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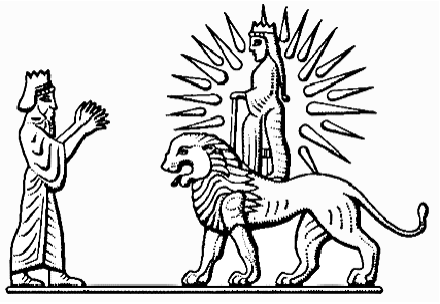

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"The Naked Ascetics of India and Other Eastern Religions in the Greek and Roman Sources of the Late Classical Antiquity"

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The Naked Ascetics of India and Other Eastern Religions in the Greek and Roman Sources of the Late Classical Antiquity*

A peculiar outcome of Alexander's Indian campaigns was the persistent fame of India as the land of wisdom.[1] In the spring of 326, during his stay in Taxila (now on the outskirts of Islamabad in Pakistan), Alexander and his men met naked ascetics, who soon became known as the Gymnosophistai. There are several different first-hand accounts of this meeting. It is sufficient here to mention Aristobulus, Nearch, and Onesicritus. The story goes on, as one of these ascetics, Calanus, consented to join Alexander's entourage and followed him to Susa, where he, falling ill, committed a spectacular suicide by burning himself at the stake, witnessed by the whole army. The reasons for this suicide were never completely understood in the West,[2] but the calmness and determination of Calanus left a lasting impression.

In addition to these Gymnosophistai or naked sophists, Alexander also met Brahmans living by the lower Indus, where he had to fight hard to suppress their resistance. A generation later, Megasthenes, the Seleucid envoy to the Indian Maurya empire, gave his own view of the Gymnosophistai and described several kinds of Indian ascetics and sectarians (such as the Pramnai and Gymnetes) he had seen.[3]

The main account of the doctrines of the Gymnosophists was given by Onesicritus (in Strabo 15, 1, 63-65). It is, however, suspiciously close to his own Greek philosophy of the Cynical school. Even if he did not intentionally distort his account, Onesicritus had to rely on several interpreters and could hardly have an in-depth interview. It was not the doctrines of the Gymnosophists, but their severe ascetism, described by the participants of the campaign, and the voluntary death in a fire, committed by one of them, that made such an enormous impression on the Greeks and the Romans after them. They became a literary commonplace. References to these Gymnosophists and to their asceticism are frequent especially in the literature of Roman Imperial period.[4] According to Josephus (*Bellum*

* The research made for this article was financed by the Academy of Finland. Margot Stout Whiting has kindly checked my English.

[1] As I have often pointed out, the so-called Indian wise men of Herodotus (3, 100f., cf. Pomponius Mela 3, 64) are not ascetics, but a primitive tribe described exactly according to Herodotus' ideas of primitivity. See e.g. Karttunen 1997b.

[2] They have somewhat puzzled modern scholars, too. In Indian tradition such a suicide is not common, though not entirely unheard of.

[3] I have here briefly summarized what was fully analysed in Karttunen 1997a, 55ff. There it is also explained how the word Gymnosophist, not yet used in the earliest accounts, became the standard designation.

[4] Often they were mentioned in comparisons or as embellishment in works completely unrelated with India. See e.g. Cicero, *Tusc. disp.* 2, 17, 40; 2, 22, 52; 5, 27, 77f.; Lucanus 3, 240f.

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Jud. 7, 351-357), Eleazar exhorted his troops in the Jewish war of 66–70 A.D. to be as willing to die as the Indians who commit their bodies to fire. Around 200 A.D. Clement of Alexandria (*Stromateis* 4, 7, 17, 3) compared the Brahmins' calmness facing the death by fire to the true Christians' attitude towards martyrdom.

The description of the Indian Gymnosophists had already received some Cynic colouration at the hands of Onesicritus and soon the Cynics, and the Stoics as their heirs, suited it to their own needs. In the legendary versions of Alexander's history, the naked ascetics of Taxila as well as the rebellious Brahmans of the southern Indus country had an important place. Onesicritus was here left aside as a secondary person, and all talks were described as taking place directly between Alexander and the Brahmans.[5] This is often contaminated with a later episode in Alexander's history: His meeting with the warlike Brahmans of the lower Indus country and the questions Alexander put to them.[6] Tradition also portrayed Alexander as a great writer of letters, and there soon arose a fictitious correspondence between him and the Brahmans, too.[7] In these later traditions Dandamis (in Latin corrupted into Dindimus), the head of the Taxilan Gymnosophists who had refused to follow Alexander, often emerges as the central figure.

We see that the conception of India as a land of wisdom and philosophy was formed during the Indian campaigns of Alexander and soon it became a part of the canonized conception of India. Until Late Antiquity this conception was completely dominated by the histories of Alexander and Megasthenes. Indian philosophers were continuously admired because of their ascetic lifestyle, but little (if anything) was known of their philosophy. A critical voice was rare, though Aelianus (*V.H.* 2, 31) proudly claimed that barbarous sages were not as wise as Greeks and Plutarch (*De sollertione animalium* 23, 975D) disparaged Egyptian fables and unattested tales of Indians and Libyans as unreliable. Occasional new contacts with Indian wise men were interpreted according to this tradition, which continued into the Middle Ages and beyond.

The first of these new contacts is found in Nicolaus Damascenus' account[8] of the Indian embassy to Augustus and of its member, Zarmanochegas, who burnt himself in Athens and thus revived the fame of Calanus. Some new information about Indian wise men can be found in authors such as Alexander Polyhistor, Dio Chrysostomus, and Bardesanes.[9] In the fourth century, the Theban Scholasticus put together an account of his own voyage to India and different traditions of the Brahmans.[10]

Indian wise men were famous, but the idea of seeking wisdom in India remained more or less literary. There were

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[5] The earliest version of this fictitious meeting is found in a philosophical Papyrus (Geneva Pap.), the full text as part 2 of Pseudo-Palladius. See e.g. Hansen 1965.

[6] The questions first in Plutarch, *Alexander* 64 and in a Berlin Papyrus, first edited by Wilcken 1923, then e.g. Pseudo-Callisthenes 3, 6.

[7] The *Collatio Alexandri cum Dindimo* in several versions (see e.g. Cary 1954 and Gregor 1964, 36ff.). On a Letter of Calanus to Alexander see Philo of Alexandria, *Quod omnis probus liber sit* 93ff. (cf. Devine 1988) and Ambrosius, *Epist.* 37, 34ff.

[8] F 100 in Strabo 15, 1, 73; also mentioned by Dio Cassius 54, 9. See e.g. Przyluski 1934.

[9] Alexander Polyh. F 18 (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 3, 6, 60, 1–4), Dio Chr. 35, 18ff. & 49, 7; Bardesanes, fragments in *FGrH* 719.

[10] This famous account was preserved among the works of the church historian Palladius.

late apocryphical stories about the Indian travels of some early Greek philosophers (see below) and some had actually joined Alexander's entourage.[11] Lucian tells of Peregrinus Proteus, the Greek charlatan, who emulated the Gymnosophists and burned himself at Olympia in 167 A.D.[12] If we are to trust Philostratus, Apollonius of Tyana actually went to India in the first century and studied among Brahmans. As a literary motif we meet in Lucian (*Toxaris* 34) a man who gave away his money and went away to India to join the Brahmans. Little is known of Hierocles, the consul of Bithynia around 300 A.D. and an anti-Christian polemist, who claimed to have visited the naked ascetics of India.[13] A certain Metrodorus is mentioned as a pupil of the Brahmans.[14]

Porphyrius (*Vita Plotini* 3) tells us that Plotinus actually wanted to go to India in order to study Indian philosophy, but was prevented by the war between Rome and Iran. However, it is somewhat disappointing that often when we find a good story and are inclined to take it as such, it happens that when we delve still deeper into classical literature, we find an earlier literary parallel to it. Thus the account of Plotinus' plans is suspiciously similar to Apuleieus' (*De Platone* 1, 3) claim that the Asian wars prevented Plato from going to Persia and India. As the founder hero of the Neo-Platonists, Plotinus was supposed to imitate Plato.[15] I have no idea where a fifth century author such as Claudianus Mamertus (*Epist. ad Sapaudum* 2) got the idea that Plato actually visited the Bragmanae.[16]

India had the established fame of the land of wisdom and the tradition was transmitted to the Middle Ages. In Christian literature, however, Indian ascetics got new roles. We see, for instance, the virtuous ascetics (and thus somehow akin to Christian ascetics) teaching moral values to the warrior Alexander.[17] There was also an opposite approach that was concerned with the ideal of chivalry and here Alexander is given the last word.[18] At the same time missionaries and other travellers were able to bring back some fresh information. Now came, for instance, the first clear accounts of Buddhism.[19]

In their approach to the religions and philosophies of the world, the early Christian authors had a triple scheme, consisting of the Jewish-Christian tradition, the Greek tradition, and the Oriental tradition. In the latter, doctrines such as those of Egypt, Mesopotamia (Chaldaea), Iran (the Magi), and India were lumped

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[11] Pyrrho and Anaxarchus, according to Diogenes Laërtius 9, 11, 61.

[12] Lucian, *De morte Peregrini,* briefly also in Philostratus, *Vitae sophistarum* 2, 1, 33 and Eusebius, *Chron.* for the year 165 A.D.

[13] The main source on him is Eusebius, *Antirhetorica adversus Hier.*, but the present note is found in Stephanus of Byzantium s.v. Brachmanes and Tzetzes, *Chil.* 7, 716-724.

[14] Rufinus, *Hist. eccl.* 1, 9; Cedrenus 1, p. 516f.

[15] Even if the story is true, it is rather important to remember that he never reached India. Notwithstanding repeated attemps to show Indian influences in Neo-Platonism (see e.g. Przyluski 1934 and Lacombe 1951, among the more serious ones), it remains true that, though "undoubtedly, intellectual affinities do exist ... the parallels are too tenuous to afford any likelihood of direct influences" (quoted from Almond 1987, 244).

[16] Note here the use of the word Brachmanes (in the late Latin form with g), which was only known in the West since Alexander's Indian campaigns.

[17] Among early sources, see e.g. Clemens of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 4, 7, 50, 1 & 6, 4, 38, 2ff. (also several other references to the Gymnosophists). Further Pseudo-Palladius 2. See Berg 1970.

[18] Starting with the *Collatio Alexandri et Dandamis.*

[19] Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 1, 15, 71, 3–6; Jerome, *Adversus Iovinianum* 1, 42. See e.g. Scott 1985, and Dihle 1984, 98ff.

together and it was polemically claimed that the Greeks had derived their philosophy from these Eastern nations.[20] We know, of course, that there is at least some truth in it in the cases of Egypt and Mesopotamia, even Iran, but this was not the point of Christian apologetics. They simply claimed that instead of Christian preachers, the Greeks preferred to believe in barbarian wisdom.

One starting point was the common tendency in the Roman period to ascribe extensive travels to early Greek philosophers and the sphere of their travels tended to become ever wider. While it is quite possible that many really had visited Egypt and Mesopotamia, there were many accounts of spurious Indian travels. It was claimed that Pythagoras,[21] Lycurgos,[22] and Democritus[23] all visited India.

It was commonly accepted that India had one of the independent religions and philosophical traditions of the world.[24] This is, in fact, a much more popular theme in early Christian literature than accounts of a Christian mission to India (by Bartholomew or Thomas).[25] A surprisingly rare theme was the prediction of the conversion of India in the near future, found e.g. in Venantius Fortunatus.[26]

There were various ideas about contacts and relations between Oriental religions. Quoting the 2nd century Pythagorean philosopher Numenius of Apamea (F 1a), Eusebius (*Praeparatio Evangelica* 9, 71) simply lumped together the Brachmanes, Jews, Magi and Egyptians and made them all the sources of Plato, while Hippolytus (*Philosophoumena* 1, 13, 2) claimed that Democritus of Abdera had studied under the Indian Gymnosophistae, Egyptian priests, Babylonian astronomers, and Iranian Magi.[27] Tertullian (*adv. Marcionem* 1, 13) mentioned together Persian Magi, Egyptian Hierophants and Indian Gymnosophistai, who all "indignas mundi substantias … colunt," while Origenes (*De Principiis* 3, 3, 2) listed the secret doctrines of the Egyptians, Chaldaean astrology, Indian supernatural doctrines, and Greek doctrines of divinity as forming the "wisdom of the princes of this world." According to Philostratus (*Vitae soph.* 1, 1, 2), the Egyptians, Indian and Chaldaeans all rely on the stars for truth.

In the early third century B.C. the peripatetic philosopher Clearchus of Soloi[28] had claimed that the Indian philoso-

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[20] Theodoret, *Therap.* 1, 25 & 5, 58 blamed the Greeks for admiring the wisdom of Indian Brachmanes and other barbarians (cf. Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 6, 80). See also Eusebius on Plato and Hippolytus on Democritus quoted below. The idea was not new, the debate about the origins of philosophy was started much earlier by Greek doxographers. See Diogenes Laërtius 1, *Prooemium,* and the excellent summary of the question in Halbfass 1988, 3ff.

[21] In the 2nd century, Apuleius, *Florida* 15, 11–13.

[22] Aristocrates in the 1st century, quoted (but not believed) by Plutarch, *Lycurgus* 4, 6.

[23] In the 2nd century, Aelian, *V.H.* 4, 20; in the third Diogenes Laërtius 9, 7, 35, and Hippolytus, *Philosophoumena* 1, 13, 2.

[24] See e.g. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 1, 15, 68, 1 & 71, 3–6; Hippolytus, *Philosophoumena* 1, 24; and Tertullian, *Anim.* 31, in the early 3rd century; then Arnobius, *Adv. nationes* 4, 13; Athanasius, *Contra gent.* 23; Augustinus, *De civit. dei* 8, 9.

[25] On the earliest missions in India see Dihle 1984, 61ff.

[26] Here we can perhaps detect a case of the afterlife of a classical literary motif. Since the Augustean period, Roman poets and other authors had speculated with the idea of the future Roman conquest on India or at least with the fear of Rome felt in India. This motif is still met in the fourth century (Julian, *Epist.* 75) and soon after this Venantius claimed that the Christian saints were admired even in India.

[27] Celsus, quoted by Origenes (*Contra Celsum* 1, 14) accepted Egyptians, Assyrians, Indians and Persians as wise people, but not Jews. Egyptian, Indian and Babylonian philosophers and the Magi were mentioned together also in Clement, *Stromateis* 6, 7, 57, 3; Magi, Egyptians, Syrians and Indians in Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 1, 12.

[28] F 28 in Diogenes Laërtius 1, 1, 9.

phers were descendants of the Persian Magi. Much later (at the end of the 4th century A.D.), Ammianus Marcellinus (23, 6, 33) stated that Zoroaster himself had been in India and founded the religion of the Magi on the doctrines of the Brachmanes.[29] Ptolemy, in his *Geography* (7, 1, 74), had introduced the Brachmanai Magoi as a Central Indian tribe.[30] Porphyrius, too, mentioned Indian Brachmanes and Persian Magi together.[31]

In the early third century B.C. Megasthenes (F 3), quoted by Clement of Alexandria (*Stromateis* 1, 15, 72, 5), had also claimed that among barbarian peoples the Jews and Indians had ancient traditions of philosophy and were as wise as the Greeks. Soon afterwards Clearchus[32] suggested that Indian philosophers were the ancestors of the Jews. This kind of idea could understandably not survive in Christian literature.

The question of the supposed contacts between India and Egypt is more complicated. The companions of Alexander and Megasthenes had identified certain Indian cults[33] with that of Dionysus, who was thus made the first conqueror of India. In Hellenistic speculation Dionysus (Latin Liber Pater) was identified with Osiris and this established a supposed connection between the two lands. After his Indian campaigns, this Dionysus–Osiris returned to Egypt.[34] Philostratus (*Vita Ap.* 6, 6–21) let Apollonius meet a second chapter of Gymnosophists in the southern confines of Egypt, although their relation to India remains somewhat shadowy.[35] In later sources it is often stated that there was an ancient migration from India to Egypt or Ethiopia.[36] To some extent these accounts can be explained by the old confusion between India and Ethiopia.[37]

India was early given a clear place in the Biblical world view. Actually this was already established by Hellenistic Jewish philosophers.[38] Flavius Josephus in the late first century had already written that the river Phison of Paradise was in fact the same as the Ganges, that India was originally colonized by Shem's descendants, and that Ophir, the gold country of Solomon (*I Kings* 10:11 and *II Chron.* 9:10), was in India.[39] All these themes were accepted by Christian au-

[29] For the Irano-Indian contacts see also *Scholia in Horatii Carmina* 2, 2, 17.

[30] See also the Theban Scholasticus' account 1, 11ff. on the Brachmanes as a separate tribe living on both sides of the Ganges.

[31] Quoted by Proclus, *Commentaria in Platonis Timaeum* 2, 2, p. 218 Diehl.

[32] F 69 in Josephus, *Contra Apionem* 178. See also Scherman 1943, 252f.

[33] See Karttunen 1989, 212ff.

[34] Dionysus as Osiris campaigning in India in Diodor 1, 19, 7; 1, 27, 5; 4, 1. In a curious passage of Lucian, *De Iside* 29, Dionysus brought two bulls named Apis and Osiris from India to Egypt.

[35] In *Vita Ap.* 3, 20 and perhaps 3, 32, however, their supposed Indian origin is made clear. Further, "Indorum Brachmanes et Aethiopum Gymnosophistae" also in Jerome, *In Ezech. prophet. comm.* 4; in Jerome, *Epist.* 53, 1, 4; and in Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epist.* 8, 3, 4.

[36] An early (but brief) reference in Strabo 17, 3, 7, then Isidorus, *Etym.* 9, 2, 128. Syncellus, *Chronogr.* ad mundi annum 3857ff. (p. 286 Dindorf = p. 177 Mosshammer, quoting Pseudo-Manetho) dated this migration to the time of Pharaoh Amenôphthis (19th Dynasty).

[37] There are some minor points connected with this. Several classical authors move the legend of Perseus from Ethiopia to India, and often it is also stated that the Phoenix, though dying in Egypt, spends his life in India. For the confusion, see Karttunen 1989, 134ff.

[38] In addition to the cases mentioned below, we may note that Philo of Alexandria, the Hellenized Jewish philosopher of the early first century A.D., did at least four times mention Indian Gymnosophists with approval (*De Abrahamo* 182; *De somniis* 2, 56; and *Quod omnis probus liber sit* 74 & 93ff. For possible further use of the Gymnosophists in Jewish tradition, see Derrett 1983.

[39] Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 1, 38 (Phison); 1, 147 (colonisation); and 8, 164 & 176 (Ophir). India next to Paradise and Shem's descendants in India also in the Pseudepigraphic *Liber Jubil.*, see Hölscher 1949, 58 & 69.

thors, with occasional modifications.

With a remarkable contempt for the known geography, found in the works of Marinus of Tyrus and Claudius Ptolemy, not only the Ganges and the Indus,[40] but also the Euphrates, Tigris,[41] and Nile[42] were identified with the rivers of Paradise by Josephus and his followers. In some cases the geographical difficulties were explained away with supposed underground passages of rivers. The idea of the Nile having its origins in India was an old one and here only interpreted in a new way to suit it to the interpretation of the Bible.[43] Sometimes it was stated more generally that the Garden of Eden was situated in the neighbourhood of India.[44] Here we can also note that, according to the Christian poet Dracontius (*De laudibus Dei* 1, 176-179), the world was, on the third day of creation, like India in spring. The gold-land Ophir, originally in South Arabia, was now commonly accepted to be in India,[45] as was also Mediterranean Tarsis.[46] In the interpretation of Biblical genealogy (*Genesis* 10) India belongs to the domains of the descendants of Shem.[47] There were even two schools of thought on the supposed genealogy of Indians: The majority derived them from Eber's son Iektan,[48] while others, perhaps influenced by the above-mentioned Hellenistic idea of a close relationship between Indians and Jews, through Eber's elder son Phalekh from Abraham.[49] Beginnings of a new popular

[40] Phison = Ganges or Indus in Avitus, *Carmina* 1, 290ff.; Cosmas 2, 81. Phison = Ganges in Jerome, *De situ et nominibus locorum Hebraicorum* p. 117 & 122 Lagarde and *Epistulae* 125, 3; Pseudo-Palladius 1, 1; Augustinus, *Commentary on Genesis* 8, 7, 3; Eucherius, *Instructionum liber* 2; Isidorus, *Etym.* 13, 21, 8; Hrabanus Maurus 11, 10. Phison = Indus in Hippolytus, *Chronica* 237. The Phison flowing from Paradise to India further in Socrates & Dionysius, *De lapidibus* 26, 6.

[41] In the original text, *Genesis* 2:10–14, the four rivers were the Phison (flowing around Evilat), the Geon, the Tigris and the Euphrates. But according to Hippolytus, *Chronica* 239, "some say" that the Phison and Geon are the same as the Tigris and Euphrates.

[42] Geon = Nile in Hippolytus, *Chronica* 237; Eucherius, *Instructionum liber* 2; Cosmas 2, 32 & 81; Augustinus, *Commentary on Genesis* 8, 7, 3.

[43] It is connected with the age old confusion of Ethiopia and India. Its beginnings lie in Homer (*Od.* 1, 22–24), who did not know India, but divided Ethiopians into two parts, the second ones living in the extreme east. In the days of Herodotus these Eastern Ethiopians were located in the confines of India, and several authors seemed to think that India was somewhere beyond Ethiopia. Alexander earnestly supposed he had found the upper course of the Nile, when he first saw the Indus, but soon learned the truth (Strabo 15, 1, 25; Arrian, *Anabasis* 6, 1). For many centuries geographers knew the truth, although the poets seem to put the sources of the Nile as far away as India (Vergil, *Georgica* 4, 293) or China (Lucanus 10, 292ff.), and in Late Antiquity the old confusion was again revived. Thus in Procop, *De Aedificiis* 6, 1, 6, the Nile is said to flow from India to Egypt (perhaps here Ethiopia is meant instead of India) and Theophylactus Simocatta 7, 17 claims that its sources lie in India close to the Hydaspes and from there it flows through Ethiopia to Egypt.

[44] Athanasius, *Quaest. ad Antiochum* 47; Epiphanius, *Adversus Haereses* 2, 1, 64; Anon. Ravennatis 1; *Expositio totius mundi* 8; Cosmas 11, 24; beyond the Eastern Ocean, Cosmas 2, 24. According to Antoninus Placentinus, *Itinerary to the Holy Places* 41, Indian vessels brought to Clysma delicious Indian nuts, which were popular among pilgrims as they were said to be growing in the Garden of Eden. See also Darian 1977.

[45] Jerome, *De situ et nominibus locorum Hebraicorum* p. 144 & 149 Lagarde, also *Comm. in Isaiam* 13, 12, and *Epist.* 65, 15; Eucherius, *Instructionum liber* 1, 1. For the Ophir question see the summary in Karttunen 1989, 15ff.

[46] *I Kings* 10:22 & 22:49; *Isaiah* 2:16; *Ezekiel* 27:12; in India according to Jerome, *Comm. in Isaiam* 2, 16, and *Epist.* 37, 2. Occasionally also the gold-land of Havilah or Evilath (*Genesis* 2:11, perhaps in Arabia) was, as compassed by the Phison, located in India, see Jerome, *De situ*... p. 117 and Anon. Ravennatis 2, 1.

[47] Descendants of Shem in general: Hippolytus, *Chronica* 47 & 190 & 192f. & 195; Cosmas 2, 27; Pseudo-Malalas 1, p. 14 Dindorf; Isidorus, *Etym.* 5, 39, 5 (Salah father of Eber).

[48] Hippolytus, *Chronica* 176; Isidorus, *Etym.* 9, 2, 5. This was the original idea of Josephus, *Ant. Iud.* 1, 147.

[49] Pseudo-Clemens, *Recognitiones* 1, 33, 4f.

tradition, Indians as one of the ten tribes, are found in the 3rd century in Sulpicius Severus (*Chronica* 2, 11, 7). Indians were also said to be present at the Tower of Babel[50] and, according to Origenes (*De Principiis* 4, 3, 1), the Devil in *Matthew* 4:8 showed Jesus the kingdoms of Persian, Scythians, Indians, and Parthians.

An interesting case is the relation of Mani to India. Here we have a rare case of real, confirmed Indian influence. Mani, at least, did personally visit India, studied Buddhism there, and included some elements of it in his syncretistic religion. Afterwards his religion became very popular in the West. As wicked dualism, it was so much hated and polemized by Patristic authors that its influence tends to be difficult to establish, especially as the majority of original sources have disappeared.

The Christian legend of the origins of Manichaeism is quite different from the real story. The legend tells of a certain Scythianus, a trader of Arabian origin, who had been in India and learnt Indian ideas there. Back in Egypt he studied more and wrote four books, which were inherited by his pupil Terebinthus. After Scythianus' death, Terebinthus took the name Buddas, claimed to be born of a virgin and established a sect; and this was maintained to be the origin of Manichaeism.[51] The Indian connections of Manichaeism were probably also the reason for Marius Victorinus' curious claim that Buddhism is dualistic.[52] That similar stories were told even before Mani's time is seen in a curious account by Hippolytus: a certain Alcibiades of Apamea came from Syria to Rome and brought with him a book, supposedly written under the inspiration of an angel, saying that the righteous Elchasai had brought it from China (Sêres) to Parthia.[53]

In the end everything was mixed up. In the famous Byzantine encyclopaedia, the *Suda,* Brachman was the eponymous king of an (apparently Indian) country, while the Brachmanes are a religious people living without possessions on an island of the Ocean (cf. Iambulus and Euhemerus), where they were visited by Alexander. But the Gymnosophists are described as philosophers among Assyrians and Babylonians. At the same time, the fame of Indian wise men continued in mediaeval and Byzantine literature until early modern period. In a way, we can find the roots of the popularity of some Neo-Hindu movements in the West in this age old tradition.

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[50] Hippolytus, *Chronica* 200.

[51] Archelaus, *Disputatio* 1, 97; Epiphanius, *Haeretica* 66, 1–4, Cyrillus of Jerusalem, *Catech.* 6, 23; Socrates, *Eccles. hist.* 22; Hegemonius, *Acta Archelai* 62f.; *Eclogae hist. eccles.* (*Anecdota Graeca Parisina* p. 92ff.); *Suda* s.v. Manes.

[52] *Ad Iustinum Manichaeum* 7 (4th century).

[53] *Philosophoumena* 9, 13, 1. Note that Hippolytus died as early as 235/6 A.D.

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