

A New Geography for Myths: Echoes of Alexander's Campaign in India in Apollodorus's *Library*

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Abstract

The new mythical sagas that originated from Alexander's campaign were fully integrated into Greek mythology, as is revealed by the references to India in the *Library*. Both the reference to the pillars of Dionysus and the ill-fated expedition of Medos depend on versions of the myth that arose in connection with Alexander's campaign and seem to suggest the Apollodorus's dependence on a source connecting Asia with the Greek mythical past.

Keywords: India; Alexander; Dionysus; geography; Apollodorus's *Library*

Resumen. *Una nueva geografía mítica: Ecos de la campaña de Alejandro en la India en la Biblioteca de Apolodoro*

Las nuevas sagas míticas originadas por la campaña de Alejandro fueron plenamente integradas en la mitología griega, como revelan las referencias a la India en la *Biblioteca*. Tanto la referencia a las columnas de Dioniso como la infausta expedición de Medos provienen de versiones míticas surgidas en relación con la campaña de Alejandro y parecen sugerir el interés de Apolodoro por las tradiciones que conectan Asia con el pasado mítico griego.

Palabras clave: India; Alejandro; Dioniso; geografía; *Biblioteca* de Apolodoro

Summary

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It is well known that Alexander's campaign to Asia marked a turning point in the geography of the ancient world. The campaign, which included geographical exploration, provided precise knowledge of areas of Asia previously unfamiliar to the Greeks¹. This expansion of the spatial horizon produced transformations not only in strictly geographical thinking but, more generally, left clear traces in all areas of Greek knowledge and literature. A clear illustration of this is provided by mythology: ancient sources often mention gods and heroes as paradigms for Alexander and his successors. Dionysus, Heracles, and Perseus are presented as antecedents that Alexander aspired to match and even transcend². This paradigmatic relationship influenced not only the historical narratives about Alexander, but also the stories about his mythical predecessors. New mythical sagas like the journey to India by Dionysus or Heracles most likely originated during Alexander's campaign³. Even if one were to accept the dubious evidence adduced to justify knowledge of Dionysus's journey to India in the classical age⁴, there is no doubt that this myth became an important theme only after or during Alexander's arrival in this region⁵. The Ptolemaic dynasty turned the parallel between Alexander and the god to its advantage⁶, and from the Hellenistic age onwards, the Indian campaign was the subject of countless literary works culminating in the monumental epic poem of Nonnus of Panopolis⁷. As a result of Alexander's campaign, India, absent from mythical sagas in the archaic and classical ages, was fully integrated into the geography of ancient myth.

1. India in the *Library*: the State of the Art

To what extent this expansion of the geographical horizon influenced the view of the mythological past in the post-classical age has not been adequately examined. There is a certain tendency to dissociate Dionysius's and Heracles's journeys to

1. On the geographical 'revolution' produced by Alexander's campaign, see GEHRKE (2011 and 2016) with further bibliography.
2. For a brief introduction to this question, see ALBALADEJO (2005: 56-61). Further bibliography is quoted in the following pages.
3. According to BOSWORTH (1996a: 119-23), the legend of Dionysus's journey to India originated during Alexander's campaign and was in part fabricated by local inhabitants, through the mediation of interpreters, to turn the ambitions of the Macedonian ruler to their advantage.
4. DIHLE (1987) considered the myth more ancient than Alexander based on a passage by Diodorus Siculus ascribed to the poet Antimachus, writing ca. 400 BCE (D.S. 3.65.7-8). However, the part of the text where India is mentioned cannot be ascribed to Antimachus. See ACERBO (2020: 183, n. 37). GOUKOWSKY (1981) regarded as proof of this tradition's antiquity a fifth-century *aryballos* (SMITH, *Cat. Gr. Etr. Vases* III, 393-3, E395) which shows Dionysus riding a Bactrian camel in a posture similar to a god in a relief at Sanchi. However, this iconography could refer to the traditional eastern journey of the god to Bactria already known to Euripides (*Ba.* 15). According to BOSWORTH (1996a: 120, n. 102), the absence of ancient attestations of this myth cannot simply be a quirk of transmission, for Eratosthenes was apparently only able to quote the Prologue of the *Bacchae* as evidence for Dionysus in the East (Str. 15.1.7).
5. See STONEMAN (2019: 93); BOWERSOCK (1994).
6. STEGEMAN (1930: 177-82); NOCK (1928).
7. See DIHLE (1987); BOWERSOCK (1994).

India from other mythological sagas. An example of this attitude is offered by the way scholars have treated the reference to India in the biography of Dionysus in Apollodorus's *Library* (3.33, 3.36). This work, although dating from the imperial era, has often been regarded as a kind of mythological encyclopaedia that offers a schematic and somewhat banal yet faithful picture of 'canonical' Greek mythology from ancient sources⁸. This view is certainly simplistic and no longer accepted⁹: the *Library* is a deliberate act of adaptation and organisation of mythological material that reveals an authorial plan¹⁰. The idea of a summary of the 'canonical' mythology was inspired by certain features that distinguish Apollodorus's work from other mythographical texts. The *Library* lacks interest in rationalizing or other interpretation of the myths, and the horizon of mythology contained therein is restricted to its central core. Despite the many differences in individual details and even profound transformations, from a general point of view, the main genealogies and mythical sagas incorporated into the *Library* correspond to those known from archaic and classical sources and are set, for the most part, in mainland Greece. There are no allusions to the world contemporary to Apollodorus¹¹, and there is normally no room for new myths created since the Hellenistic age. Scholars have often highlighted the absence of Rome and Italy more generally, despite the many widespread traditions from the Hellenistic age onwards that linked Rome and other Italian cities with the great Greek mythical sagas¹².

All these features explain why the *Library* has appeared to many modern readers to be a canonical presentation of classical Greek mythology, rather than a work that is the result of compilation and elaboration by an author motivated by his own interests and intentions. On the other hand, the now-lost epigram that Photius reports reading at the beginning of the *Library* and which has been attributed to its author invites the reader to consult its pages for ancient myths instead of the works of archaic and classical authors, for it contains all there is to know¹³. Even if the epigram were not authentic, it would show that the idea of the *Library* as a canonical overview of classical mythology is ancient¹⁴.

Many scholars have considered the presence of a mythical saga inspired by Alexander's campaign, in contrast to Apollodorus's alleged preference for ancient sources and for 'canonical' myths. At the beginning of the 19th century, C.G. Heyne considered the references to India in the biography of Dionysus in the

8. See, e.g., FRAZER (1921: xvii); DOWDEN (1992: 6); GANTZ (1996: xvi).

9. See ACERBO (2019a: 4-20); MICHELS (2022: 4-6, 8-9, 286-95) with further bibliography.

10. ACERBO (2019a: 29-43, and 2021); MICHELS (2022: 63-64).

11. The only historical event mentioned in the *Library* is the Phocian war in 346 BCE (*Ep.* 6.22) and the only historical figure is Croesus (2.166).

12. FRAZER (1921: xii); BOWIE (1970: 24); SCARPI (1999); FLETCHER (2008).

13. The epigram mentions Homer, elegy, the tragic Muse, lyric or the cyclic poets and seems to exclude sources from the Hellenistic and imperial age.

14. The authenticity of this epigram has been defended by CAMERON (1995: 398) and KYLINTIREA (2002: 11); however, some serious, though not decisive, arguments have been adduced by AGOSTI (2016: 659-60) to date the epigram to late antiquity or the early Byzantine era; see also MICHELS (2022: 54-55) with further bibliography.

Library to be very suspect and was followed by many scholars¹⁵. According to H. Jeanmaire in his famous study on Dionysus, the god is presented by Apollodorus as the founder of a religion and not as a conqueror as in the Hellenistic traditions¹⁶. The references to India are held to be a later insertion extraneous to the *Library*, whose own account dates to the end of the fourth century¹⁷.

The presence of a Hellenistic myth has also been presented as a problem by scholars who accept the reference to India in Apollodorus's text. E. Schwartz, who thought that Apollodorus was following the same Hellenistic mythological manual as Diodorus Siculus (3.64.3-6; 4.2-4.3.1) for Dionysius's life, stated that in the *Library* the Hellenistic sagas are reduced to vestigial remnants by Apollodorus's focus on the traditions of classical poetry¹⁸. M. Huys argued that the presence of the Indian journey in the otherwise 'very classical biography' of Dionysus in the *Library* proved the antiquity of this episode, that it may thus predate Alexander's campaign¹⁹. Even the erudite and intelligent analysis of J. Michels, in a very recent volume, arguing for the authenticity of this passage and its provenance from Alexandrian sources, admits a certain embarrassment regarding the apparent contrast between the rest of the biography of Dionysus and this episode in which the god appears as a conqueror inspired by Alexander²⁰.

The aim of this article is to show that this contrast was likely not perceived by the mythographer. Another passage from the *Library*, hitherto ignored by scholars, reveals that the Indian myths inspired by Alexander were perfectly integrated into the mythological traditions known to Apollodorus.

2. The Indian Pillars of Dionysus

The passage Apollodorus devotes to Dionysus mentions his journey to India twice.

Διόνυσος δὲ εὐρετῆς ἀμπέλου γενόμενος, Ἦρας μανίαν αὐτῷ ἐμβαλούσης περιπλανᾶται Αἴγυπτόν τε καὶ Συρίαν. καὶ τὸ μὲν πρῶτον Πρωτεὺς αὐτὸν ὑποδέχεται βασιλεὺς Αἰγυπτίων, αἴθις δὲ εἰς Κύβηλα τῆς Φρυγίας ἀφικνεῖται, κάκει καθαρθεὶς ὑπὸ Πέας καὶ τὰς τελετὰς ἐκμαθὼν, καὶ λαβὼν παρ' ἐκείνης τὴν στολήν, ἐπὶ Ἰνδοῦς διὰ τῆς Θράκης ἠπείγετο. Λυκοῦργος δὲ παῖς Δρύαντος, Ἰδωνῶν βασιλεύων, οἱ Στρυμόνα ποταμὸν παροικοῦσι, πρῶτος ὕβρισας ἐξέβαλεν αὐτόν (3.33-34)²¹.

15. HEYNE (1803: 265); HEYNE (1837: 35-36). Heyne was followed by, for example, HERCHER (1874: 88); WAGNER (1894: 117); FRAZER (1921: 330); ALDRICHT (1975: 2); GUIDORIZZI (1995: 295); BRODERSEN (2004: 144). Further references are offered by MICHELS (2022: 512, n. 96).

16. JEANMAIRE (1951: 358-59).

17. JEANMAIRE (1951: 358).

18. SCHWARTZ (1903: 671, 674).

19. HUYS (1998: 128).

20. MICHELS (2022: 513, 516-17).

21. In this and the other passages of the *Library* quoted I reproduce the edition of PΑΡΑΘΟΜΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ (2011).

διελθὼν δὲ Θράκην καὶ τὴν Ἰνδικὴν ἅπασαν, στήλας ἐκεῖ στήσας ἦκεν εἰς Θήβας, καὶ τὰς γυναῖκας ἠνάγκασε καταλιπούσας τὰς οἰκίας βακχεύειν ἐν τῷ Κιθαιρῶνι (3.36).

Dionysos was the one who discovered the grapevine. When Hera cast madness upon him, he wandered through Egypt and Syria. At first Proteus, the king of the Egyptians, was his host, but later he went to Cybela in Phrygia and was purified there by Rhea, learned her rites, and adopted her accoutrements. He pushed on through Thrace on his way to fight the Indians. Dryas's son Lycourgos, the king of the Edonoi, who dwell along the Strymon River, was the first to treat Dionysos insolently and reject him.

[Lycurgus's punishment has been omitted; after this episode the text continues as follows:]

After going through Thrace and all of India (where he set up pillars), he came to Thebes and made the women leave their houses and celebrate Bacchic rites on Mount Cithairon²².

The journey to India occupies very little space, and the route taken by Dionysus is rather vague: only Thrace is mentioned, no doubt because this is where the location of the encounter with Lycourgos, in which Apollodorus is particularly interested. The geographical improbability of this route to India via Thrace has been interpreted as a possible corruption of the text²³; however, it is consistent with the vagueness of geographical references in Apollodorus²⁴. This does not mean that Apollodorus necessarily thought that India was near Thrace; he simply omitted the lands in between for narrative expediency, as he did elsewhere in the *Library*, such as Heracles's return journey after the capture of the cattle of Geryon²⁵.

The brief references in the *Library* to Dionysus's journey to India have no explicit military character; nor do the verbs ἐπιείγω and διέρχομαι by themselves indicate a hostile intention²⁶. This may simply depend on the vagueness of Apollodorus's reference to this expedition, but we cannot dismiss the possibility that in the *Library*, Dionysus would not behave as a conqueror, but only as a civilising god, as in the Dionysus-Osiris²⁷ tale transmitted by Diodorus Siculus and, likely, derived from Hecataeus of Abdera²⁸. According to Diodorus, Osiris-Dionysus gathered an army not to conquer other countries, but to raise all peoples

22. Translation by M. Trzaskoma (SCOTT SMITH and TRZASKOMA, 2007: 49).

23. CLAVIER (1805: 373); SOMMER (1822: 117); WAGNER (1894: 116).

24. MICHELS (2022: 513).

25. Abdera, modern Adra in Andalusia, is mentioned as the stage that immediately leads to Liguria (2.109).

26. *DGE* and *LSJ* do not give values that have an explicit military exception for the intransitive uses of ἐπιείγω and for the transitive uses of διέρχομαι.

27. Diodorus explicitly says that Osiris was called Dionysus by the Greeks (1.15.6-7).

28. D.S. 1.19-20. For Hecateus as Diodorus's source, see MURRAY (1970); BAR-KOCHVA (1996: 14); BURSTEIN (1992: 45). BURTON (1972: 16, 34) stated that Diodorus drew from multiple sources. In any case, Diodorus's tale cannot be considered a paraphrase of Hecateus since he adapted his sources to his beliefs and aims; see SULIMANI (2011: 57).

out of their savage state and teach them how to cultivate the vine and sow wheat and barley (1.17.1-2) and thus he was received as a god and a benefactor by all without resorting to warfare (1.18.5-6). His stay in India is also entirely peaceful: Osiris founds Nysa and many other cities and plants vines (1.19.7-8)²⁹.

The example of Diodorus indicates that Dionysus's eastern conquests do not automatically imply a contrast with the civilising and founding functions of the god. In any case, the extreme vagueness of Apollodorus's references to them undermines any *argumentum ex silentio*, and we cannot exclude that Apollodorus's source attributed a military character to Dionysus's journey. The unique point on which we can rely to place Apollodorus's account within the great stratigraphy of the Dionysian mythical tradition that arose after Alexander's campaign is the pillars set up by Dionysus in India.

The idea of a marker placed by Dionysus at the furthest point of his conquests is mentioned by several sources³⁰ and is almost always³¹ connected to Alexander's ambition to match and even surpass his divine predecessors, perhaps as early as Nearchus³². However, the pillars are more specific than other signs left by Dionysus. They clearly recall the famous pillars of Heracles at the western border of the ecumene and, in this sense, they do not simply mark the furthest point reached by the campaign, but a universal limit, the very eastern border of the ecumene³³. This signification is evident in Dionysius Periegetes (1162-64), according to whom the god places pillars near the Ocean and ascribes to them the function of marking the extreme eastern limit of the earth. Dionysius Periegetes's text is the one that most closely matches Apollodorus's allusions to the pillars³⁴. Other sources speak of many pillars left by Dionysus in different places³⁵, or of other types of signs, such as altars or trees³⁶. It has even been suggested that two verse of Dionysius

29. In contrast, in the Greek account of Dionysus preserved in Diodorus's *Library* and likely derived from Dionysius Scytobrachion, the god made a military campaign in India (4.3.1) and punished the impious king of the Indians, Myrrhanus (3.65.4).

30. See, e.g., Arr. *An.* 5.1.6-2.1; Curt. 7.9.15, 9.4.21; Plin. *Nat.* 6.49.

31. Besides Apollodorus, Dionysius Periegetes (1162-65) also mentions these pillars in a context that does not relate to Alexander. See *infra*.

32. BOSWORTH (1995: 208) considers it likely that the source of Arr. 5.2.1 was Nearchus.

33. See CARRIÈRE y MASSONIE (1991: 221).

34. The same description of the columns at the border of the lands near the eastern Ocean is taken up by Eustathius in his commentary on Dionysius Periegetes (623). Eustathius explicitly compares these columns to those left by Heracles in Gadeira.

35. According to Diodorus Siculus (1.20.1), he left behind him inscribed pillars whose texts recounted his campaign. The third Dionysus, the son of Zeus and Semele, placed many pillars in different places to mark the boundaries of his own military campaigns, imitating in this way the other two Dionysuses (3.74.2). Strabo (3.5.6) says that the Macedonians would have identified the pillars in all the places where they thought they had found some sign of Dionysus, even though there were actually none in India. The list of ancient sources mentioning the pillars given by GRAEF (1886: 5) is inaccurate. He mentioned an epigram of the *Greek Anthology* (16.185), but the epigram refers to two statues, not columns, and their location in India is far from certain.

36. See, e.g., Str. 3.5.5; Plin. *Nat.* 6.49. Pliny places the altars at the extreme limits of the land of the Sogdiani and not in India. The altars of Alexander are placed in the north by many sources. See PFISTER (1959: 9).

Periegetes were Apollodorus's source. A relationship between the two authors may be confirmed by the fact that also Dionysius, in another passage, mentions Thrace immediately before the Indians³⁷. Dependence on a common tradition is more likely than a direct relationship between the two sources, however, for they show no other points of contact³⁸.

The mythical image of pillars set up at the ends of the world can be associated with the civilising function attributed to Dionysus in the Hellenistic age as the bearer of Hellenic culture throughout the world. The idea that Dionysus travelled the entire ecumene must have been quite common in the Hellenistic age, as testified by Diodorus Siculus. In his *Bibliotheca historica*, it is there in the account of Osiris-Dionysus derived from Hecateus of Abdera (1.17), in the story of the first (3.63.4) and the third Dionysus (1.64.7), and in the long passage from Dionysios Skytobrachion on the Libyan Dionysus (3.73.6-7)³⁹. Dionysios Skytobrachion has sometimes been considered the source of this section of Apollodorus's *Library*⁴⁰. He is mentioned as a source by the mythographer at 1.118 and, according to J.S. Rusten, was also used by Apollodorus in other passages⁴¹. The long Libyan tale transmitted by Diodorus also presents another rare mythical element, namely, the role of Kampé in the struggle between gods and Titans⁴². However, the account in the *Library* is quite different. Both the rationalising character and the references to Egyptian mythology that mark Diodorus's long passage are absent from the *Library*. Kampé, for example, is placed by Dionysios Skytobrachion close to a Libyan city called Zabirna and not in Tartarus as in the *Library*. The accounts likely share some mythological details that originated in early Hellenistic sources, but Skytobrachion adapted them to his own euhemeristic perspective. In any case, the idea of Dionysus's pillars is likely not one of the common elements and arose later, as we will see in the next paragraph.

3. The Indians of Apollodorus and Alexander

The Hellenistic image of the civilising god may have contributed to the idea of the pillars of Dionysus, but the sources speak of various signs left by the god in different places all over the world to mark his passage⁴³. The idea of a single set of columns placed in India, which, as we have seen, is shared by Apollodorus and Dionysius Periegetes, is likely closely related to the evolution of the biographical traditions about Alexander. Within these traditions, the signs left by the god became

37. D.P. 575-79. See CARRIÈRE and MASSONIE (1991: 221).

38. MICHELS (2022: 516) states that CARRIÈRE's hypothesis rests only on a slight overlap in content.

39. Another fragment of Dionysios Skytobrachion (*NBJ* f. 13) mentions the military campaign of Dionysus against the Indians. Jacoby (commentary fr. 13) expressed doubts over the attribution of this fragment to Scytobrachion. *Contra* RUSTEN (1982: 67, n. 6); CONSTANTAKOPOULOU (2010) and ZACCARINI (2020) in their commentaries of fr. 13.

40. MICHELS (2022: 516, n. 124).

41. RUSTEN (1982: 117).

42. D.S. 3.72.3; Apollod. 1.6-7.

43. See n. 34.

pillars equivalent to those erected by Heracles at the western end of the world only when Alexander reached the edge of the ecumene by the Ocean. At this point, even the boundaries reached by the divine mythical predecessors could coincide with the limits of the world. Alexander and his contemporaries knew that he had not reached the literal edge of the world⁴⁴ and a few years later Megasthenes was sent as an ambassador to the Gangetic kingdom, thus going further east than Alexander⁴⁵.

The strict relationship between the fabulous motif of Alexander at the end of the world and the monuments left by Dionysus is already evident in the first *Suasoria* of Seneca the Elder, a rhetorical exercise in which Alexander ponders whether to try to cross the Ocean once he has reached the edge of the earth, and his counsellors urge against it⁴⁶. Moschus, one of these counsellors, states that the sovereign has stopped at the edge of the world where the sun ceases to shine, *ultra Liberi patris trophaea* (1.2)⁴⁷. We also find similar monuments in a later text, which pertains to the traditions of the *Life of Alexander*⁴⁸.

This evidence suggests that the reference to the columns of Dionysus in the *Library* and in Dionysius Periegetes originates from a source influenced by the fictional biographical traditions concerning Alexander. The other passage of the *Library* in which the mythographer alludes to India is also likely derived from this source. In this case, so far overlooked by scholars, the relationship with Alexander's campaign is even more evident:

Μήδεια δὲ ἦκεν εἰς Ἀθήνας, κάκει γαμηθεῖσα Αἰγεῖ παῖδα γεννᾷ Μηδόν.
ἐπιβουλεύουσα δὲ ὕστερον Θησεῖ φυγὰς ἐξ Ἀθηνῶν μετὰ τοῦ παιδὸς ἐκβάλλεται.
ἀλλ' οὗτος μὲν πολλῶν κρατήσας βαρβάρων τὴν ὑφ' ἑαυτὸν ἄπασαν χώραν Μηδίαν
ὄνωμασε, καὶ στρατευόμενος ἐπὶ Ἴνδοῦς ἀπέθανε. (1.147).

Medeia went to Athens. There she married Aigeus and bore him a son, Medos.

44. It is possible that, having reached Hyphasis, Alexander had hoped to come close to the Ocean, but Phegeus informed him of the existence of a long and difficult route and of the powerful Gangetic kingdom. See BOSWORTH (1996a: 77-80).

45. Arrian (*Ind.* 5.3) states that Megasthenes went further than Alexander and claimed to have visited Chandragupta. On Megasthenes's embassy, see BOSWORTH (1996b).

46. See ROMM (1992: 25-26).

47. It is possible that Curtius Rufus already considered the eastern limits of Dionysus's campaign equivalent to the western pillars of Hercules. The bounds of Hercules and Father Liber are mentioned together in two different speeches by Alexander. In the first, given before the battle of Issus, he affirms that the Macedonians have already passed beyond the bounds of Hercules and Father Liber (*Herculis et Liberi patris terminus*, 3.10.5). During his retreat from India, before confronting the Sogdians, Alexander states that he has renounced the idea of reaching the Ganges and subduing the peoples beyond the Sogdians, but that he has led his army to a place of no less glory and that, having defeated these enemies, they would reach the Ocean and cross the borders of Heracles and Dionysus (*Herculis et Liberi Patris terminos transituros illos*, 9.4.21). It has been suggested that this expression refers to the western and eastern limits of the world, from the pillars of Hercules to the end of the triumphal journey of Bacchus (ROLFE 1946: 125), but taking into account the second context in which the expression appears, we cannot exclude that it alludes not to the pillars of Hercules, but to the limits of Heracles's Indian campaign, which is known to Curtius, as shown by 9.4.1.

48. In a late Latin version of the Letter of Alexander to Aristotle in which Alexander finds *Herculis Libericque trophaea ... in orientis ultimis oris*. See BOER (1953: 26.17-18).

Later, she plotted against Theseus and was driven into exile from Athens with her son. But her son conquered many barbarians and called the whole area under his control Media. He died while campaigning against the Indians⁴⁹.

Medos is already known from the *Theogony* (1001), which, like the epic poet Kinaithon (fr. 2 *PEG* = Paus. 2.3.9), presents him as the son of Jason. An account similar to that of Apollodorus is provided by Diodorus Siculus, who ascribes it to sources eager to win the favour of the Athenians (4.56.1-2)⁵⁰. Medos, the son of Medea and Aegeus, recovered the throne of Colchis and conquered much of Asia, giving his name to Media. Diodorus makes no mention of Medos's death at the hands of Indians, and in any case, this death does not serve the intent to flatter Athens that Diodorus Siculus attributes to this mythical tradition.

This failed campaign likens Medos to other great conquerors of Asia who failed to subdue India, such as Cyrus and Semiramis. The most complete list is offered by Megasthenes. The diplomat-historian states that Alexander was the first to wage war on the Indians since the time of Dionysus⁵¹. Strabo cites Megasthenes as a confirmation of his scepticism about the Indian campaigns of Cyrus and Semiramis mentioned by previous texts (15.1.6)⁵². We should probably not count Ctesias among these earlier sources. Although he is mentioned by Diodorus as his main source on Semiramis's exploits (2.7-18), not every element of his account can be attributed to Ctesias, as is sometimes assumed⁵³. Too many similarities between Semiramis and Alexander, especially in the Indian section, reveal that Diodorus's account has been reshaped in such a way as to recall the feats of the Macedonian⁵⁴ and it is probable that the Indian section was derived from a later source that was acquainted with the story of Alexander⁵⁵. Moreover, Diodorus's account clearly reveals the influence of the propagandistic idea that Alexander had succeeded where his predecessors had failed, since Semiramis had withdrawn after losing two-thirds of her troops and without even managing to cross the Indus⁵⁶.

49. Translation by Trzaskoma (SCOTT SMITH y TRZASKOMA, 2007: 20).

50. Diodorus Siculus presents an alternative version, according to which Medea marries an anonymous king in the interior of Asia and bears him Medos, who succeeds to his father's throne and gives his name to his people, the Medes (4.55.7). According to Strabo, Medos simply succeeds to an empire conquered by Medea and Jason (9.13.10). Hyginus (*Fab.* 27.5) preserves an account likely derived from a Roman tragedy (see POCIŃA, 2004) in which Medos kills Perses and obtains his grandfather's kingdom, giving that land the name Media. This version is odd from a geographical point of view, since Perses was the ruler of Colchis and not Media. It is possible that Hyginus omitted the enlargement of the borders of his grandfather's kingdom through a military campaign by Medos or that this detail was lost in the transmission of his text.

51. *FGrH* 11 = *NBJ* 11 = F 13 Stoneman. See STONEMAN (2022: 96-100).

52. The scepticism of Strabo, who also knew about the campaign of Darayavaush I of Persia from Herodotus (4.44), demonstrates the extent to which Alexandrian legend conditioned the transmission of historical information; see BOSWORTH (1996b: 122-23); ROLLER (2019: com. fr. 11).

53. See, e.g., BROWN (1955: 27).

54. SZALC (2015: 500-503); SULIMANI (2005).

55. STONEMAN (2022: 97).

56. SULIMANI (2005: 59-60) notes that in Diodorus's story of Sesostris, on the contrary, the king's achievements are presented as greater than Alexander's. She proposes different explanations and suggests that Semiramis could not eclipse Alexander because she was a woman.

It is not impossible that the Indian campaign of Semiramis and other great rulers were already originated by Alexander's entourage; in any case, it is certain that this motif was already being used by early historians of Alexander. Nearchus stated that Alexander conceived the plan to cross Gedrosia when he heard that Semiramis and Cyrus had failed⁵⁷. The point of this tradition is the same as that of Megasthenes's revision, that is, to enhance the grandeur of Alexander's feat⁵⁸.

Medos is not mentioned in the long list of Megasthenes, and no source mentions him as a model for Alexander, but as a conqueror and founder of an empire in the East he was perfectly suited to play a role comparable to that of Cyrus and Semiramis. Medos, of course, was not considered by Alexander or his first historians to be among his predecessors, like Dionysus or Heracles: his unsuccessful Indian campaign was likely invented later due to the tendency to present the deeds of the great conquerors of the past in line and in comparison with those of Alexander⁵⁹.

As in the case of the columns of Dionysus, when India becomes part of the mythical horizon embraced by the *Library*, the mark left by Alexander's campaign is evident.

4. Conclusions

The analysis of Apollodorus's passage dedicated to Dionysus's eastern journey and the comparison with his only other mention of the Indians shows how the traditions that were shaped by Alexander's campaign became part of the *Library*. On the one hand, it demonstrates how the new horizons opened up by the Macedonian ruler transformed the geography of the known world but also prompted a rethinking of the past, including the mythical past. The depth of this revision is so profound that it left traces in a work that does not normally go beyond the spatial and temporal boundaries of classical and archaic mythology, to the point of wiping Rome and the great Hellenistic cities off the map of myth.

On the other hand, the presence of these traditions raises some questions. The presence of two elements of rare mythological stories concerning India, both strongly influenced by Alexander's account, in two different sections of the same work may suggest the use of the same source in the two passages. From a chronological point of view, the two accounts also show points of contact, as neither of them seems to date back to the traditions arose immediately after Alexander's expedition. As mentioned above, the idea of a pair of columns at the Indian edge of the world and the unsuccessful campaign of Medos probably depend on later evolutions of those traditions. One might imagine a late Hellenistic work with a historical focus, which narrated the mythical prehistory of the encounter between Greece, India and Asia in a manner heavily influenced by Alexander's campaign. Normally, the narrative offered by the *Library* does not present elements that show

57. *FGrH* 3a; b = *Arr. An.* 6.24.2; *Str.* 15.1.5. See WHITBY (2012: com. fr. 3).

58. ROLLER (2019: com. fr. 11).

59. On the existence of a similar tendency in Hellenistic and later historiography, see SZALC (2015: 503).

a marked historicisation of myth, but an example of a tale inspired by historical events has already been recognised in Apollodorus's text⁶⁰. We have seen how this text may also have been used by Dionysius Periegetes and may have some points of contact with Dionysius Scytobrachion, even if it included later elements.

The use of this source could perhaps explain some other passages that establish relations between Asia and the Greek mythical past. Greek heroes often give their names to places or peoples, but only in two cases does Apollodorus connect mythical genealogies with historical genealogies; in both cases, these are lineages of Asian rulers. Croesus is said to be descended from the son of Heracles by Omphale, and the kings of the Persians are said to be descended from Perses, the son of Perseus and Andromeda (2.165). In a work in which mythical time is kept separate from historical time, the presence of Croesus, the Persian kings, and the expeditions of Medos and Dionysus to India may be more than mere coincidence.

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60. ACERBO (2019b).

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