the meagreness of Indian sources of the period. I have attempted to give the Northwestern (when seen from India) perspective its proper place.

In order to do this the task was not only to cull from the Sanskrit sources Indian parallels to the Greek accounts – as has been often done – but to see what the Indian sources have to say about the Northwest, an area which in our period still more or less remained outside the orthodox (Vedic) Aryan culture dominated by Sanskrit (and Middle Indo-Aryan) literature. From the Northwest itself we have no original documents of the period and the peculiar and unorthodox (from the Indian point of view) customs are described only by prejudiced and ill-informed Greek and Indian strangers.

Even in India the harvest is small, especially when strict chronological principles are followed. Although the *Rigveda* tells us much about the Northwest,² it is much too early to be really useful in this study, and the geographical milieu of the later Veda is mostly Indian and looks east. However, there are few of longer accounts³ and many scattered notices about the Northwest in Sanskrit literature. When these are combined with the classical accounts we have at least some idea of this Northwestern country. This can be added to by archaeological and linguistic evidence. In many cases it seems that the best parallels are found in the regions of Nuristan, Swat and Dardistan.

One point must be taken up separately here. Our Northwestern perspective has brought forward evidence showing that some of the “Indian” material in Herodotus and especially in Ctesias seems to deal with Northwestern tales told about Central Asia. More or less the same tales have influenced the Indian idea of the northern paradise of Uttarakuru, but they are also found in Chinese sources. The northern paradise with a miraculous river as its boundary, giant reeds growing on its banks, the countries of Dog-heads and women, gold-digging ants and griffins are all part of this tradition.⁴

¹ One of the few scholars who really did this is Caroe (1958, 35).

² See e.g. Witzel 1980.

³ See chapters VIII.15. and 18.

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Several other issues were involved. The existing studies on Graeco-Indian relations often suffer from a slight knowledge of either of the fields involved. In addition, many are written by scholars who have some other field as their main interest and consequently they do not discuss (or sometimes even understand) the particular problems of this field.⁵ Thus, many wild speculations and antiquated theories are carried from one authority to another and rarely subjected to a critical examination.⁶

Another problem, often not noticed at all, is the question of the Indian sources and their use. There are scholars who without any scruples think they can combine two pieces of evidence separated by, say, two millennia,⁷ but in order to get some reliability we should make the chronological gap as short as possible. When the early period is concerned, there are rather few Indian sources preserved and among them exact chronology is the exception rather than the rule. An examination of the dates commonly given in the standard literary histories showed how much the Indian literary chronology is really built on vague hypotheses, especially in the early period. In chapter VI.1. I have tried to show how much we really know and how some old hypotheses must be revised.

From the point of view of the early classical sources and information about the Northwest, one crucial point with the Indian evidence is which sources can be safely dated to the period before Alexander (and can therefore be said to be clearly independent of the Greek ones). Unfortunately, in the light of recent research, many Indian dates must be revised in consideration of the new Buddha chronology, the development of urbanization, and some other factors. What is left for the pre-Mauryan period is little enough, in fact nothing else but the Veda (with the exception of its latest parts). Later sources can also be used, e.g. Buddhist canonical works and Sanskrit epics contain much old material, but every passage must then be critically analysed.

There are other problems connected with the Greek sources and the picture of India they offer. As a general conclusion from the many problems discussed in chapter II. we can note the key-position of the Achaemenian empire. This is seen in the history of the western contacts of India, where, with the exception of early contacts between the Indus civilization and Sumer, most of our evidence points to this period. The empire with its harbours and capitals was also the context where even Greeks could learn something about the distant eastern country, be it actual facts or seamen's tales and the like. The empire also gave Scylax the occasion to visit Northwest India personally.

The Achaemenian empire with its many links to India (especially the Northwest) is the key to any original information we encounter in early Greek sources. But it would be an error to see in our Greek material faithful accounts of this information. Questions of reliability have often been dealt with in a straightforward manner by distinguishing between truths and lies, but the actual reality of early Greek ethnography, its theory, its way of construing the world and especially distant countries and peoples, its ideals of Greek

⁴ See VII.6. and 8.-9.

⁵ Of course there are exceptions like Stein, Dihle and Schwarz.

⁶ Ophir in India (chapter II.2.) and the Homeric knowledge of India (chapter IV.1.) with the supposed Indian etymologies of Biblical and Homeric words serve as examples.

⁷ As in the identification of Πακτυϊκή with Paštō.

interpretation and utopia, its attitude to primary information, native explanations and literary predecessors, needs a more complicated analysis. This has been attempted in a general way in chapters III. and V. and then often in connection with individual themes dealt with in chapters VII. and VIII.

In early Greek sources everything is seen and interpreted in Greek light, and a knowledge of the early tradition of ethnographic writing is therefore indispensable. India is the fabulous country at the eastern end of the world, where all kinds of marvels are seen. In many respects it is the ethnographic theory which defines its characteristics. On the other hand, it is still real information about India which has been given a Greek garb, and in a careful analysis it can still be shown as such.

A particularly interesting case is Ctesias, who had not the high scholarly standards of Herodotus, and whose reliability has been a matter of dispute ever since. In the preceding pages I have tried to show that Ctesias, too, collected real information about India. In many cases he provides us with an unquestionably early source for some particular fact or tradition. This, however, is not enough to make Ctesias a reliable source about India when other sources are missing. In the remains of his *Indica* the original information may be significantly distorted in the hands of Ctesias himself or those who have preserved his fragments. Consequently, Ctesias can be used, but only when he is confirmed by some independent evidence.

It is not easy to gain a clear picture or even glimpses of the Northwestern reality. What we have in Western and Indian sources was already heavily interpreted in the light of the respective culture, its own prejudices and interests. The comparison of these two sources is made difficult by the scantiness of the sources and by their different geographical perspective.⁸

On the other hand, the history of the area seems to have been very complicated indeed. It has been suggested with good grounds that the country was already ethnically very mixed in the far off times of the Indus civilization, in spite of the remarkable uniformity of the culture itself.⁹ Subsequent periods brought only more and more new elements. The Dravidian element is there even nowadays in the form of Brahui and has probably very ancient origins.¹⁰ Our earliest literary sources in India as well as in the West attest both an Indo-Aryan¹¹ and an Iranian element which are still met with there. It is more difficult to show definitely the presence of the Dardic and Nuristani element, but their old roots in

⁸ Long ago Lassen (1827, 4) pointed out two texts that well illustrate this situation. In *Mbh* 8 the rivers of the Pañjab are listed from east to west, whereas for instance in Strabo 15, 1, 27 and Ptolemy 7, 1, 26f. they are given from west to east. The *Mbh* passage is 8, 30, 35 *pañca nadyo vahanty etā yatra pīluvanāny api/ śatadruś ca vipāsā ca tṛṭiyerāvati tathā/ candrabhāgā vitastā ca sindhuṣaṣṭhā bahirgatāh//*.

⁹ See e.g. Lambrick 1975, 206f.

¹⁰ Andronov 1971, 11ff. More generally on the position of the Dravidian element see Tikkanen 1988, 317ff.

¹¹ For a possible IA element already in the late Harappan period see Allchin & Allchin 1982, 303f. Later Vedic culture seems to correspond to the so-called Painted Grey Ware (Allchin & Allchin 1982, 316f. and Parpola 1988, 197f.).

their present dwelling places are very likely.¹² Another question still waiting a definite answer is the extent and importance of Burušaški, not to speak of Tibeto-Burman. At least there seems to be some traces (toponyms, linguistic and cultural elements) of a Burušaški influence south of their present area (especially in the Shina speaking area), thus indicating a greater distribution in early times.¹³ Even the westernmost traces of Austroasiatic are not too far from the area, and the *Rigveda* already contained words ultimately of Austroasiatic origin.¹⁴ We must also always keep in mind the "x" factor, an unknown ethnic and linguistic element present in ancient times but since disappeared. There certainly was at least one such "x" in the Northwest, perhaps even several of them.¹⁵

Though linguistic diversity like this necessarily supposes ethnic diversity, we fortunately have other kind of evidence too. And when there are dangers in straightforward identification of, say, differences in pottery with major ethnic and cultural differences, the archaeological material can at least tell us of the strong ties in various directions the area has had during its history. Thus, for instance, Swat, after having relations with the Indus civilization, attained a period (Ghalegay IV in the second millennium B.C.) characterized by features related to the Neolithic culture of North China, while the next period (Ghalegay V, c. 1400–800 B.C.) shows links with West Iran.¹⁶

There was a time when the Rigvedic Aryans lived in the Pañjab, but even then they were not there alone.¹⁷ Later they moved eastward¹⁸ and who was left was apparently assimilated either by the existing population or perhaps by Aryan (this time not Rigvedic) newcomers, who had many strange habits opposed by the orthodoxy developing further in the east. The resulting antagonism is clearly seen in the general disgust towards the Northwesterners we have noted in the *Dharmaśāstra* (ch. VIII.8.) and Indian epics (e.g. ch. VIII.5.).¹⁹

The first coming of the Iranians cannot be dated, the movement continued over a long time. Already in the early period both Veda and Avesta seem to know the Iranian population in the Indus country.²⁰ In the sixth century it seems likely that there were even Sakas living in the confines of Northwest India. In a way the Achaemenian

¹² On the history of Nuristani and Dardic peoples see e.g. Jettmar 1975, 173ff., 294ff. and 450ff. A recent attempt to explain the origin of the Nuristani is found in Parpola 1988, 243ff.

¹³ See Tikkanen 1988, 304f. and *passim*.

¹⁴ Tikkanen 1988, 319f.

¹⁵ Tikkanen 1988 316f.

¹⁶ Parpola 1988, 240ff. summarizing Stacul 1987, 115ff. See also Stacul 1987, 75ff. on "Trade".

¹⁷ Dāsas and other "barbarous" peoples mentioned in the RV clearly lived close by, and in a way this is even necessary as an explanation of the many non-Aryan elements in the RV itself. For possible archaeological evidence for the same see Allchin & Allchin 1982, 246ff. Parpola 1988, 208ff. gives a new analysis of literary evidence and attempts an archaeological identification.

¹⁸ See the well-known account in SB 1, 4, 1, 14–16 and Hiersche 1977.

¹⁹ See also Vasil'kov 1982, 58ff. Among other passages (like *Mbh* 8, 30) he notes that the Northwest is nearly a white speck in the *Tirthayātrāparvan* (*Mbh* 3, 80–153).

²⁰ See Witzel 1980, *passim*. Parpola 1988, 243ff. (especially 246f.) and fig. 33 suggests an Iranian origin for the Nuristani peoples, dating their coming from archaeological evidence in the late second millennium B.C. (Swat's Ghalegay V [according to Parpola Proto-Nuristani] following Indo-Aryan [Proto-Rigvedic] Ghalegay IV).

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dominion was part of the movement and later – after the Macedonian and Graeco-Bactrian interlude²¹ – it was continued by new waves of Sakas, Parthians, Yüe-chi and others²² until the role of regularly reappearing northwestern intruders was taken over by Turkic and Mongolian peoples.

²¹ And even then it seems likely that the Bactrian dominion brought more (more or less Hellenized) Bactrian Iranians than Greeks to India.

²² Even the Huns were more or less Iranized before they come to India.

