



B 20953

# GNOMON

KRITISCHE ZEITSCHRIFT  
FÜR DIE GESAMTE  
KLASSISCHE ALTERTUMSWISSENSCHAFT

HERAUSGEGEBEN VON

MARTIN BENTZ · RUTH BIELFELDT  
PETER EICH · HANS-JOACHIM GEHRKE  
CHRISTOPH HORN · MARTIN HOSE  
JOSEPH MARAN · KATHARINA VOLK  
PAUL ZANKER

SCHRIFTFLEITUNG

MARTIN HOSE (VERANTWORTLICH) UND  
OLIVER SCHELSKE

Online-Ausgabe auf  
[elibrary.chbeck.de](http://elibrary.chbeck.de)



91. BAND

**Sonderdruck**

HEFT 3

VERLAG C.H.BECK MÜNCHEN

Apart from this sort of general defects, some weaknesses in specific aspects are noteworthy. So, e.g., Prontera (p. 252) rightly insists on Strabo's lack of positive assessment of the periplographic tradition, but does not give any explanation for such a surprising fact, considering that Strabo is the main transmitter of such works. In my opinion, behind this kind of inconsistency by the Amaseian geographer a trace of his methodological and literary criticism of his predecessor Eratosthenes can be distinguished. Likewise, Olshausen (p. 263, n. 26) refers to Artemidorus' geographical work citing only his reference in Jacoby's edition (*FGrHist* 438), even though only a reference to his still future 'Part V: *Die Geographien*' (cf. No. 2008) appears. Olshausen himself, when alluding to the complex case of the periplographer Menippus of Pergamon (p. 269), deprives us of the abundant bibliography currently available (he does not even quote A. Diller's edition, see above).

Finally, we still need to mention some minor, but equally unfortunate and avoidable defects. The illustrations are not of the best quality, and the ones on pp. 138 (repeated on p. 257), 258 (2), 275, 283, 288 and 291 could clearly be improved. In some cases, the bibliographical list does not include works cited in abbreviated form in the notes (e.g. «Garcia [sic] Zamacona 2012» [p. 125, n. 43]). In other cases, the bibliographical abbreviations are incomplete (e.g. «Prontera 2001» instead of '2001b' [p. 128, n. 53]; «Cruz Andreotti 2004» instead of '2004a' or '2004b' [p. 276, n. 6]). In addition, incorrect references («see below n. 4» [p. 163, n. 5]), and quotations («*HN* 3–4» instead of '3–6' [p. 300]) can be noted, as well as errata («*pariplus*-like» instead of '*periplus*-like' [p. 355]) and the inconsistency of citing ancient works in English and Latin abbreviations («Euseb., *Martyrs of Palestine*» [p. 383, n. 11] in front of «Euseb., *Hist. Eccl.*» [p. 383, n. 12]).

But none of these defects, which are generally minor, diminishes the value of a work of excellent overall quality.

Sevilla

Francisco J. González Ponce

\*

**Josef Wiesehöfer, Horst Brinkhaus, Reinhold Bichler** (Hrsgg.): *Megasthenes und seine Zeit/Megasthenes and his time*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2016. VI, 230 S. 10 Abb. 3 Ktn. (Classica et Orientalia. 13.) 58 €.

The volume consists in the publication of the contributions presented at the conference entitled 'Bilder des Orients: Megasthenes, Apollodoros von Artemita und Isidoros von Charax', which was held at Christian-Albrechts-Universität Kiel on June 27 to 30, 2012. The conference was called for Indologists, scholars of ancient history, classical philologists, orientalist, archeologists and scholars of Iranian studies to discuss not only the work of Megasthenes as a diplomatic envoy to the court of the Maurya emperor Chandragupta, but also to talk about the world image created by Greek historians and geographers, the relations between the Seleucid kingdom and India and the Mauryas' own government on the subcontinent.

The volume begins with R. Bichler's paper on various Greek writers' descriptions of how the peoples of India were organized politically. Bichler draws attention to the fact that authors like Herodotus and Ctesias did not describe Indian cities or fortresses or even the way the peoples of the subcontinent practiced war. At the core of the paper is an analysis of the passages by Alexander's historians

that dealt with political control and the power structure in India. The author notes that Arrian (credited with the most accurate story of Alexander's campaign) did not use the term *basileus* to refer to the governors and dynasties the expedition encountered in India, no doubt to underline the universal nature of Alexander's rule. Bichler also notes that Arrian avoided presenting political utopias in India; in this sense, the authors of the Vulgate did mention several such organizations (as was consistent with Hellenistic political literature), present in the work of the first-generation Alexandrian historians.<sup>1</sup>

H. Brinkhaus furnishes a historiographical review focusing on the possible influence of the *Arthasāstra* (attributed to Kautilya) on the work of Megasthenes, a question that has been debated from the first edition of the text of political teachings (1909) right up to the present day.

In her chapter, V. Bucciantini maintains that Nearchus' account was the main model for and forerunner of Megasthenes' work, although Bucciantini feels that Megasthenes also drew on the work of other authors who accompanied Alexander. Like A. Zambrini, Bucciantini considers the traditional chronology of Megasthenes valid. A tie exists between Nearchus and Megasthenes: both were sent to head up exploratory or diplomatic missions by monarchs who had placed their trust in them. The idea, then, is that reports submitted by navigators and diplomats to the sovereigns who commissioned them form 'a genre within a genre'. However, one must bear in mind that Greek tradition forced these envoys to Hellenize their description of reality to make it more understandable to the Greek public.

B. Jacobs writes about Palibothra in the work of Megasthenes and compares it with the archeological remains found in Patna since the 1920s (we owe the identification of Palibothra with Patna to Colonel L. Waddell in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century). The author reviews the origins of Maurya architecture, linking it with Achaemenid architecture and with Hellenistic architecture, from which it drew numerous features, such as its monumentality and its esthetic attractiveness.

The ethnography and paradoxography of India as described by Megasthenes are the object of S. Jansari and R. Ricot's attention, as they examine the relationship between Chandragupta, the founder of the Maurya Empire and sovereign during the time when Megasthenes visited the Maurya court, and Jainism. To do this, the authors compare the fragments by Megasthenes with southern Asian sources, many of which are of uncertain date and are more religious than historiographic, except for the *Arthasāstra* and the *Sthaviravalicaritra*. The *Sthaviravalicaritra* is the only literary work that places Jains in the environment of Chandragupta's court; the authors' thesis is that the description of the *astomoi* (mouthless persons) in Megasthenes' work (although he did not call them this) may be a rather veiled reference to Jains Megasthenes may have met in Chandragupta's dominions. While the authors correctly caution that Megasthenes was following the Greek ethnographic tradition, they offer a somewhat positivist interpretation. To reach their conclusion, they do not make over much of the literary custom of naming India (as a remote country) home to a whole series of

---

<sup>1</sup> Such as T.S. Brown, 'Onesicritus: A Study in Hellenistic Historiography', Berkeley 1949, which is not mentioned in the article's bibliography.

fantastic peoples endowed with a different physiognomy and often just the reverse of what was known in the Greek world and surrounding regions.<sup>1</sup>

In his interesting chapter, G. Parker analyzes the use of Megasthenes' work by later authors living during the late Roman Republican era and the High Empire (Diodorus of Sicily, Strabo, Pliny the Elder and Arrian). Parker points out that, when these four authors' public read about Alexander's expedition and its consequences in distant regions like the Hindu Kush and the Indus Valley, they could not help but read their own historical reality (the apogee of Roman power and its rule over very remote areas of Italy) into the account.

D. Potts' contribution is distanced from the other chapters both chronologically and thematically, as it looks into the interaction of the coastal regions of the Persian Gulf and the western Indian Ocean, culturally and in trade, from the Neolithic to Alexander's time. Their location on the shore enabled the societies at issue to create a network of connections and communications, making possible a different historical development from that which took place in the inland regions of western and southern Asia. Potts surveys the mentions of places like Dilmun (Bahrein and the adjacent part of Saudi Arabia), Magan (Oman) and Meluhha (the Indus Valley culture) in one of Sargon of Akkad's inscriptions, and he compares them with the archeological materials having to do with long-distance trade and found at the same respective sites. Potts also points to various texts from Ur III to indicate the existence of a far-flung system that socially and economically interconnected the various regions ringing the Persian Gulf and the western Indian Ocean between Mesopotamia and Gujarat in the late third millennium BC.

D.W. Roller reviews the scanty biographical data available on Megasthenes and explores the main topics appearing in the preserved fragments (especially the description of Pataliputra, the fauna and flora of India, paradoxography and news about Indian society and the caste system).

R. Rollinger's contribution is based on the theoretical scheme created by Gehrke in regard to the 'intentionale Geschichte'<sup>2</sup> to show how Megasthenes used the historical figure of Nebuchadnezzar to offer his readers an image of the Seleucid royal ideology while at the same time contextualizing these propagandistic patterns within the cultural context of the ancient Near East. After having analyzed and compared texts from the Neo-Assyrian era and authors from Greek culture like Berossos and Megasthenes, Rollinger affirms that Seleucid power not only proclaimed itself a follower of Alexander's legacy (like the other Hellenistic kingdoms), but claimed to be the continuation of the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian empires. Thus, Berossos and Megasthenes upheld the idea that these entities attained universal dominion, embodied in a mental map that did not show historical reality but was instead a product of the ancient Near East's own traditional monarchic ideology.

---

<sup>1</sup> O. Murray, 'Herodotus and Hellenistic Culture', *ClQu* 22, 1972, 200-213; J.S. Romm, 'The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought', Princeton 1992.

<sup>2</sup> H.-J. Gehrke, 'Greek Representations of the Past', in L. Foxhall – H.-J. Gehrke – N. Luraghi (eds.), 'Intentional History. Spinning Time in Ancient Greece', Stuttgart 2010, 15-33.

In his paper, K. Ruffing presents the historical development of the Greek image of India, which led to the work of Megasthenes. The literary origin of the image must be situated within the context of the Achaemenid Empire of Darius I, when Darius entrusted the mariner Scylax of Caryanda with organizing an exploratory voyage that took Scylax from the middle course of the Indus to the river's mouth and later to Egypt after a crossing over the Indian Ocean. Scylax's report was the beginning of a series of ideas about India (exotic fauna and flora, strange-looking inhabitants, intense heat because of nearness to the Sun) that established a pattern for later Greek authors who wrote about the region (especially Hecataeus, Herodotus, Ctesias and Alexander's historians). Even so, Herodotus himself (who created the ethnographic scheme later Greek authors used) did not envisage in his Indian *logos* the description of mythical peoples, as Scylax, and later Ctesias, did. Rather, Herodotus focused on illustrating the country's exuberant fauna and flora, in addition to telling strange stories like the tale of ants that dug for gold and showing how the 'real' populations of India lived. Ctesias largely continued the path traced by Scylax and depicted a colorful, splendid India where fabulous populations (pygmies and dog-headed people) abounded, who enjoyed all the wealth that a country blessed by nature could be imagined to have. Alexander's historians, especially Nearchus<sup>1</sup> and Onesicritus, began to use many of these elements in their own respective works, even though they had personal knowledge of India.

In his chapter, O. von Hinüber deals with the relationship between Aśoka and the Greeks. Aśoka was a grandson of Chandragupta, and he unified a large stretch of the Indian subcontinent by force. We have records of some of the things he did under his rule, through a series of inscriptions found scattered about the territory under his power. Von Hinüber analyzes the Greek contents of two of these inscriptions found in Kandahar, Afghanistan, in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The first contains a short version of contents known through other epigraphs inscribed on stone, while the second consists in a revised translation of another text. Obviously, there was a diplomatic and commercial relationship between Aśoka and the Greeks situated westward of his dominions. It seems that Aśoka employed some of the diplomatic practices known by the Hellenistic monarchies to make contact with their sovereigns, such as sending letters carried personally by ambassadors.

The last contribution, by J. Wiesehöfer, also deals with diplomatic and trade relations between the Maurya Empire and the Seleucid kingdom. In his analysis, Wiesehöfer rejects the idea that either of the two political entities obtained a clear territorial advantage over the other, since the situation Chandragupta and Seleucus were in – building new structures of government – practically forced them to have friendly relations and avoid confrontations. The author also points to the existence of an ancient tie between India on one side and the Mesopotamian and Iranian world on the other, which resulted in an exchange of knowledge beneficial to them both.

---

<sup>1</sup> The bibliography makes no reference to the monograph by V. Bucciantini, 'Studio su Nearcho di Creta: dalla descrizione geografica alla narrazione storica', Alessandria 2015, no doubt because it was published while the manuscript was at press.

The volume ends with an index of the historical figures, ethnonyms, place names and country and region names cited in the book. The work is one that showcases some of the hottest new research into Megasthenes and his time. The foremost studies included in the volume analyze written sources from the East (Mesopotamia, Iran and ancient northern India) to establish a point of view different from that conveyed by Megasthenes and to look deeply into the analysis and scope of the political, economic and cultural contacts of a good part of the Middle East and ancient India.

Valencia

Manuel Albaladejo Vivero

\*

**Yann Berthelet:** *Gouverner avec les dieux. Autorité, auspices et pouvoir, sous la République romaine et sous Auguste.* Paris: Les Belles Lettres 2015. 435 S. (Mondes Anciens.) 27,50 €.

Die hier zu besprechende Studie verfolgt das Ziel, die institutionellen Verflechtungen der Begriffe *auctoritas*, *auspicia* und *potestas* sowie der ihnen zugrunde liegenden Konzepte nachzuzeichnen und zu analysieren. Yann Berthelet (B.) verfolgt dabei erklärtermaßen einen soziologisch geprägten Ansatz und stellt seinen Ausführungen gleichsam als Motto ein durchaus berechtigtes Plädoyer für eine Kombination aus Institutionengeschichte und praxeologischer Analyse voran (15): «Contre la valorisation traditionnelle de la dimension de l'institué au détriment de celle de l'instituant, il faut voir que l'institution n'a de valeur que dans la mesure où elle rend possible l'existence toujours renouvelée des actes qui l'habitent [...]».<sup>1</sup> Am Ende der Lektüre dieses kenntnisreichen und detailliert argumentierenden Buches hat sich – dies sei bereits vorweggenommen – beim Rezensenten jedoch der Eindruck ergeben, dass trotz dieser Prämisse insbesondere die Wechselwirkung von Institution und politischer Praxis an der einen oder anderen Stelle stärker hätte berücksichtigt werden müssen.

Den Schlüssel zum Verständnis der Zusammenhänge zwischen den Sphären des Religiösen und des Politischen sieht B. im Begriff der *auctoritas*. Er definiert diesen in Anknüpfung an Hannah Arendts These vom engen Zusammenhang zwischen den *auspicia* römischer Magistrate und der *auctoritas* des Jupiter, die allein den Handlungen der Amtsträger die notwendige vollkommene Legitimität habe verleihen können als den auf symbolischem Kapital basierenden soziopolitischen Einfluss einer Person, der unterschieden werden müsse von der rein politisch definierten *potestas* der Magistrate (18f).<sup>2</sup> Vor diesem Hintergrund diene die *auctoritas*, die insbesondere den Auguren und der Gesamtheit des Senats zukomme, vor allem der Einhegung magistratischer *potestas* und stelle somit ein Instrument der aristokratischen Selbstkontrolle und der Konfliktprävention dar (145f).

<sup>1</sup> C. Widmaier: 'De la puissance au pouvoir. Le nécessaire détour par l'Antiquité', in: P. Guisard, C. Laizé (Hgg.), 'Le Pouvoir. Diriger, commander, gouverner'. Paris 2011, 3–28, hier 24.

<sup>2</sup> Vgl. H. Arendt: 'What is Authority?', in: Dies.: 'Between Past and Future. Six Exercises in Political Thought'. London 1961, 91–141.