

5-2011

# The Bare Necessities: Ascetic Indian Sages in Philostratus' 'Life of Apollonius'

Samuel McVane  
*College of William and Mary*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wm.edu/honorstheses>

---

## Recommended Citation

McVane, Samuel, "The Bare Necessities: Ascetic Indian Sages in Philostratus' 'Life of Apollonius'" (2011). *Undergraduate Honors Theses*. Paper 362.

<https://scholarworks.wm.edu/honorstheses/362>

This Honors Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses, Dissertations, & Master Projects at W&M ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Undergraduate Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of W&M ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@wm.edu](mailto:scholarworks@wm.edu).

The Bare Necessities

*Ascetic Indian Sages in Philostratus' Life of Apollonius*

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement  
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Classical Studies from  
The College of William and Mary

by

Samuel David McVane

Accepted for High Honors  
(Honors, High Honors, Highest Honors)

William Hutton

William Hutton, Director

John Donahue

John Donahue

Kevin Vose

Kevin Vose

Williamsburg, VA  
May 3, 2011

## Introduction

One might not think that much direct contact occurred between the cultures of ancient Greece and Rome and ancient India. The civilizations lay thousands of miles apart, a vast distance for men who traveled by foot or horse. But in fact, we have much evidence, both material and literary, for rather extensive contact – economic, military, and cultural – between the ancient East and West. One of the most interesting interactions, in my opinion, was the intellectual exchange between the West and ancient Indian philosophers, sages, and religious thinkers. Fortunately, we have a great body of extant ancient Western literature – primarily in Greek – that provide numerous accounts and descriptions, historic, pseudo-historic, and fictional, of Indian wise men and their interactions with the West.

This body of literature particularly focuses on portrayals of Indian ascetics who lived a very frugal lifestyle, scorning most material needs, in the pursuit of knowledge. These Indian ascetic sages seem to have particularly impressed Western authors. Indeed, many authors seem to see Indian ascetics as paragons of self-sufficiency and other virtues. In some of the literature, authors use accounts of Indian ascetics to support moral or rhetorical treatises, emphasizing, eliding, or even changing certain details about the Indians as befits the particular argument. Over time, this creates an image of Indian sages that is progressively more distorted, but nonetheless these literary Indian sages often retain at least some of the features of their historical counterparts. But how authors use and, indeed, distort traditions surrounding the Indians is interesting in its own right. This particular facet of the long story of intellectual interaction between the West and India will be the focus of the present study.

One of the later and lengthier accounts of Western interactions with Indian ascetic wise men occurs in a 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD biography of the ascetic wise man Apollonius of Tyana. Written by a sophist named Philostratus, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana* describes in great length and detail Apollonius' journey to India and his conversations with the Indian sages, the "Wise Ones." It also describes his journey to Ethiopia where he meets with local sages called simply the "Naked Ones." It is clear that Philostratus' account draws from the already well developed tradition of Western depictions of Indian

sages for both of these groups, but little scholarship explores these influences and how Philostratus uses the tradition in his depiction of Apollonius.

In the following study, I will survey what the ancient Greek sources say about Indian wise men and proceed to analyze what information Philostratus uses from these sources in his depiction of Apollonius' trip to India and Ethiopia and the philosophers he meets there. I will argue that Philostratus manipulates the Western tradition in order to emphasize Apollonius's wisdom and respectability. To do this, Philostratus imbues the Indian Wise Men, with whose wisdom Apollonius associates himself, with all the attributes ascribed to Indian sages in the Western tradition that are positive from a western point of view. And on the other hand, Philostratus imbues the Ethiopian Naked Ones, whose philosophy Apollonius rejects, with all the negative attributes. Philostratus also presents certain attributes contained within the Western tradition as common to both the Indian Wise Men and the Ethiopian Naked Ones, but does so in a way that still praises the Indians and demeans the Ethiopians.

I will also use my analysis of Philostratus' use of the Western tradition concerning Indian sages to provide a new perspective concerning one of Philostratus' most problematic sources: Damis. Philostratus claims that much of his biography is based on a travel journal written by a man named Damis who supposedly accompanied Apollonius for much of Apollonius' life. As I will detail below, a good deal of scholarly debate has arisen over whether Damis was a real person who wrote an account that Philostratus actually consulted or whether he, or his account, was a fictional creation of Philostratus. I will tentatively argue that, judging by Philostratus heavy use of the Western tradition in his depiction of Indian and Ethiopian sages and the portrayals that result, the Damis source is in fact fictional.

### **The West's Knowledge of Indian Sages and Philosophers**

If we are to understand Philostratus place in the Western tradition concerning Indian intellectuals and how he manipulates it, we must first know the details of this Western tradition. Although there are

literary accounts of interactions between Greeks and Indian sages before, the first historical encounter – that we know of – occurred after Greeks in the retinue of Alexander the Great came into contact with religious ascetics common throughout India in the fourth century B.C.<sup>1</sup> Afterwards, other Greek-speaking authors supposedly encountered these Indian sages throughout the next six centuries. And while the original texts are lost, numerous ancient authors cite these Greeks who supposedly came into direct contact with the Indian sages and recorded in writing their conversations and lifestyles. The three most prominent of these Greeks are Onesicritus, a follower of Alexander and a Cynic philosopher, Megasthenes, a Greek ambassador from the Hellenistic Seleucid kingdom sent to the Indian king Chandragupta following the death of Alexander the Great, and Bardesanes, a Christian teacher and scholar who supposedly met with an Indian embassy in Syria and recorded what he learned. What sort of understanding of Indian philosophers developed from these encounters, and how distorted was the Greek image of the ascetic? Not only was miscommunication between the Greek and Indian nearly inevitable (Onesicritus supposedly needed three translators<sup>2</sup>), but later authors were certainly selective about what to include from these three primary sources (among others) and even embellished certain facts. In addition, authorial biases, whether philosophic, religious, or cultural certainly colored both original and secondary accounts. Nevertheless, similarities within most Greek sources suggest that these authors and their sources had at least some legitimate knowledge concerning Indian sages. Indeed there appears to be enough information to piece together tentative arguments concerning the historical Indian religious and philosophical groups about whom the Western authors write. In this chapter, I will outline the Western tradition concerning Indian sages, summarize the three major primary accounts of Indian wise men drawn

---

<sup>1</sup> There are three accounts (not older than Onesicritus) of even older interactions between Indian wise men and Greeks. Plutarch in his *Life of Lycurgus* cites the Spartan Aristocrates that Lycurgus in his journeys met with the Indian philosophers (4.6). Plutarch himself questions the veracity of this claim. Even if true, nothing about the wise men Lycurgus met remains and thus is of little use to us. Also, Eusebius the Christian scholar cites Aristoxenus the Musician that Socrates himself discussed philosophy in Athens with a visiting Indian wise man (*Preparation for the Gospel*, 11.3.511a-c). Again, like Lycurgus' meeting, nothing more than the anecdote remains. Furthermore, it is unlikely that this Indian was an ascetic, for while they did wander, wandering all the way to Athens seems far-fetched. Lastly, it was common lore that Pythagoras in his travels met with Indian wise men. Like both Lycurgus and Socrates, nothing remains of the supposed conversations Pythagoras had nor any descriptions of the wise men with whom Pythagoras met. While such meetings may have occurred, Onesicritus' account is the first recorded exchange.

<sup>2</sup> Strabo, 15.1.64.

from extant secondary accounts, and tentatively identify the historical ascetic groups the Greek accounts seem to describe.

The exchange between Onesicritus and the Indian ascetics, during Alexander's invasion of India in 326 and 325 BC, is the oldest and most famous account. Numerous ancient authors retell and comment on this conversation which Onesicritus himself is said to have written down, though his version is no longer available. Here we meet the most famous Indians in Greek literature, the ascetics Dandamis and Calanus, whom Greek authors seem to hold as the paragons of Indian asceticism. Interestingly, some authors substitute Alexander himself for Onesicritus and create a scene in which Alexander loses a debate with the Indian ascetics about Alexander's monarchical powers and the proper art of life.<sup>3</sup> Yet in most accounts, Alexander, intrigued by rumors of these ascetics, sends Onesicritus, a philosopher in Alexander's retinue, to invite the ascetics to his court. The ascetics, led by the elder Dandamis, decline the invitation and tell Alexander (via Onesicritus) to come to them if he wishes to hear their teaching. In some versions Alexander complies and in others, Onesicritus proceeds to have a conversation with them instead. What follows is a synopsis of the most important accounts based on Onesicritus.

The Greek geographer Strabo, in his *Geographia*, provides the oldest extant account of Onesicritus a little over two and a half centuries later (mid 1<sup>st</sup> century BC). Strabo cites Onesicritus' work itself, saying that "Onesicritus says that he himself was sent to converse with these sophists [the Gymnosophists]" (15.1.63). The first thing Strabo notes is that these wise men are naked and live a self-imposed ascetic lifestyle. Indeed, this is what first piqued Alexander's interest: "... for Alexander had heard that the people always went naked and devoted themselves to endurance..." (15.1.63). The ascetics' nakedness was their foremost defining feature for the Greeks. Accordingly, the Greeks coined for them the name "Gymnosophists" (Γυμνοσοφιστάι), literally, "naked philosophers." In addition, Western authors marveled at their extreme lifestyle: standing in one position for long periods of time, eating little, living in the open, and, ultimately, committing suicide (we will come to this later in the story of Calanus). When Onesicritus came to the ascetics "he found fifteen men at a distance of 20 stadia from the city..."

---

<sup>3</sup> The author(s) of the *Alexander Romance* is (are) the most prominent, see *Alexander Romance*, 3.6.16.

who were in different postures, standing or sitting or lying naked and motionless till evening... [despite the fact] that it was very hard to endure the sun, which was so hot that at midday no one else could easily endure walking on the ground with bare feet” (Strabo, 15.1.63). He met first with Calanus, one of the ascetics, who arrogantly commanded Onesicritus to strip naked if he wanted to hear any talk from the wise men. He also berates Onesicritus for the corrupting luxury of most men. Mandanis (Dandamis in most accounts), “the oldest and wisest of the sophists,” chastises Calanus and invites Onesicritus to talk.<sup>4</sup> According to Onesicritus, Mandanis commends teaching that “removes pleasure and pain from the soul” (15.1.65). He tells Onesicritus that he regards the Greeks as sound minded though they place too much emphasis on custom over nature. Were they to give up this habit, Mandanis says, they too would live the ascetic life, forgoing clothing, fancy food, and even homes. Onesicritus claims that these gymnosophists study the natural sciences and medicine, go into the city to beg (and people freely give to them), and engage in conversation with city-dwellers, even the wealthy. Lastly, according to Onesicritus, the ascetics despise bodily disease and if sick will commit suicide by burning themselves alive. In ascetic fashion, they burn “without a motion” (Strabo, 15.1.66).

Numerous other authors retell the story of Onesicritus (or Alexander). In Plutarch’s account, in his *Life of Alexander*, Onesicritus is at first, as in Strabo, verbally abused by Calanus and then received more civilly by Dandamis (Strabo’s Mandanis). They discuss Greek philosophers (Socrates, Pythagoras, and Diogenes) and, as in Strabo, Dandamis admonishes the Greeks for their tendency to favor custom over nature (Plutarch, *Life of Alexander*, 64.3). Arrian, in his *Anabasis*, claims Alexander himself met with Dandamis and his ascetics and asks them to join his retinue. Dandamis declines and tells Alexander that he desires nothing that Alexander can give him and that the ascetic life is all he needs. In this way, Dandamis convinces Alexander that he is “in a true sense, a free man” (7.2.4.5). Alexander does succeed in convincing Calanus to join him and for this Calanus is condemned by the other ascetics (7.2.4). Lastly, Palladius, a Christian ascetic and author of the *De gentibus Indiae et Bragmanibus*, writes that the ascetics

---

<sup>4</sup> In Arrian’s account, Dandamis is oldest and most respected (πρεσβύτατος) and the group’s teacher (ὄτου ὀμιληταί οἱ ἄλλοι ἦσαν) (*Anabasis*, 7.2.2.7).

“subsist upon such fruits as they can find, and on wild herbs, which the earth spontaneously produces, and drink only water. They wander about in the woods, and sleep at night on pallets of the leaves of trees” (1.12.1-5).<sup>5</sup> Hearing of these men, Alexander sent Onesicritus to invite them to Alexander. Dandamis rebukes Alexander (to Onesicritus) for claiming to be a god (the son of Zeus) and praises the ascetic’s simple lifestyle and its tranquility. This account echoes the other accounts in Dandamis’ rejection of all Alexander’s material offerings. Moreover, Alexander is not angered but awed by their audacity. Palladius writes that “Alexander, on receiving from Onesicrates [Onesicritus] a report of the interview, felt a stronger desire than ever to see Dandamis, who, though old and naked, was the only antagonist in whom he, the conqueror of many nations, had found more than his match” (2.23).

A similar tale sometimes accompanies or replaces Onesicritus’ conversation with Dandamis and/or Calanus.<sup>6</sup> In it, Alexander engages ten gymnosophists in a game of riddles. In each extant version the circumstances of the meeting vary. In Plutarch, Alexander takes ten Indian Gymnosophists prisoner whom were active in an Indian nation’s rebellion and gives one riddle to each in succession, under the threat of death for a poor answer (64.1-5). Curiously, he makes the unnamed eldest the judge. In Clement of Alexandria, a Christian scholar from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, Alexander takes the ten prisoner because they “seemed the best [ἄριστοι] and most concise [βραχυλογώτατοι],” threatens them with death, and makes the eldest one the adjudicator (6.4.38).<sup>7</sup> And lastly, in the *Alexander Romance*, Alexander comes to question the ten gymnosophists in a very similar fashion to Onesicritus (in Strabo’s account), without the threat of death, and does not ask each in turn (3.5). The questions which Alexander asks and the Indians’ answers are nearly identical in Plutarch’s and Clement’s accounts:

(1) Question: Who are more numerous: the living or the dead?

Answer: The living because the dead do not exist.

---

<sup>5</sup> All translations from Palladius’ *De gentibus Indiae et Bragmanibus* are from Majumdar’s *Classical Accounts of India*, 1960.

<sup>6</sup> There are three extant versions of this story: one in Plutarch, another in Clement of Alexandria, and the last in the *Alexander Romance*. Plutarch and Clement produced their versions within a century of each other, while the date of this section of the *Romance* is uncertain.

<sup>7</sup> Plutarch uses the same adjective, βραχύλογος, to describe the Indians whom Alexander tests (*Life of Alexander*, 64.1.5)

(2) Does the land or the sea produce the largest beasts?

The earth since the sea is a part of it.

(3) What is the most cunning beast?

The one which man has not found.

(4) How did they convince the king of their nation to rebel?

By telling him that he should live or die nobly.

(5) Which is older: night or day?

The day, by one day at least.<sup>8</sup>

(6) How is a man loved most?

Be powerful without being feared.

(7) How can a man be a god?

Do what is impossible for man.

(8) What is stronger: life or death?

Life because it supports so many miseries.<sup>9</sup>

(9) How long is it right for man to live?

Until death is better than life.

Upon hearing this last answer, Alexander asks the final and eldest Indian who answered worst.

The Indian, cunningly turning this question into another paradoxical riddle, told Alexander that each answered worse than the other (and thus no one definitively answered the worst).<sup>10</sup> While Clement says nothing on Alexander's response, Plutarch says Alexander gave them presents and sent them away (65.1). The Indians' answers to Alexander's questions in the *Romance* are even more cryptic. For example, in response to the third question (question eight in Plutarch's and Clement's versions), the Indians reply

<sup>8</sup> In Clement of Alexandria's version, the fifth Indian responds "One day. For puzzling questions must have puzzling answers" (*Stromata*, 6.4.38.7).

<sup>9</sup> In Plutarch's version, he does not supply what Alexander's question was, only the Indian's answer (64.4).

<sup>10</sup> In Plutarch: "τοῦ δὲ ἕτερον ἑτέρου χεῖρον εἰρηκέναι" (*Life of Alexander*, 64.1); in Clement: "ἕτερος, ἕφη, ἑτέρου χεῖρον εἶπεν" (6.5.39). There is no paradoxical final judgment in the *Alexander Romance*, since Alexander never threatens the Indians with death.

“Life, because the sun as it rises has strong, bright rays, but when it sets, appears to be weaker” (3.6). So too have some, but not all, of the questions changed. Instead of question six above, Alexander asks “What is kingship?” A question he perhaps is hinting at in Plutarch’s and Clement’s versions, but nonetheless is portrayed putting more bluntly in the *Romance*. Regardless, many of the questions unique to the *Romance* have clear forbearers in the other two versions. In the *Romance* version at 3.6, Dandamis is among those whom Alexander questions, and after the group questioning, Alexander and Dandamis discuss things similar to the latter’s conversation with Onesicritus in Strabo’s account (15.1.65).

Alexander’s questioning of the Indian sages does not seem to be from Onesicritus. Strabo provides the fullest account attributed to Onesicritus, and Strabo neither includes nor even alludes to any such test (15.1.63-65). Furthermore, Plutarch’s account of the Indian sages suggests that the report concerning the sages questioned by Alexander and the report about those whom Onesicritus spoke to were not one in the same. Indeed, in Plutarch’s account he first tells the story of Alexander and the ten Indians, and then transitions to the report clearly drawn from Onesicritus (*Life of Alexander*, 6-65). Plutarch seems to suggest in his transition from Alexander’s test to Onesicritus’ discussion that the Indians whom Onesicritus meets are a particularly renowned subset of the *Gymnosophistai*. Plutarch writes: “After [Alexander] gave them [the tested *Gymnosophistai*] gifts, he left; [then] Alexander sent Onesicritus to those greatest in reputation [ἐν δόξει μάλιστα] and who lived in peace...” (*Life of Alexander*, 65.1.1-3). Moreover, while Plutarch’s and Clement of Alexandria’s accounts clearly come from the same source, Clement has no additional section concerning Onesicritus nor is there a section in any of his works concerning Indian sages that resembles the meeting between Onesicritus, the Indians, and Dandamis/Calanus. Clement is one of the most extensive extant sources on Indian philosophers, and it seems unlikely, in my opinion, that if the Onesicritus source had included the test, that Clement would fail to include it somewhere. And finally, when writing this section of the *Romance*, the author(s) seems to have fused the two separate encounters, Alexander’s Q&A session and Onesicritus’ discussion, into one, which suggests this section is later in the tradition than either Plutarch’s or Clement’s accounts. While the original version no longer exists, it is possible, since it involves Alexander and, in Plutarch’s

case, is attached to an account of Onesicritus, that the source was one of the early biographers of Alexander.<sup>11</sup>

The last traditional story to emerge from Alexander's adventures into India, that of the gymnosophist Calanus, is, at least by mere number of references, the most popular.<sup>12</sup> By all the accounts which discuss his origins, Calanus was one of the gymnosophists Onesicritus or Alexander met in the forests. When Alexander asks for the gymnosophists to join his retinue nearly all refuse, except for Calanus. Famously, Calanus, who had been with Alexander for some time, grew sick when the expedition returned to Persia. There, he convinced Alexander to provide a grand funeral for him, while still alive, during which he walked calmly to the burning pyre, lay upon it, and thus burned to death without a flinch. But Calanus seems to have become a disputed person, for beyond this bare outline, ancient authors vary widely in the details.

In fact, even the above outline is not agreed on entirely. Philo Judaeus wrote that when Alexander wanted to "exhibit the Graecian world a specimen of the barbarians' wisdom" he urged Calanus to join him, but when Calanus refused, Alexander threatened to bring him by force (*Quod omnis probus liber sit*, 14.94-5). Calanus, unruffled in his detached, wise-man tranquility, writes Alexander a letter informing him that no matter what Alexander may do to his physical body, he can do nothing to compel Calanus' soul to do as it does not please (14.96). But in this letter Calanus does say that "Fire causes the greatest trouble and ruin to living bodies: we are superior to this: we burn ourselves alive" (14.96). Thus even Philo, who tells a very different tale than the others, connects Calanus to self-immolation. Ancient authors also disagree on whether to commend or condemn Calanus. Strabo and Plutarch portray him as being rude

---

<sup>11</sup> While Onesicritus' account of Alexander's conquests in India does not seem to have included this Q&A session, it is not impossible that the story of Alexander's testing was based on the meeting between Onesicritus and the Indian sages. But we cannot be sure one way or the other. Stoneman, though, suggests that we have no reason to think it came from any actual history of Alexander, but was rather just a folk-tale that developed in Greek philosophical circles (since it includes paradoxes, philosophical favorites of Greek philosophers) (1995, p. 113).

<sup>12</sup> Eight authors reference Calanus and his famous immolation, while an additional four refer, without naming Calanus, to the Indian, supposed custom of suicide by fire for which Calanus was best known. The former are Diodorus Siculus, 17.107.1-6; Strabo, 15.1.63-65, 68; Philo Judaeus, *Quid omnis probus liber sit*, 14.92; Plutarch, 65; Arrian, 7.2-3; Aelian, *Varia historia*, 2.41; Hipplytus, *The Refutation of All Heresies*, 1.14; Palladius, *De Gentibus Indiae et Bragmanibus*, 2.4-6. The latter are Quintus Curtius Rufus, *The History of Alexander*, 8.9.31-33; Porphyry, *De Abstinencia*, 4.18; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 4.4.17.4; Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel*, 6.10.277.c.

and arrogant to Onesicritus (or Alexander) when he comes to speak with the gymnosophists.<sup>13</sup> But Plutarch later says that Calanus shows Alexander an allegory for how he ought to rule his empire, which Plutarch implies is good advice (65.3-4). Arrian even openly commends Calanus for his death on the pyre, clearly suggesting that Calanus acted like a good Stoic. He claims that “this story [of Calanus’ death] and others to a similar effect have been recorded by good authorities; they are not without value to anyone who cares for evidence of the unconquerable resolution of the human spirit in carrying a chosen course of action through to the end” (*Anabasis*, 7.4). And even if the Greek authors were ambivalent towards Calanus, it seems clear that Calanus was condemned by his fellow gymnosophists. Many authors write that at the time and afterwards Calanus was condemned by other Indian philosophers for abandoning the forest and being influenced by greed, while Dandamis was commended for refusing Alexander’s entreaties and threats of force to join his retinue.<sup>14</sup> Strabo writes what some later authors seem to echo, that “Calanus [was] a man who was without self-control and a slave to the table of Alexander; and that therefore Calanus is censured, whereas Mandanis [Dandamis] is commended [for refusing Alexander]” (15.1.68). Regardless of the authors’ various stances on it, the story of Calanus and his suicide was very popular in Greek literature.

Despite the numerous variations in the accounts, there are a number of characteristics and beliefs the Greek authors commonly attribute to the Indian wise men with whom Onesicritus and/or Alexander spoke. First and foremost, their ascetic lifestyle: they wear nothing or next to nothing, eat and drink only what the earth naturally provides, abstain from meat, are celibate, own no property, and live and sleep in the jungle out in the open.<sup>15</sup> They are wise men who spend their time contemplating subjects common to the ancient Western philosopher and natural scientist: metaphysics, cosmology, natural phenomenon, as well as ethics.<sup>16</sup> The Indian ascetic, according to the Greek portrayals of the Indians’ conversations, seeks

---

<sup>13</sup> Strabo, 15.1.64; Plutarch, *Life of Alexander*, 64.2.

<sup>14</sup> See Strabo, 15.1.68; Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies*, 1.21; Arrian, *Anabasis*, 7.2.4.

<sup>15</sup> Strabo, 15.1.63-65; Arrian, *Anabasis*, 7.2; Plutarch, *Life of Alexander*, 65; the *Alexander Romance*, 6.5-6; Philo Judaeus, *De somniis*, 6.2; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 1.15.71.5

<sup>16</sup> Strabo, 15.1.65; Arrian, *Anabasis*, 7.1.4; Plutarch, *Life of Alexander*, 65.2; Philo Judaeus, *Quid omnis probus liber sit*, 11.74

true freedom and tranquility in his rejection of material goods and comforts, for through non-attachment one has nothing which can be taken from him.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the Indians believe in some sort of everlasting soul which is more important than their bodies and which is cultivated by ascetic practices.<sup>18</sup> Lastly, these ascetics despise physical illness and thus afflicted will commit suicide by self-immolation, the most famous example being the Indian Calanus.<sup>19</sup>

Alexander the Great conquered numerous lands and nations in northwestern India (much of it now modern day Pakistan) during his invasion between 326 and 325 BC. While Alexander installed a number of satraps, both Greek and Indian, to govern these provinces, after his death Indian nations unconquered by Alexander quickly reclaimed the conquered territories. But through Alexander, Greeks and Indians interacted on a large scale for the first time ever. Though soon ruled by Indians, many Greek colonies remained and even thrived in India for several centuries.<sup>20</sup> One ruler in particular reclaimed much of northwestern India from the Greeks: Chandragupta Maurya (Sandrocottus to the Greeks and Romans). He was able to unite much of northern India under his power. In 305 BC, less than twenty years after Alexander's death, Alexander's successor in the East, Seleucus Nicator, attempted to reclaim Alexander's former Indian territory from Chandragupta. It seems he fared poorly, and Seleucus and Chandragupta formed an alliance in which Seleucus had to cede some of his land in Bactria in exchange for a large number of elephants.<sup>21</sup> Most important for our study, Seleucus also sent an ambassador named Megasthenes to Chandragupta's court at Pataliputra in northeastern India. For a number of years Megasthenes observed Indian culture and politics firsthand, recording what he found in a work called the *Indika*. This became the standard source on India for all the later Greek authors.

---

<sup>17</sup> Strabo, 15.1.64-65; Arrian, *Anabasis*, 7.2.3-4; the *Alexander Romance*, 6.6; Philo Judaeus, *Quid omnis probus liber sit*, 14.92

<sup>18</sup> Strabo, 15.1.65; Arrian, *Anabasis*, 7.2.2-4; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 3.7.60.2; Philo Judaeus, *Quid omnis probus liber sit*, 14.92

<sup>19</sup> Strabo, 15.1.65; Arrian, *Anabasis*, 7.3; Plutarch, *Life of Alexander*, 69.4; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 4.4.17.4; Philo Judaeus, *Quid omnis probus liber sit*, 14.96

<sup>20</sup> Basham, A.L. *The Wonder that was India: A survey of the history and culture of the Indian sub-continent before the coming of the Muslims*. New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1967. pp. 49-51.

<sup>21</sup> Basham, 1967, p. 52.

While Megasthenes' *Indika* no longer survives, much of what he wrote is preserved in the extant writings of later authors who used Megasthenes extensively as a source. Megasthenes, according to Strabo, Arrian, and Diodorus Siculus, claimed that India was divided into seven castes.<sup>22</sup> The first and most honored were philosophers who were holy men learned in ritual sacrifice and offerings to the gods. Their prophecies were rarely wrong, and when they were (after three strikes), the philosophers would be bound to silence for the rest of their lives.<sup>23</sup> These philosophers also acted as close advisors for kings and other rulers. This was the only caste in which an individual could voluntarily join, though the requisite rigor kept most from doing so. Arrian includes the information that members of this caste go naked and live in the open year round eating only a sweet bark (*Indika*, 9.11.7-8).

Megasthenes greatly expanded Western knowledge of Indian philosophers and wise men. According to Strabo, Megasthenes writes that the philosopher caste is divided into two groups, the *Brachmanes* and the *Garmanes* (15.1.59). The *Brachmanes* are raised as such from childhood by learned *Brachmanes* teachers. At some age (Strabo does not specify) they live in groves outside of cities and live an ascetic life being both vegetarian and celibate. After thirty-seven years of living as an ascetic, they retire from the grove and return to the city where their former possessions remain. Here they no longer live as ascetics and are able to wear linen clothing, gold jewelry, eat meat and have many wives with whom they bear children.

Regarding philosophy, the *Brachmanes* believe in the immortality of the soul. This life is like “that of a babe still in the womb” and upon death one is born into the “true” and happy life. Thus philosophy is preparation for this death and rebirth. In addition, nothing is either good or bad for mankind, since one might be pleased by the same thing which pains another and a single man might be delighted by that which pains him a moment later (Strabo, 15.1.59). As for natural science, they believe that the universe was created and is destructible and that there are five elements, the fifth being what forms the heavens and the heavenly bodies.

---

<sup>22</sup> Strabo, 15.1.39; Arrian, *Indika*, 11-12; Diodorus Siculus, 2.40.1

<sup>23</sup> Arrian, *Indika*, 9.11.6 and Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliothèque*, 2.40.1.

The *Garmanes*, according to Megasthenes (as reported by Strabo), are composed of two groups (15.1.60). The more respected, the *Hylobii* (“forest dwellers”), live an ascetic life in the forests. They eat only leaves and fruits, wear only bark, and are celibate. But they also communicate with and advise kings that seek their wisdom and seek to worship the gods with their assistance. The second and less renowned group Strabo calls only “the physicians” (15.1.60). They live ascetic lives but not in the woods, and they live off of begging and the generosity of those they help. With the help of magic and various medicines, they are able to heal many illnesses. Both the *Hylobii* and the physicians practice the traditional ascetic hardships including staying in one position for an extended period of time. And unlike the *Brachmanes*, they do not stay in one place, but must travel begging from place to place. Also unlike the *Brachmanes*, women are allowed to study as a member of the *Garmanes*. Interestingly, Strabo claims Megasthenes denied that either the *Brachmanes* or *Garmanes* practice self-immolation or suicide in general (15.1.68). Rather, suicide was viewed as a sign of impetuosity and a lack of self-control. And it was for this reason, among others, that the other Indian sages condemned Calanus.

Clement of Alexandria, who cites Megasthenes elsewhere, comments on the division in India of the *Gymnosophistai*, a division which closely resembles Megasthenes’ account. He writes that there are two classes of *Gymnosophistai*: *Sarmanes* and *Brachmanes* (*Stromata*, 1.15.71.5). The *Sarmanes*, the “so-called forest dwellers,” do not live in cities or in any house at all. They wear tree bark, are vegetarians, and are celibate. Clement of Alexandria also describes a sect of wise men called *Semnoi* who live naked and worship a pyramid structure under which they believe some god’s bones lie (*Stromata*, 3.7.60.3-4). In addition, they do not have wives, though there are female *Semnoi* who live chaste lives as well. Though Clement of Alexandria attributes this information to Alexander Polyhistor, a Greek polymath of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, Dihle argues that this is actually from Megasthenes.<sup>24</sup> This seems unlikely though, since Strabo in his quite thorough citations of Megasthenes says nothing of the *Semnoi* nor indeed of the *Brachmanes*’ belief in reincarnation (παλιγγενεσίαν), which Clement also includes (3.7.60.2).

---

<sup>24</sup> Dihle, A. (1964) ‘The Conception of India in Hellenistic and Roman Literature’, *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, N.S. 10, p. 21.

Although a Greco-Indian kingdom flourished in northwest India in the first and second centuries BC, an invasion of Indo-Scythians ultimately destroyed it as a political unit.<sup>25</sup> But despite the presence of Greeks around India, contact between these Greeks and Western Greeks, and thus between Western Greeks and Indians, was largely severed by the rise of the Parthian empire upon the fall of the Seleucid empire. It was not until the reign of Augustus during the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD that contact was again made with India. According to Suetonius and Augustus himself the Roman Empire then grew enough in power and territory to attract an Indian embassy to Rome.<sup>26</sup> Suetonius remarks that before this embassy, the Indians were known only by name (*Divus Augustus*, 21). While he is likely exaggerating, this nonetheless suggests the toll the centuries-long break in contact had on the West's knowledge of India.<sup>27</sup> The prosperity of the Roman Empire under Augustus raised demand for many of the luxury items imported from India, creating a lucrative trade system with India via Egypt.<sup>28</sup> But by the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, internal problems within the Roman Empire started to weaken trade with India until again contact with India only occurred through numerous intermediaries.<sup>29</sup>

Intellectual and cultural exchange accompanied the increased interaction between the West and India during the first few centuries of the Common Era. One such example, one of the few recorded accounts extant, was between the Christian scholar and teacher named Bardesanes and an Indian embassy that had come to Syria during the reign of the Roman emperor Elagabalus between 218 and 222 AD.<sup>30</sup> He wrote down what he learned from his conversations with the Indians some of which concerned their philosophers. Though this work is no longer extant, a few extant authors preserve parts of it.<sup>31</sup> The most important of these authors, Porphyry, was a Neo-Platonist philosopher and scholar. In his tract, *On*

---

<sup>25</sup> OCD, "India".

<sup>26</sup> Suetonius, *Divus Augustus*, 21; Augustus, *Res Gestae*, 31

<sup>27</sup> This also might simply illustrate Roman ignorance of India, as opposed to the Western world as a whole. Nevertheless, the point remains of a serious decline in contact between the Western world and India.

<sup>28</sup> OCD, "India".

<sup>29</sup> OCD, "India".

<sup>30</sup> Majumdar, R.C, 1960, p. 427.

<sup>31</sup> See Porphyry, *De Abstinencia* and Stobaeus, *Anthologium*.

*Abstinence from Animal Food*, in which he presents an argument for vegetarianism, he cites Bardasanes' work on the lifestyle of the Indian wise men (4.17).

Bardasanes, via Porphyry, writes that those “whom the Greeks are wont to call the *Gymnosophistai*” are in fact two sects: the *Brachmanes* and the *Samanaioi*. The *Brachmanes* are the leading sect and birthright secures their privileged wisdom and respect. They are all of one race with common ancestry. The *Samanaioi*, on the other hand, are selected and consist only of voluntary initiates from all castes of India. The *Brachmanes* are divided between those who live in the mountains and others who live on the bank of the Ganges. In either place, they abstain from meat. They worship, sing hymns, and give prayers to the gods throughout every day. Each philosopher has a small hut in which he lives and “passes as much [time] as possible in solitude.” When an individual decides to become a *Samanaeos*, he goes to the magistrates of his city or village and there gives away all his belongings. If he has a wife and kids, he entrusts them to the state and “thinks of them no more.” He then shaves his head and puts on a *Samanaioi* robe and joins the others. They live in a monastery (what Bardasanes/Porphyry just call a house and temple) which is founded and funded by the king and in which they receive what is necessary to live. There they worship and discuss the divine. The *Samanaioi* are allowed neither to marry nor own anything. Both the *Brachmanes* and the *Samanaioi* are well respected and often sought by the king for advice. Lastly, Bardasanes claims that both sects will commit suicide and indeed “endure life unwillingly” (4.18). And unlike the other Greek tales of Indian suicide, Bardasanes claims that these men will kill themselves even in the best of health. And not only do their friends and fellow citizens not object, but even commend them and wish them well in the afterlife. Indeed, the witnesses of these suicides deem the dead men “happy in their attainment of immortality.”

The three above accounts of historical meetings between Indians and Greeks and Romans encompass the majority of what the West knew of Indian wise men. Numerous Western authors add other singular accounts of Indian wise men without reference to source and without corroboration from other extant authors. Some of these accounts seem to be accurate, in so far as they agree with modern knowledge of historical Indian wise men. We will incorporate these below in our attempts to both analyze

whether the Greeks had legitimate knowledge of Indian wise men and to identify these men within the groups of historic Indian ascetics.

It is certainly possible that the three major interactions between Greeks and Indian philosophers discussed above actually took place.<sup>32</sup> Nearly all the ancient sources on Alexander agree that some exchange took place, either with Onesicritus or Alexander himself.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, it seems unlikely that Alexander in his dealings with Indian kings did not interact with their advisors, most of who were of the Brahman caste. And as we will discuss below, many of the ascetic wise men portrayed in Greek literature were likely Brahmans, who at different parts of their life either advised political leaders or lived the ascetic life of contemplation. Also, Alexander supposedly met these wise men outside of Taxila, a city in northwest India. The historic Taxila, attested both by archaeological and literary accounts, was a major seat of learning in the Indian world even well before Alexander's visit.<sup>34</sup> That numerous Indian wise men frequented and occupied this city is very likely. Megasthenes' account, like Onesicritus', is well documented in ancient sources, and while some scholars (like Strabo) question his accuracy and acceptance of local stories, none question that he had intimate contact with the Indians while serving as ambassador to the Indian king for numerous years.<sup>35</sup>

Bardanes' existence, outside of references to his account on India, is attested by the Chronicle of Edessa, a reputable source which places his birth there in Edessa in 154 AD.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, though none of his work still exists, Bardanes' religious beliefs are preserved by extant works of his pupils.<sup>37</sup> Bardanes' Indian account is cited in only two sources, the philosophers Porphyry and Stobaeus.<sup>38</sup> But such a meeting would fit historical circumstances. Edessa, in northern Mesopotamia, was a thriving city along a major trade route between the East and the West, and thus it is quite likely that an envoy coming

---

<sup>32</sup> Of course the details may have been different. For example, whether Onesicritus, or even more improbably Alexander, really met with Indian sages is up for question, but it is well within the realm of possibility that some sort of exchange occurred between Indian philosophers/religious sages and the invading Greeks.

<sup>33</sup> Sedlar, *J.W. India and the Greek World*. Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1980. p. 69.

<sup>34</sup> Stoneman, R. (1995) 'Naked Philosophers: The Brahmans in the Alexander Historians and the Alexander Romance', *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, Vol. 115, pp. 107-8.

<sup>35</sup> For Strabo's view on Megasthenes' testimony see 15.1.57.

<sup>36</sup> Majumdar, 1960.

<sup>37</sup> Philippos, *Book of the Laws of Countries* (Sedlar, 1980, p. 170)

<sup>38</sup> Porphyry, *De abstinence*, 4.17; Stobaeus, *Anthologium*, 1.3.56

from India would pass through it. In addition, Bardesanes' prestige as a Christian scholar had already been cemented by the time of this meeting and he had formerly been a courtier in Edessa, both positions enabling him to meet and talk with the Indian ambassadors.<sup>39</sup> Lastly, Porphyry, who cites Bardesanes in his work, lived only a few decades after him, adding a near-contemporary testimony to his value as a genuine source.

Although the three major sources for Greek knowledge of India reflect historical events, this does not necessarily lend any credence to their specific depiction of Indians. A close comparison of Greek descriptions of Indian wise men with modern knowledge, however, indicates that much of what the Greeks knew was factual and that the Greeks had a reasonably accurate, though incomplete and occasionally confused, knowledge of Indian wise men. In fact, with each new interaction between Greek and Indian, Greek literature illustrates a more thorough and complex understanding of Indian wise men.<sup>40</sup>

The best example of this gradual improvement of knowledge is the increasing number of names and divisions the Greeks attribute to the wise men. When Onesicritus met with the wise men in 336/5 BC, he either did not learn the name of their group or failed to record it. The majority of the authors, who either cite Onesicritus directly or likely use him as an unnamed source, call the account's wise men only generic names. Arrian calls them simply "wise men" (σοφισταί) (*Anabasis*, 7.2), as does Strabo (15.1.63). Indeed, both Arrian and Strabo call them by this unspecific name even though they have other Indian names at their disposal, thanks to Megasthenes. This suggests that Onesicritus gave them no specific name and hence did not coin the term *Gymnosophistai* (Γυμνοσοφισταί), though *Gymnosophistai* is later attributed to these wise men.<sup>41</sup> Most of the subsequent names attributed to the wise men are of Indian origin. Indeed, only *Gymnosophistai* and *Hylobii* can be attributed to Greek.

---

<sup>39</sup> Sedlar, 1980, p. 170.

<sup>40</sup> I agree with both Stoneman (1995, p. 110) and Bhagat (*Ancient Indian Asceticism*. New Delhi: Munishiran Manoharlal Publishers, 1976. p. 296) that despite the increasing complexity of the Greeks' terminology for Indian wise men, they are never entirely accurate in their distinctions (although the error lies in the incomplete/confused nomenclature, not as much in the actual information) and by and large fail to distinguish the three biggest schools of thought: Brahmanism, Jainism, and Buddhism. That said, I also agree with Stoneman's pseudo-defense of the Greeks, that their confusion is rather warranted, since the system of specific ascetic schools was both incredibly numerous and changing, often with very subtle differences (1995, p. 110).

<sup>41</sup> Plutarch (e.g. *Alexander*, 64.1.1), Diogenes Laertius (1.6.5), Philo Judaeus (*Quid omnis probus liber sit*, 74.5), and the *Alexander Romance* (3.4.22).

Moreover, Porphyry specifically notes that it was the Greeks who called the wise men *Gymnosophistai* (οὓς γυμνοσοφιστὰς καλεῖν εἰώθησιν Ἕλληνας) (4.17.3-4).

After Megasthenes spent far more time with the Indians than Onesicritus, the Greeks learned of the manifold divisions among wise men. Megasthenes introduced the terms *Brachmanes* (Βραχμᾶνες) (in their philosophic roles),<sup>42</sup> *Garmanes* (Γαρμᾶνες), and *Hylobii* (Ὑλόβιοι) (Strabo, 15.1.59-60). The two main groups of wise men are the *Brachmanes* and the *Garmanes*. Within the *Garmanes*, there are two groups, the *Hylobii* and the less respected “physicians” (ἰατρικοί) who are “philosophers of man” (φιλοσόφους περὶ τὸν ἄνθρωπον) (15.1.60). Though Strabo failed to cite his source, he also wrote of another group of philosophers called the *Pramnae* (Πράμναι) whom he divides into “mountain,” “city” or “neighboring,” and “naked” (ὄρεινοί, πολιτικοί/προσχώριοι, and γυμνήται respectively) (15.1.70.5-6). It seems that Megasthenes did not introduce this term, since Strabo consistently and specifically cited Megasthenes elsewhere, but offered no citation in this instance (writing only “that they are distinguished” [ἀντιδιαροῦνται] from the *Brachmanes*, 15.1.70.1). Moreover, Strabo does not mention the term in the division that he specifically ascribes to Megasthenes at 15.1.59-60. Nevertheless, Strabo’s writing from the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC/AD is one of our earliest extant sources. The term *Pramnae* is thus an early addition in the canon of knowledge on Indian wise men. The two most recent sources, who claim Bardesanes as their source, Porphyry and Stobaeus, introduce a new name for the Indian wise men: *Samanaioi* (Σαμωναῖοι). The *Samanaioi*, like the earlier *Garmanes*, are juxtaposed to the *Brachmanes*.

The names used by the later Greek sources to refer to Indian wise men are remarkably close to the historic names of various groups of Indian sages. Additionally, many of the Greek’s descriptions of these groups appear to be quite accurate given modern historical scholarship. I will leave the discussion on the most puzzling issue of the identity of Onesicritus’/Alexander’s wise men until the end. First, the word *Brachmanes* (Βραχμᾶνες) is clearly the Greek derivative of the Sanskrit *Brahmanas* or Brahmins, the

<sup>42</sup> The Alexander historians, even though they do not apply the name *Brachmanes* to the naked ascetics Onesicritus meets, do recognize and name the *Brachmanes* who served as advisors to the kings and, according to the historians, helped incite rebellion in certain kingdoms. These are the men of the Brahman caste serving in their political, as opposed to philosophical/religious role. See Arrian (*Anabasis*, 6.16.5.2) and Diodorus Siculus (17.102.7.2), among others.

priestly caste of India. The historical Brahman male had a four-stage life called the *ashrama*.<sup>43</sup> After he completed an elementary education and turned eight, the Brahman was given a learned teacher, called a *guru*. The young Brahman lived with his *guru* and led an ascetic, celibate, vegetarian life with a few other students (called *brahmacarin*). After twelve years in this living arrangement, the student left his ascetic studies in order to marry and procreate. In fact, it was common for Brahmans to take multiple wives in order to fulfill this civic duty.<sup>44</sup> After he saw his first grandchild and grew to have completely white hair, the Brahman left his household. In some cases, a Brahman bequeathed his home to the care of his wife. In others, she left with him and joined him in living in a small hut as forest hermits (*vanaprastha*). Whether alone or with his spouse, a Brahman would live off the forest or the alms of others. The final stage of a Brahman's life was as a homeless wanderer (*sannyasin*), with only a staff, a begging bowl, and a few scraps of clothing. Importantly, at no time during the Brahman's life was he required to go naked.

Megasthenes quite accurately describes a number of these Brahmanic practices. In Strabo, Megasthenes notes that the Brahman child is educated, but given better teachers as he ages. After being taught as a child, the Brahman man lives an ascetic life in the forests outside the city, abstaining from meat, sex, and any comfort. Megasthenes wrote that Brahmans spent thirty-seven years as ascetics. Though this would have been an unusually long time spent in the first stage of the Brahman's life, an important Brahman law book, *The Laws of Manu*, recommends thirty-six years as the maximum length of time studying with a *guru*.<sup>45</sup> After this time, Megasthenes correctly noted, they returned to the city, lived a less ascetic life, married numerous women, and procreated. Furthermore, Megasthenes was correct that upon returning to the city, the Brahman could dress in finer clothing, wear jewelry, and eat meat again.<sup>46</sup> Megasthenes' comment that the Brahman could only eat meat of animals "that are of no help to man in his work" likely refers to the discouragement and later prohibition of eating cows and oxen, the latter an

---

<sup>43</sup> Basham, 1967. pp. 159-177. Basham notes that this was the ideal and often men did not complete the final two stages. As well, some men would skip the household stage and remain an ascetic and scholar. The four stages of an ideal Brahman's life are detailed in the ancient Hindu manuals of human conduct, the *Dharma Sutras*, composed as early as the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC and reflecting centuries old traditions (Basham, 1967, p. 113).

<sup>44</sup> Basham, 1967. pp. 174-5.

<sup>45</sup> *The Laws of Manu*, 3.

<sup>46</sup> Basham, 1967. p. 166.

important beast of burden. Megasthenes' claim of banning women from religious philosophy is unfounded, though they could indeed not be priests. Women could take part in religious scholarship and there are some examples of well-respected females in ancient Indian literature. That said, they were typically discouraged from a life of religion and asceticism, since their primary function was marriage and procreation.<sup>47</sup> Although Megasthenes mentions nothing of the last two stages of the Brahman's life, it is quite possible that he likely mistook them for an entirely different type of ascetic altogether, which we will see below. As for the Brachmanes' philosophy, their indifference to good and evil and their belief in opinions as "dream-life notions" and a creator god who pervades everything, indeed fit the philosophy of the early *Upanishads*, one of the ancient holy books of Brahmins.<sup>48</sup>

Megasthenes' term *Garmanes* (Γαρμάνες) is probably a Greek transliteration of the Sanskrit term *Sramana*, which literally means "one who is toiling" and, by the time of the Indian king Ashoka in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC (only a few decades after Megasthenes) came to refer to all the wandering ascetics, both Brahman and otherwise.<sup>49</sup> While in Strabo, the sigma becomes a gamma, in other works which cite Megasthenes, such as Clement of Alexandria, the term used is *Sarmanes* (Σαρμάνες) (*Stromata*, 1.15.71.5). In India by the 4<sup>th</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, *sramana* could refer to either Brahman ascetics, Jains (a sect of severe ascetics who went naked), or Buddhists.<sup>50</sup> Megasthenes identifies the group he calls the "forest-dwellers" (Υλόβιοι) as a sub-group of the *Sarmanes*, despite the fact that the group he describes corresponds well to the third stage of the Brahman's life, an ascetic life in the forest as a *vanaprastha*. Indeed his description of their lifestyle fits the *vanaprastha* well, including their little but still existent clothing. This is not entirely inaccurate, as the *sramana* term could encompass the ascetic stages of a Brahman's life, but it does illustrate Megasthenes' incomplete understanding of the Brahman's four-stage life. Also, Megasthenes says that these forest-dwellers are celibate, and as Bhagat says, he may be

---

<sup>47</sup> Basham, 1967. p. 180.

<sup>48</sup> Bhagat, M.G. *Ancient Indian Asceticism*. New Delhi: Munishiran Manoharlal Publishers, 1976. p. 295.

<sup>49</sup> Bhagat, 1976. p. 292.

<sup>50</sup> Dihle, A. (1964) 'The Conception of India in Hellenistic and Roman Literature', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, N.S. 10, p. 21. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, Buddhism and Jainism were quite new religions since both their founders lived in the late 5<sup>th</sup> century BC.

referring to Brahmins who have chosen to skip their second stage (marrying and running a household) and instead remain ascetic scholars, a not uncommon practice.<sup>51</sup> As for the less respected “physicians,” Megasthenes likely meant the provincial, village Brahmin who made their living by fortune-telling, sorcery, and magical healing.<sup>52</sup> Megasthenes correctly notes that all these ascetics would practice some form of self-mortification, often through standing in one posture all day long. Furthermore, Megasthenes notes that women are allowed to be *Sarmanes*. For the actual Indian groups corresponding to the *Sarmanes* he mentions, the *Hylobii* and the medicine men, it is possible that there were women versed in religion among them, though this was rare (see above). But, women sometimes accompanied their husbands as assistants in the forest-dwelling stage of the Brahmin life,<sup>53</sup> so perhaps Megasthenes didn’t differentiate between their two roles. Moreover, Megasthenes may simply be conflating the *Hylobii* with a number of other non-Brahmin ascetic sects which could include women. For example, perhaps Megasthenes had heard of Buddha’s decision to include nuns in his monastic orders. In Megasthenes time (early 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC), Buddhism was still young and localized in eastern India, but was included in the all-encompassing term *sramana*. Perhaps Megasthenes had heard of the Buddha’s decision, a controversial one, and included it in his description of the *Sarmanes*, despite the absence of any other references to Buddhists.

Clement of Alexandria, in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, provides the next additional name for a group of wise men: the *Semnoi* (Σεμνοί).<sup>54</sup> These ascetics live a celibate life and go naked. Dihle, I think rightly, identifies them as the Jains, a sect that took asceticism to an extreme.<sup>55</sup> The Jains wore no clothing, were celibate and allowed women into their fold. These characteristics pertain equally to the

---

<sup>51</sup> Bhagat, 1976, p. 295. Although forest-dwellers were required celibate so long as they were forest dwellers, they were typically only forest-dwellers for a limited amount of time and at other times were required to produce offspring.

<sup>52</sup> Bhagat, 1976, p. 140.; Basham, 1976, p. 199. G. Parker notes that in Sanskrit literature there are often two different Brahmins: one honored and one not. (Parker, G. *The Making of Roman India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>53</sup> Basham, 1967, p. 176.

<sup>54</sup> In fact, it’s actually Alexander Polyhistor who provides this new information, though we do not know by what means. Nevertheless, Alexander Polyhistor, writing in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, gained this knowledge after Megasthenes in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC.

<sup>55</sup> Dihle, 1964, p. 21.

contemporary sect called *Ajivikas*, but as I will show in a moment, the connection between the names *Semnoi* and Jains is too close for coincidence. Where, in Strabo, *Sarmanes* became *Garmanes*, Clement did the opposite, *Gemnoi* became *Semnoi*. And in fact, as Dihle points out, the 6<sup>th</sup> century lexicographer Hesychius of Alexandria defines *Gennoi* (Γεννοί) as *Gymnosophistai* (Γυμνοσοφιστάι).<sup>56</sup> Hesychius' spelling most clearly represents the Greek transliteration of Jain. Curiously, Clement of Alexandria attributes the worship of pyramidal structures to the *Gemnoi*. But this describes well the Buddhist practice of buildings stupas, which were large stone/earth mounded monuments supposedly covering some part of the remains of Buddha (which were allegedly spread around after his death) or another famous Buddhist. In fact, Clement of Alexandria makes the first direct reference to Buddhists in Greek Literature, writing: "Among the Indians are some who follow the precepts of Buddha, whom for his exceptional sanctity they have honored as a god"(εἶσι δὲ τῶν Ἰνδῶν οἱ τοῖς Βούττα πειθόμενοι παραγγέλμασιν. ὃν δι' ὑπερβολὴν σεμνότητος ὡς θεὸν τετιμήκασι.) (*Stromata*, 1.15.71.3). It seems likely that Clement of Alexandria simply confused some of the information he had read/heard concerning the Jains and the Buddhists.

Clement of Alexandria's rough contemporary Bardesanes, via Porphyry and Stobaeus, identifies yet another sect of Indian wise men, the *Samanaioi* (Σαμαναῖοι). Clement of Alexandria mentioned them before Bardesanes, but attributed the *Samanaioi* only to Bactria but not to India (1.15.71.3). Dihle argues convincingly that by the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, *Samanaioi* is a Greek transliteration of *samanaija*, the Aramaic word for Buddhists in the Kushan Empire located in Bactria. Dihle argues that Clement of Alexandria recognized the Bactrian *Samanaioi* as Buddhists, despite his describing Indian Buddhists as something separate later in the passage.<sup>57</sup> I, along with Stoneman, see no reason to think this is the case.<sup>58</sup> Rather, Clement identified some of the Indian wise men as Buddhists, but made no such connection to the Bactrian *Samanaioi*, thinking them something entirely different. But Bardesanes, writing a few years after

---

<sup>56</sup> Dihle, 1964, p. 21.

<sup>57</sup> Dihle, 1964, p. 22. Dihle claims that Clement must have received the two different pieces of information from different sources and thus made no effort to combine them.

<sup>58</sup> Stoneman, 1995, p. 109.

Clement of Alexandria, seems to have made the connection, likely because of his personal conversations with the Indian embassy. Like the *Sarmanes* and *Garmanes*, Bardesanes presents the *Samanaioi* as one of the two sects of the Indian *Gymnosophistai*, along with the *Brachmanes*. Bardesanes attributes nakedness to neither the *Brachmanes* nor the *Samanaioi*, despite nakedness being the clear impetus for the term *Gymnosophistai* in its original meaning. In fact, Bardesanes specifically mentions that Samanaioi wear robes (στολαί) (Porphry, *De abstinentia*, 4.17.41). By the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, helped greatly by the patronage of Indian royalty beginning with King Ashoka in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, Buddhism was one of the dominant religions in India and the main contender with Brahmanism/Hinduism. Thus it is not surprising that Bardesanes either ignored or was ignorant of other minor sects (including the Jains). His description of the *Samanaioi* lifestyle aptly describes the Buddhist life. The *Samanaioi* included people from all castes, unlike the hereditary *Brachmanes*. Indeed, the ability for anyone to be ordained as a Buddhist monk was of great appeal to Indians. Upon ordination they gave up all their material possessions, shaved their heads, and put on the iconic orange robe of a Buddhist monk.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, if they had a family (the Buddha himself had a wife and young son before he became a religious leader) they renounced it as well. Bardesanes, via Porphry, documents the tradition of kingly patronage, writing “Their [the *Samanaioi*’s] house and temples are founded by the king, and in them are stewards who receive a fixed allowance from the king for the support of the inmates of the convents” (...ἔχουσι δὲ οἴκους καὶ τεμένη ὑπὸ τοῦ βασιλέως οἰκοδομηθέντα, ἐν οἷς οἰκονόμοι εἰσὶν ἀπότακτόν τι λαμβάνοντες παρὰ τοῦ βασιλέως εἰς τροφήν τῶν συνιόντων...) (*De abstinentia*, 4.17.48-51). This is the first mention of the Buddhist monastic tradition, a tradition new among the religious orders of India. Bardesanes records that both the *Brachmanes* and the *Samanaioi* voluntarily commit suicide even in good health. Yet, suicide was forbidden to both Brahmans and Buddhists.<sup>60</sup> Bardesanes description of voluntary suicide might just be an elaboration on a favorite topic among the Greek scholars of India, the voluntary self-immolation made famous by Calanus, and erroneously attributed to all Indian wise men.

---

<sup>59</sup> Basham, 1967, p. 283.

<sup>60</sup> Bhagat, 1976, p. 294.

Finally we return to the original *Gymnosophistai* met by Onesicritus and Alexander. Who were they: Brahmans, Buddhists, Jains, or some other Indian ascetic sect? Their Greek name, *Gymnosophistai*, and their varied descriptions do not provide as easy or as clear identification as the other Indian wise men in Greek literature. Nevertheless, a number of scholars have made such an attempt. Tarn argues that they were Buddhists, largely because the question and answer form in some accounts is similar to dialogue form in some Buddhist literature.<sup>61</sup> Sedlar suggests that they are likely either Buddhists or Jains.<sup>62</sup> Berg and Parker take the Greeks at their word and assume that they are indeed Brahmans.<sup>63</sup> Stoneman ultimately argues that a solid identification is impossible because of the fluidity of Indian ascetic groups.<sup>64</sup> I will argue that they were Hindu ascetics, perhaps Brahman, though not one following the traditional fourfold *ashrama*.

But first, before I attempt to identify the historical *Gymnosophistai*, it is worth identifying Western influence on the Greek portrayal of the *Gymnosophistai* Alexander and Onesicritus meet, as this will have important implications later in this study. The main Western influence on the Greek depiction of the *Gymnosophistai* is Cynic philosophy.<sup>65</sup> Onesicritus' account, recorded in Strabo, forms the backbone of nearly all the later portrayal of Indian *Gymnosophistai*. Onesicritus was a Cynic, and Onesicritus' admission that he required three translators and that the conversation was like water flowing through mud suggests that some of the ideas Onesicritus puts in the Indians' mouths are not their own but Onesicritus'. Indeed, many of the ideas proposed by the *Gymnosophistai* in Onesicritus' and the Alexander historian's accounts have a Cynic ring. In fact, even the very concept of these squalid philosophers being unaffected by the presence of a king alludes to stories of Cynic philosophers disrespecting figures of authority. The fact that Arrian intersperses his account of Alexander's meeting with the *Gymnosophistai* with the story

---

<sup>61</sup> Tarn, *The Greeks in Bactria and India*, p. 415. Stoneman persuasively refutes this argument showing that this literary form was common to many different traditions in ancient literature (1995, p. 110-111).

<sup>62</sup> Sedlar, 1980, p. 67.

<sup>63</sup> Berg, B. (1970) 'Dandamis: an early Christian portrait of Indian Asceticism', *Classica et medievalia*, Vol. 31, pp. 269-305.; Parker, 2008. In many ways, Parker doesn't really care about their true identity.

<sup>64</sup> Stoneman, 1995, p. 116.

<sup>65</sup> For good arguments concerning the Cynicism in Greek accounts of the Gymnosophists, see Stoneman 1994 and 1995.

of the Cynic Diogenes telling Alexander to get out of his sun beam suggests that the ancient reader would have acknowledged this similarity as well (*Anabasis*, 7.2.1). Moreover, as Pearson notes, Calanus' arguments that man's life used to be easy, his demands that Onesicritus lay down on the hot rocks, and Mandanis' claim that the best house requires the fewest repairs all can be found in ancient sources on Cynicism and Onesicritus' teacher Diogenes in particular.<sup>66</sup> The very foundational ideas the *Gymnosophistai* in Onesicritus' account and those based on his propose are very Cynic. In particular, the Indian *Gymnosophistai* reject cultural standards in favor of living with nature. This is one of the most basic and important tenets of Cynic philosophy, which led the Cynics to do many things in direct opposition to prevailing norms and gaining them a lot of condemnation.<sup>67</sup> While some of the *Gymnosophistai*'s ideas may accurately reflect historical Indian ascetic thought (as some scholars argue), the fact that Onesicritus was a Cynic and that there is ample evidence of Cynic influence in Onesicritus' account suggests that the *Gymnosophistai*'s ideas may not be their own.<sup>68</sup> Rather, Onesicritus likely found interesting Eastern sages who seemed to live a Cynic lifestyle, and thus he portrays them as espousing a particularly Cynic philosophy in his account. As such, the suspect nature of the *Gymnosophistai*'s proposed philosophy leads me to ignore ideas attributed to the *Gymnosophistai* in Greek accounts and rather focus on their physical attributes and lifestyle in order to try to identify their historical model.

So to return to our attempt at identifying the Indian *Gymnosophistai* whom Alexander or Onesicritus supposedly met, first of all, the *Gymnosophistai* were certainly not Buddhists. Strict asceticism was rejected by the Buddha after he decided that a middle path between asceticism and indulgence was best.<sup>69</sup> The Buddha included nudity or near nudity in this rejected asceticism, introducing the yellow Buddhist robe. Also, the ascetic practices of sitting in the sun for a long time or holding a single position were common to both Jains and Hindu ascetics (including Brahmins), but denied to Buddhists. The absence of a number of distinguishing features of the *Gymnosophists* in Buddhist

---

<sup>66</sup> Pearson, 1960, p. 99.

<sup>67</sup> *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Philosophy*. Ed. David Sedley. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 174.

<sup>68</sup> Bhagat (1976, p. 292) suggests that the *Gymnosophists*' doctrine does embody some core Indian ideals.

<sup>69</sup> Bhagat, 1976, p. 165.

doctrine, I think, eliminates them as a possible identification. But this still leaves Jains, Brahmins following the *ashrama*, and other Hindu ascetics.

It is tempting to think that the *Gymnosophistai* were Jains since certain Jains, those of the *Digambara* group, were especially well known for their nakedness. But nakedness was not unique to the Jains, although they were one of the few major religious sects to include groups that made nudity a central tenet. Nevertheless, both Hindu ascetics and Brahmins in their ascetic stages of life might have gone naked.<sup>70</sup> In addition, some of the aspects of the *Gymnosophistai*'s lifestyle fit Jains and Hindu ascetics equally well. For example, the *Gymnosophists* are illustrated as living out in the open in a group with a leader. Jain groups of ascetics with a spiritual master (like Dandamis) were not unusual.<sup>71</sup> The gathering of the *Gymnosophistai* suggests they were not ascetic Brahmin following the *ashrama*. The Brahmin, in his fourth stage of life, lived the life of an ascetic wanderer living outside, but at this point he was solitary.<sup>72</sup> In the other ascetic stages, as described above, the Brahmin would live either in the home of his guru with other students or in his own forest hut perhaps with his wife. But the Hindu ascetic not following the Brahmin *ashrama* also might live in a group under the leadership of an elder.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, both Hindu ascetic and the Jains would practice their asceticism in ways such as standing motionless for long periods of time in the hot sun.<sup>74</sup> But while in some ways the *Gymnosophists* describe both Hindu ascetics and Jains, there are a number of key *Gymnosophic* attributes that suggest they were Hindu ascetics.

First and foremost, like the *Gymnosophistai*, Hindu ascetics were highly respected for their teachings and religious development by all levels of society, including even kings.<sup>75</sup> This respect meant that when the Hindu ascetics went around towns and cities begging for alms, the people would give freely, a fact noted about the naked philosophers whom Onesicritus met according to Strabo (15.1.65).

---

<sup>70</sup> On Hindu ascetic nudity, see Basham, 1967, p. 246. On Brahmin nudity, see Stoneman, 1995, p. 108.

<sup>71</sup> Bhagat, 1976, p. 176

<sup>72</sup> Basham, 1967, p. 177.

<sup>73</sup> Basham, 1967, p. 246.

<sup>74</sup> Basham, 1967, p. 246 and 294.

<sup>75</sup> Basham, 1967, p. 247; Bhagat, 1976, p. 326.

Yet the Jains were not well respected by society. Indeed they were reprehensible to the populous at large on account of their filth and disagreeability.<sup>76</sup> For example, in the *Acaranga Sutra* quoted by Bhagat, Mahavira, the founder of Jainism, was beaten by people, chased off by them, and had a very difficult time obtaining enough food via begging to survive.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, Jainism strictly forbade any anointing of the body, which Onesicritus, among others, claims that people readily did this for the *Gymnosophistai* wandering the cities (Strabo, 15.1.65).<sup>78</sup> And lastly, while suicide was not uncommon for the Jains, the Greeks description of self-immolation is not compatible with Jain philosophy. Although suicide was uncommon in Indian asceticism – it was strictly forbidden by Buddhists – Brahmins and Hindu ascetics were allowed to commit suicide in cases of sickness.<sup>79</sup> But suicide by fire was reserved for those who had killed a priest.<sup>80</sup> But more importantly, Jain suicide, which was more common, nevertheless was typically by starvation, modeled on the death of Mahavira.<sup>81</sup> Indeed, Jains were not allowed to kindle or use fire, so suicide by fire would be out of the question.<sup>82</sup> The origin of the Calanus story and Indian self-immolation might have come from a rare occurrence of an actual ascetic suicide, but perhaps the Greeks conflated the suicide of ascetics with the Indian practice of *sati* in which a “virtuous” wife would throw herself upon her husband’s pyre.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, a few Greek authors comment on this custom, the earliest being Philo Judaeus in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.<sup>84</sup> Regardless, the Greeks attribute a type of suicide to the *Gymnosophistai* which is simply incompatible with the Jain lifestyle, even if it would be highly unusual for a Hindu ascetic. Although Onesicritus’ *Gymnosophistai*, in many ways, could plausibly be either Jains or Hindu ascetics, certain key attributes suggest that the *Gymnosophistai* were naked, Hindu ascetics.

---

<sup>76</sup> Bhagat, 1976, p. 195.

<sup>77</sup> Bhagat, 1976, p. 184.

<sup>78</sup> Bhagat, 1976, p. 182.

<sup>79</sup> Stoneman, 1994, p. 505. It is worth noting that Calanus’ rationale for suicide in all the accounts in which he gives one is sickness or old age.

<sup>80</sup> *Laws of Manu*, 11.74.

<sup>81</sup> Bhagat, 1976, p. 188. Indeed, all the sanctioned forms of suicide for a Jain required a long waiting period (death by starvation, exposure, stillness, etc.) (Bhagat, 1976, p. 189).

<sup>82</sup> P. Dundas, *The Jains*, London: Routledge, 1992, p. 138.

<sup>83</sup> For an explanation of *sati*, see Basham, 1967, pp. 188-9.

<sup>84</sup> *De Abrahamo*, 33.178.182-3. See also Diodorus Siculus, 24.33.

In this chapter, I have outlined the major accounts of Indian wise men in Greek literature, describing how the Western world portrayed and viewed these Indians. I have suggested that it is quite possible that the three major reported meetings between Indians and the West reflect historical events. And I have illustrated how both the names and the groups' descriptions match surprisingly well with known ancient Indian ascetic groups. This proves that the Western world did have at least some factual knowledge of Indian asceticism, although the exact mode of exchange is impossible to know. Lastly, I offered an argument that the *Gymnosophistai* whom Onesicritus and Alexander met might have been Hindu ascetics.

### **Philostratus, Apollonius, and the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana***

Now that I have provided a brief account of the Greek tradition – up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD – of depicting Indian philosophers and sages, I will turn to the main focus of this study, the accounts of the Western sage and ascetic Apollonius and his visits to Indian and Ethiopian ascetic philosophers in Philostratus' biography, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*. The remainder of my study will focus on these accounts with a twofold purpose. First, I want to place these scenes within the Greek tradition of portraying India, suggesting areas where Philostratus clearly draws from existing accounts, areas where he presents new information drawn from non-extant accounts concerning Indian sages, or areas where, perhaps, he provides new information drawn from the Damis source which recounts an actual meeting with Indian sages. Second, I want to analyze how Philostratus presents Apollonius' visit with the Indian sages and Ethiopian Naked Ones and manipulates the existing tradition to suit his own portrayal of Apollonius.

But first, in this chapter I will provide the requisite background on the historical Apollonius of Tyana, his biographer Philostratus, and the main scholarly debates concerning Philostratus' biography, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*. In addition, I will discuss my study's relationship to these debates and its place in the tradition of scholarship on *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*.

### Apollonius of Tyana

We can be certain about little of Apollonius of Tyana's life. Few ancient sources remain to illuminate the man and the factual accuracy of the remaining sources is suspect. According to these sources (primarily the hefty biography of Apollonius by Philostratus, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, hereafter the *VA*), Apollonius was born at Tyana in Cappadocia in the eastern part of the Roman Empire, sometime in the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.<sup>85</sup> As a boy he adopted the Pythagorean philosophy and lifestyle, living henceforth a wandering, ascetic life. In addition to being a philosopher, he was supposedly a miracle-worker and seer, healing the sick, accurately foreseeing a number of major events (including the assassination of the emperor Domitian), and even rising from the dead. These same deeds earned him reproach as a magician, sorcerer, and practitioner of dark magic, a label Philostratus consciously meant to refute in his biography (*VA*, 1.2). According to Philostratus, Apollonius traveled all over the known world, visiting the edges of the earth in the East (India), the South (Ethiopia), and the West (Cadiz, Spain), and everywhere in between. He was profoundly knowledgeable on religious practice and consistently corrected malpractice at temples and holy sites that he visited. Lastly, Apollonius took a rather active role in politics, both meeting with prominent men (like the soon-to-be-emperor Vespasian) and lecturing against tyranny.

Scholars agree on little of what to accept about Apollonius' life. Bowie argues that due to the questionable veracity of the literary tradition surrounding Apollonius' life, we must hold details concerning Apollonius attributed to the literary tradition suspect, and instead put more faith in details attributed to oral tradition.<sup>86</sup> Thus, we can only be very certain about a few details of Apollonius' life: his being a prophet and miracle worker active in and around Ephesus and that he had a reputation as a magician who produced talismans. In addition, Bowie argues, though with less certainty, that we can

---

<sup>85</sup> Besides Philostratus, we have few extant sources on Apollonius life and all are very brief. The historian Cassius Dio references him once, recording that Apollonius while in Ephesus witnessed Domitian's assassination in Rome. A number of philosophers cite him and his works as a source (see below). Lastly, a few authors reference Apollonius as either a Pythagorean or a sorcerer (or both), e.g. Lucian in *Alexander* and Origen in *Contra Celsum*.

<sup>86</sup> Bowie, E.L. (1978) 'Apollonius of Tyana: Tradition and Reality', *ANRW*, II.16.2, p. 1682.

accept that Apollonius foresaw Domitian's assassination. Moreover, he suggests that Apollonius likely took part in the political and religious affairs of the cities he visited (whatever they might have been) and that some sort of argument existed between him and the Stoic philosopher Euphrates (a rivalry much emphasized by Philostratus). Interestingly, Bowie claims that Apollonius' Pythagoreanism rests on less sturdy ground than typically thought, though he does admit that the available evidence suggests a "provisional" acceptance of this detail.<sup>87</sup> Dzielska adds a few additional details to the historical Apollonius' life. She agrees with Bowie that Apollonius did indeed "foresee" the assassination of Domitian in some manner. And assuming this and a number of other known historical events and dates, she argues that Apollonius was born around 40 AD and died around 120 AD.<sup>88</sup> This sets Apollonius' life later than traditionally believed, originally 3 or 4 BC to 97 AD.<sup>89</sup>

On the other hand, Anderson takes a much bolder position towards the historical Apollonius than either Bowie or Dzielska. He argues that Philostratus' main source Damis, whose authenticity Bowie and Dzielska deny (on the "Damis Problem," see below), was indeed an actual person and a source.<sup>90</sup> Accordingly, Anderson argues for much less skepticism about many of the details in the biography attributable to Damis, such as the relationship between Apollonius and the emperor Vespasian, the extensive travels around Greece, Rome, and Egypt, and even the trips to India and Ethiopia. Of course Anderson takes many of the details with a grain of salt, attributing much embellishment to Philostratus and many factual/chronological errors to Philostratus' interpretation of his sources and to the sources themselves. But he nonetheless suggests the significant possibility of a grain of truth beneath the sophistic veneer.

Apollonius supposedly wrote a number of works, though none survive in full. Both the *VA* and the *Suda* lexicon attribute a number of published works to Apollonius: a collection of letters sent to fellow

---

<sup>87</sup> Bowie, 1978, p. 1692.

<sup>88</sup> Dzielska, M. *Apollonius of Tyana in Legend and History*. Rome: 'L'Erma' di Bretschneider, 1986. p. 32 and 37.

<sup>89</sup> These are the dates extracted by the scholarly analysis of the events in Philostratus' biography on Apollonius. Dzielska provides a summary of this scholarly debate, 1986, pp. 32-38.

<sup>90</sup> Anderson, G. *Philostratus: Biography and Belles Lettres in the Third Century A.D.* London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1986. pp. 155-173.

philosophers, followers, public officials, and even emperors; a book on proper sacrifice (Περὶ θυσιῶν); a book on the life of Pythagoras (Πυθαγόρου βίος); a book on the philosophical views of Pythagoras (Δόξαι Πυθαγόρου); a book on astrology (Περὶ μαντείας ἀστέρων); a will; and his defense speech given before Domitian. Only a number of his letters and a fragment of his *On Sacrifices* still exist,<sup>91</sup> and both Porphyry and Iamblichus cite Apollonius' *Life of Pythagoras* as a source for their own biographies of the philosopher. But due to the lack of corroborating evidence and an Apollonian tradition often embellished, including with forged documents, scholars deny definitive confirmation to any of Apollonius' works. For example, Bowie believes that *On Sacrifices* was likely a fabrication and while he grants authenticity to some of Apollonius' letters, he denies others, particularly those that criticize cities and individuals.<sup>92</sup> Dzielska, while she agrees with Bowie on the letters, argues that while *On Sacrifices* was not written by Apollonius, it nevertheless was written around the time of Apollonius' life and by those who could accurately represent his beliefs.<sup>93</sup>

Like his life itself, Apollonius' popularity in the ancient world both while alive and after death is difficult to gauge. Inscriptions<sup>94</sup> and historical testimony suggest that after Apollonius' death he became the object of a hero cult, the members of which included the Severan emperors. Indeed, it was supposedly at the behest of Julia Domna, Septimius Severus' wife, that Philostratus undertook his biography of Apollonius (VA, 1.3). His home city of Tyana, as well as a number of others, built a shrine to him posthumously. But it is unknown how extensive Apollonius' popularity was and how quickly it grew. Dzielska argues that the absence of his name in any contemporary author suggests that Apollonius, during his lifetime, was known only in the few cities in the Eastern part of the Roman Empire in which he was active.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, she points to John Chrysostom of the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, who says Apollonius was only famous in a limited area. And the earliest extant reference to Apollonius occurs in the later part of the 2<sup>nd</sup>

---

<sup>91</sup> Sections are quoted and attributed to Apollonius by the 3<sup>rd</sup> century philosopher Porphyry and the 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> century Christian scholar Eusebius.

<sup>92</sup> Bowie, E.L., 1978. Bowie argues that it is highly unlikely that letters openly reprimanding cities and individuals would have survived, since neither the cities nor individuals would have any motivation to publish them (p. 1691).

<sup>93</sup> Dzielska, 1986.

<sup>94</sup> On a discussion of these archaeological remains, cf. Bowie, 1978, p. 1687-1688.

<sup>95</sup> Dzielska, 1986, p. 183.

century AD in Lucian's *Alexander*, in which the false prophet Alexander is said to be a student of Apollonius. Moiragenes wrote the first known biography of Apollonius around 140/150 AD, but it is no longer extant.<sup>96</sup> Another biographer, Maximus of Aegeae, covered Apollonius' childhood in a biography published sometime after Moiragenes but before Philostratus in approximately 220 AD (since Philostratus cites Maximus as a source).<sup>97</sup> The shrines ascribed to Apollonius and the Eastern origins of both Lucian and Maximus suggest that Apollonius was known in the middle and late 2<sup>nd</sup> century throughout the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire.<sup>98</sup> And obviously, Apollonius was known well enough in the Roman Empire (perhaps primarily in the East) by the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD to have attracted the attention of the Severan emperors, no doubt helped by Julia Domna's Syrian origin. But any more detail than this is impossible to provide. Apollonius' fame really ballooned after Philostratus' biography. In the early 4<sup>th</sup> century, Sossianus Hierocles, a vehement persecutor of Christians, wrote a treatise comparing Apollonius with Jesus Christ. Hierocles uses Philostratus' work as the basis of his description of Apollonius. This treatise provoked a response, *Contra Hierocles*, from the Christian scholar Eusebius condemning Hierocles and Apollonius. The use of Apollonius as a platform to criticize Christianity held the interest of Pagan and Christian apologists for centuries.<sup>99</sup>

The historical Apollonius of Tyana is and will likely always be an elusive figure. With limited sources and a complex tradition, modern scholars are hard pressed to prove even the most basic facts of his life. It seems that the best we can do is exceptionally limited: Apollonius of Tyana was an itinerant miracle worker and Pythagorean ascetic who lived in the eastern part of the Roman Empire in the 1<sup>st</sup> and likely early 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD. But fortunately, one of the few extant sources on Apollonius, the biography by Philostratus, is of exceptional interest in its own right both as a piece of the Apollonian legend and for

---

<sup>96</sup> This date is proposed by Bowie, 1978, p. 1678.

<sup>97</sup> Jones, 2005, p. 4.

<sup>98</sup> Cassius Dio writes that Caracalla built or expanded a temple to Apollonius in Tyana (77.18.4). According to Maximus (via Philostratus in book 1), Apollonius had a cult statue in the temple of Asklepios at Aegaeae in Cilicia. There is also an extant inscription to Apollonius found in Adana (see discussion by Bowie, 1978, p. 1687-1688).

<sup>99</sup> For discussions and details on the afterlife of the Apollonian tradition, see Dzielska, 1986, pp. 153-183; Bowie, 1685-1692. Some important figures include Nicomachus Flavianus, who in the very late 4<sup>th</sup> century translated Philostratus' biography into Latin, the (near) contemporary church fathers St. Jerome and St. Augustine, and indeed Arabic texts from the early Middle Ages.

its literary techniques and topics. Moreover, it is this work and its description of Apollonius' visit to India and Ethiopia which will be the focus of the rest of my thesis. It is to this work that I now turn.

### Philostratus

The author of the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, Philostratus “the Athenian” was born in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD and died in the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century.<sup>100</sup> He was a member of a well connected Athenian family originally from Lemnos. Three other Philostrati from his family are known in historical records, all authors of various treatises.<sup>101</sup> The Athenian Philostratus was a sophist.<sup>102</sup> The sophists of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD in the Roman Empire were professional public speakers who were paid, among other services, to give entertaining and rhetorical speeches. But they were in many ways paid to be intellectuals, serving in politics as ambassadors and political advisors as well as authoring poetry, history, educational handbooks, and other forms of literature. The 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries saw a great thriving of sophists, many of whose works we still have today. Modern scholars call this period “the Second Sophistic,” a name coined by Philostratus himself.

Philostratus received his education largely in Athens and, though he never held any official positions, gained entry into the inner circle of the empress Julia Domna, wife of Septimius Severus. During this time he presumably lived in or around Rome, but upon Julia Domna's suicide after her son Caracalla's assassination Philostratus likely moved back to Athens. At this time he wrote his two longest works: first, his *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (between 220 and 230 AD) and, second, his *Lives of the Sophists*. Philostratus also wrote the *Heroikos* (dialogues on the heroes of the Trojan War), the *Gymnastikos* (a treatise on athletic games including the Olympics), and the *Epistolai* (a collection of love letters). He died during the reign of Philip the Arab.

---

<sup>100</sup> For two good synopses of Philostratus' life see the introduction to the Loeb's 'Apollonius of Tyana' and the *OCD* entry under “Philostratus.”

<sup>101</sup> The primary source for the lives of the four Philostrati is the *Suda* lexicon, although there are numerous complications regarding its entries on these men, including even questions concerning how many Philostrati there really were (see Anderson, 1986, pp. 1-8 and 291-296 for a good overview).

<sup>102</sup> The *Suda* writes that all the Philostrati were sophists (421-423).

### *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*

The *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* is the longest extant ancient biography. It is composed of eight books which cover Apollonius' life from birth to death. The following is a short synopsis of each book:

**Book 1:** Philostratus describes Apollonius' birth, presaged by a number of miraculous portents.

In Apollonius' youth he becomes a Pythagorean and devotee of Askclepios, and already shows great potential for learning and piety. Apollonius decides to perfect his wisdom with a visit to the Brachmanes in India and sets off, soon meeting his most faithful follower and scribe Damis. After a visit, the Parthian king Vardanes supplies Apollonius and his entourage supplies for the journey to India.

**Book 2:** Apollonius sees many wonders in India and meets with the wise Indian King Phraotes in the city of Taxila.

**Book 3:** Continuing east, Apollonius meets with the Indian Wise Men, led by Iarchas, in their hill-town.

**Book 4:** Leaving India, Apollonius returns to Greece, visiting many cities in Ionia and the mainland. At these cities he performs miracles, gives lectures, and corrects the practice of worship at the local temples. When traveling to Rome, Apollonius is urged to flee in fear of Nero. While unfazed by the threat, Apollonius sets off to Spain.

**Book 5:** Apollonius and his retinue spend time in Spain and then head to Alexandria. In Alexandria, Apollonius meets the future emperor Vespasian, with whom he discusses a number of topics.

**Book 6:** Apollonius travels south to Ethiopia and visits the Ethiopian wise men, the "Naked Ones." He finds them less wise than the Indians, though they are both ethnological and philosophical descendents. Leaving the "Naked Ones," he returns to Alexandria and continues on to various cities around the Mediterranean, working miracles and giving lectures.

**Book 7:** Due to Apollonius' lectures against tyranny and alleged encouragement to leading men to revolt against Domitian, Apollonius is arrested and brought to trial. He defends himself against the charges, but is rebuked by the emperor and thrown back in prison.

**Book 8:** Apollonius appears before Domitian again and is acquitted, subsequently magically disappearing from the courthouse. Philostratus includes the long speech Apollonius would have given had Domitian not so quickly absolved him. Apollonius meets with Damis outside of Rome and travels back to Greece. Philostratus then provides a number of the traditional accounts of Apollonius' death and recounts his supposed resurrection in which he proved the immortality of the soul.

Since the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* is the only extant biography of Apollonius and our chief source on his life, it has been the subject of much scholarly work, most works centering on its historical reliability.<sup>103</sup> To gauge its veracity scholars have focused on Philostratus' sources. He names four: (1) oral tradition, (2) a biography by Maximus of Aegeae (mentioned above), (3) a biography by Moiragenes (mentioned above), and (4) a memoir (δέλτοι) of a particularly devoted follower of Apollonius named Damis. This memoir supposedly contained the account of Damis' time with Apollonius, which spanned nearly Apollonius' whole life. Included in Damis' memoir were "not only his [Apollonius'] journeys...but also his sayings, speeches, and predictions" (ἀποδημίας... καὶ γνώμας καὶ λόγους καὶ ὅποσα ἐς πρόγνωσιν εἶπε) (VA, 1.3). Early in his career, when Apollonius was headed east to India, he stopped in the city of Old Ninos (Syrian Hierapolis). There Damis came to hear him and offered his services, since he knew "every language of the Barbarians" (τὰς φωνὰς τῶν βαρβάρων...πάσας) (VA, 1.19). Philostratus says that these memoirs were unknown until brought to Julia Domna, who gave them to Philostratus to transcribe them and rewrite them in a better style (VA, 1.3). Philostratus disparages the biographer Moiragenes, claiming that he was "greatly ignorant" (πολλὰ ἀγνοήσαντι) of Apollonius. Thus, by Philostratus' own admission and by his rejection of the other major biography of Apollonius,

---

<sup>103</sup> The three major, modern works on this question are Bowie (1978), Dzielska (1986), and Anderson (1986).

Moiragenes, Damis' memoirs are his main source.<sup>104</sup> But Damis is a seriously problematic source, so much so that most scholars argue that he is a fiction.

Bowie proposes the oldest modern (post-1970) analysis of the nature of Damis. He ultimately argues that Damis is an invention of Philostratus, neither a real person nor a name attached to an actual work given to Philostratus by Julia Domna.<sup>105</sup> Bowie focuses on a prior scholarly work by F. Grosso,<sup>106</sup> who argued that Damis was a pupil of Apollonius and did provide memoirs for Philostratus. Grosso argued for Damis' existence because the history in Philostratus is coherent and without internal contradiction. Bowie (agreeing with the objection of E. Meyer)<sup>107</sup> contends that internal consistency merely shows that Philostratus knew history well enough to avoid error. And since we can occasionally check Philostratus' history with our limited sources, certainly Philostratus had access to enough sources to produce a historically coherent story. Furthermore, Bowie shows that there are, in fact, inconsistencies within the VA.<sup>108</sup> For instance, Philostratus mixes up the dates of the reign of the Parthian king Vardanes, whom Apollonius meets on his way towards India. Vardanes sat on the Parthian throne for only three years until his death.<sup>109</sup> But Apollonius visits and leaves Vardanes' court nearly four years after Vardanes' accession and returns and meets with Vardanes again after he historically had died. In addition, Philostratus' dates for the trials the philosopher Musonius Rufus endured at the hands of Nero are confused. Similarly, Philostratus' depiction of Demetrius the Cynic, who is a companion of Apollonius, differs significantly from other extant accounts of the philosopher. Bowie argues that Damis, if a student of Apollonius, would have little incentive to distort Demetrius since men who knew Demetrius would still be alive and able to condemn Damis' depiction.<sup>110</sup> Bowie offers a final example of inconsistency within Philostratus' biography: the consecration of Vespasian at Alexandria. In Philostratus, Apollonius meets with Vespasian in Alexandria, has a number of lengthy conversations with Vespasian and his advisors

---

<sup>104</sup> The other source Philostratus cites, Maximus, concerned only Apollonius' childhood.

<sup>105</sup> Bowie, 1978, pp. 1663-1667.

<sup>106</sup> Grosso F. (1954) 'La vita di Apollonio di Tiana' come fonte storico, *Acme* 7, pp. 333-533.

<sup>107</sup> Meyer, E. (1917) 'Apollonios von Tyana und die Biographie des Philostratus,' *Hermes* 52, pp. 371-424.

<sup>108</sup> Bowie, 1978, pp. 1655-1662.

<sup>109</sup> Bowie, 1978, pp. 1655.

<sup>110</sup> Bowie, 1978, p. 1659.

Dio and Euphrates, and sacrifices with the emperor (VA, 5). But both Tacitus and Suetonius cover Vespasian's time in Alexandria in great detail and Apollonius and Vespasian's supposed philosophical advisors appear nowhere in these accounts. Nor do any of the testimonia on Dio or Euphrates put them in Alexandria with Vespasian.<sup>111</sup> Bowie uses a specific example of the general objection leveled against the Philostratean Apollonius: no contemporary source mentions the man who supposedly had a very active role in a number of Roman emperors' lives. Bowie summarizes his argument: “Damis presents a historical [and political] background too sophisticated for his station [as a simple scribe] while the palpable inexactitudes come precisely where he ought to be best informed, at Apollonius' entrances on stage.”

Bowie suggests that Damis is a Philostratean invention, invoking a commonly used novelistic technique of inventing sources which recently were “uncovered.”<sup>112</sup> Since many popular novels were contemporary with Philostratus, Philostratus could assume that readers would recognize his invocation of a fictitious source as a novelistic technique. Furthermore, in this way Philostratus would not be abusing Julia Domna's name, since the fiction would be obvious to Greek readers. Thus Julia Domna cannot be used to suggest Damis' authenticity.<sup>113</sup> Bowie supports this view by enumerating the other widely recognized novelistic techniques/content in the VA: extensive travel, the title *Τὰ ἐς τὸν Τυανέα Ἀπολλώνιον* (more similar to novels' titles than biographies), and the main character's persecutions by evil men in power.<sup>114</sup> And lastly, Bowie argues that many of Apollonius' opinions and interests are likely Philostratus' own as opposed to the historic Apollonius.<sup>115</sup>

---

<sup>111</sup> Bowie, 1978, p. 1660.

<sup>112</sup> Bowie cites, among others, the 4th century work by Lucius Septimius which supposed translated from Phoenician the long-lost diary of Dictys of Crete, the companion of Idomeneus and Meriones during the Trojan War. The diary was clearly a fictional source (1978, p. 1663). Another example of invented sources occurs at the beginning of the novel *Leucippe and Clitophon* by Achilles Tatius, written in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century. It begins with the narrator looking on a votive painting depicting the myth of Europa and then meeting Clitophon who then proceeds to tell both the narrator and his audience his story (Bowie briefly mentions this, 1978, p. 1664).

<sup>113</sup> Bowie, 1978, p. 1663.

<sup>114</sup> Bowie notes the similarity of Philostratus' title to the novels, which begin “*Τὰ περὶ/κατὰ...*,” as opposed to the normal biography, which follow the pattern “*τοῦ δεῖνος βίος*” (1978, p. 1665).

<sup>115</sup> For a discussion on these projected interests, see Bowie, 1978, p. 1690.

Dzielska largely agrees with Bowie. She suggests that Philostratus was more interested in Greek Romance and rhetoric than in the historical Apollonius, and thus embellished Apollonius and attached 3<sup>rd</sup> century values to him.<sup>116</sup> Following Bowie, she argues that Damis is fictitious and his memoirs are invented by Philostratus. Indeed, Dzielska says that the *VA* is “a falsification compiled with a chronicler’s precision.”<sup>117</sup> She argues, following Bowie’s lead, that the only figure historically connected to Apollonius is the philosopher Euphrates, who, Bowie and her claim, had a real rivalry with Apollonius.

Anderson, on the other hand, takes the opposite position: Damis is in fact real and produced a set of memoirs used by Philostratus. Anderson admits that there are two serious arguments against the existence of Damis: (1) it is very useful for Philostratus to have a monopoly on an eye-witness with which he can discredit prior biographies (i.e. Moiragenes), and (2) there are a number of clear parallels between the *VA* and contemporary novels.<sup>118</sup> But Anderson rejects a number of other objections. The absence of Apollonius in other contemporary sources, he argues, does not prove Damis’ nonexistence. Rather, this is a common occurrence for sages in ancient history (e.g. Secundus or Alexander of Abonouteichos in Lucian) and little can be assumed by our lack of sources. In addition, although the material ascribed by Philostratus to Damis contains many of Philostratus’ own embellishments, this does not suggest Damis’ nonexistence. Philostratus admits that he was given Damis’ memoirs to improve their style (*VA*, 1.3), so of course he is going to add sophistic flourish and embellishment to the grains of truth of Damis. Furthermore, Anderson argues that there was already enough material on Apollonius (e.g. oral traditions and Apollonius’ letters) with which Philostratus could use to discredit prior biographers. That is, Philostratus had no need to invent Damis.

Anderson suggests that scholars must look directly at the material attributed by Philostratus to Damis to gauge Damis’ reality.<sup>119</sup> He provides a strict test of whether the data is ascribed to Damis: it must be accompanied by the seal “Damis says...” (ὁ Δάμις φησί...). Anderson points out that under this

---

<sup>116</sup> Dzielska, 1986, p. 14.

<sup>117</sup> Dzielska, 1986, p. 24.

<sup>118</sup> Anderson, 1986, p. 156.

<sup>119</sup> Anderson, 1986, p. 157.

criterion there is a lot of information presented by Philostratus not attributed to Damis, and, in fact, this information is the more fantastic (and thus less reliable). Much of the information concerning India and Ethiopia, certainly the most fantastic parts of the *VA*, are ascribed not to Damis but to popular tradition or unnamed sources, indicated by the generic “they say...” (φασί). As Anderson says, “it is consistently true that information prefixed by φασί is inferior or faulty; if Damis is not the most reliable source, neither does he seem to be the least.”<sup>120</sup> In accounts where Damis’ alleged contributions are juxtaposed with others (e.g. in India at Taxila [Damis] and with the Sages [others]), Damis’ contributions are often the more credible. Also, Anderson rejects the claim that one can reduce all of Damis’ supposed contributions to either the Alexander historians or Philostratus’ own creation based upon his own interests. This is a clear rebuttal to Bowie’s objection.<sup>121</sup> Similarly in contrast to Bowie, Anderson claims that the similarity between Apollonius’ interests in Philostratus’ biography and Philostratus’ own interests does not prove that Apollonius’ interests are not authentic. Perhaps they simply had some similar interests. Lastly, Anderson argues that Damis cannot be held accountable for historical inaccuracies which are not attributed to him. This undermines arguments concerning Demetrius, since Damis is not cited in these accounts. Anderson summarizes his argument as follows: “All in all, the indications of Damis in Philostratus are at least consistent with the existence of a source which need not lay claim to much of the obviously ‘Philostratean’ material: while Damis’ existence would of course have been no restriction on Philostratus’ powers of amplification. One suspects that he has simply stretched a real and not very readily characterized Damis-*Quelle* in a number of ways...”<sup>122</sup>

Anderson suggests that Damis likely provided something upon which Philostratus embellished. Philostratus is able to extend Damis’ account with scenes introduced by φασί and to ignore Damis’ account with the claim that “Damis wasn’t there.”<sup>123</sup> But then who was Damis? Bowie argues that the

---

<sup>120</sup> Anderson, 1986, p. 158.

<sup>121</sup> Bowie, 1976, pp. 1680-1684.

<sup>122</sup> Anderson, 1986, p. 164-165.

<sup>123</sup> Anderson, 1986, p. 165.

fictional Damis may have been a literary homage to the Ephesian sophist Flavius Damianus.<sup>124</sup>

Damianus' name suggests that he may have been a descendent of a Damis. Furthermore, he was loyal to the Severan emperors and provided Philostratus information on two of his sophists in his *Lives*.<sup>125</sup> Bowie tentatively suggests that Damianus provided Philostratus information about Apollonius' time in Ephesus. As such, the fictional Damis represents a "complimentary allusion" to one of Philostratus' respected sources. But Anderson proposes a very different identification. Looking for other characters named Damis in extant ancient literature, Anderson finds two other references which he argues are the same Damis.<sup>126</sup> First, in Lucian's *Iuppiter Tragoedus* (written around 50 years before the VA), there is an Epicurean Damis who attacks the anthropomorphized Greek gods. As Anderson notes, it would seem obvious that Lucian simply invented this figure since an Epicurean would be an ideal objector to Greek gods. But, Anderson argues, Origen does associate an unnamed Epicurean with Apollonius.<sup>127</sup> As such, it is at least conceivable that this Epicurean Damis is the same follower of Apollonius. Furthermore, a character similar to Lucian's Epicurean Damis appears in a late medieval Persian work, the *Marzuban-nameh*. A Babylonian sage called Dini criticizes the abilities of spirits and on a mountain top defeats the demon spokesman with an argument on the nobility of the pure soul. As Anderson claims: "There is no room for doubt about the identity of these versions, in spite of the change of location: both dwell on the inept rehearsal for the debate by Zeus [in Lucian] and the demon prince [in the *Marzuban-nameh*] in an almost identical way."<sup>128</sup> Indeed, Anderson suggests that these two episodes are very similar to the event in Philostratus in which Damis expels a spirit on a mountain in the Caucasus (VA, 2.4). Apollonius provides Damis with the same argument used by Dini: the power of the soul. The most probable explanation for three very similar stories concerning a Damis figure, Anderson says, is that a real Damis existed, with a reputation as an exorcist, who authored the memoirs used by Philostratus. Damis' alleged

---

<sup>124</sup> Bowie, 1976, p. 1670.

<sup>125</sup> The Sophists Aristeides and Hadrianus (Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists*, 1.9 and 2.10, respectively). Damianus himself had a biography in Philostratus' work *Lives of the Sophists* (2.23).

<sup>126</sup> Anderson, 1986, p. 166-169.

<sup>127</sup> Anderson cites Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 6.41.

<sup>128</sup> Anderson, 1986, p. 166.

Epicureanism was a likely categorization of someone who, as an exorcist had “no time for ghosts or spirits.” Thus Anderson claims that not only was Damis a historical figure who provided Philostratus with his main source, but also that this Damis is evident in other extant literature with a reputation as a Epicurean and exorcist.

I have included this lengthy discussion on the historical authenticity of Philostratus’ *VA* for two reasons. First, no work concerning Philostratus’ biography would be complete without at least presenting these foundational questions concerning his work, particularly the question on the Damis source. And second, any study of the *VA* must not only acknowledge these unanswered questions but also grapple with the implications of such questions on the study. As I stated above, my analysis of Philostratus’ depiction of Apollonius’ visit to the Indian Wise Men and the Ethiopian/Egyptian Naked Ones will focus on, first, the influence of the prior Greek accounts of Indian sages on Philostratus, and, two, how Philostratus uses and manipulates this tradition to serve his own depiction of Apollonius. As such, should Damis prove to be a real and reliable source concerning the trip to India and Ethiopia, my study would have to take account of this. Should Philostratus have had a true Damis source, then any detail in Philostratus’ account of India and Ethiopia could reflect information provided by Damis and would have to be examined in this light.

While my analysis does not seek to answer conclusively any questions concerning the historicity of the Damis source, it nevertheless will offer new material and perspective concerning this question. For example, if the analysis of the influence of the Greek tradition of portraying Indian sages on Philostratus depictions of the visits to the Indian and Ethiopian philosophers fails to explain much of the biographer’s account, then this may very well suggest the influence of other accounts such as the Damis source. On the other hand, if such an analysis explains most, if not all, of Philostratus’ account, then this would suggest that the Damis source is indeed the invention of Philostratus and thus a device to allow Philostratus a free hand in using other sources to depict Apollonius’ travels as Philostratus desires. It might also suggest that the Damis source is so minimal as to be generally inconsequential and much less important than Philostratus intimates, indeed suggesting that Philostratus uses this minimal source in the same way as an

entirely fictional one. Moreover, if the portrayal of Apollonius' visits to Indian and Ethiopian sages suggests a historically accurate depiction of actual philosophical or religious groups (with details beyond those in extant Greek sources), this might support claims of a historical Damis source that accurately reflects a historical trip to India or Ethiopia made by Apollonius. And, of course, the opposite conclusion might be drawn if a historically impossible account unfolds. These possibilities will be explored after the first stage of my analysis on Philostratean influences. My study will proceed under the tentative hypothesis that Damis is in fact not historical and my analysis will test this hypothesis. But I will now briefly discuss why my study can, in fact, accommodate both possibilities of Damis' historicity.

Philostratean scholars, who disagree over Damis, agree that Philostratus did not write his biography to understand Apollonius or even present a historically accurate man, but rather glorify his memory, clear his name of sorcery, and write an entertaining biography.<sup>129</sup> Regardless of the historical tradition available to Philostratus, he admits that at least part of his purpose was stylistic, i.e. sophistic embellishment (VA, 1.3). Philostratus combines and manipulates what information and sources he had to portray an Apollonius largely of his own creation. So if Damis is indeed fictional, as Bowie and Dzielska claim, I need not worry that as I argue for various influences on Philostratus I am ignoring influence of a historical Damis and the information presented in his supposed memoirs. That is, if Philostratus invented Damis then any scene attributed to Damis is the work of Philostratus, either of his own creation or influenced by other sources. On the other hand, if Damis, or at least a source attributed to Damis, is indeed real, as Anderson maintains, my work and methodology nevertheless remain largely unaltered. Philostratus cites Damis relatively rarely in the accounts of Apollonius' visits to Indian and Ethiopian philosophers.<sup>130</sup> So even allowing for the existence of the Damis source, most of the information presented on Indian and Ethiopian sages is still open for an analysis concerning other Greek influence. And even the information strictly attributed to Damis may still have been greatly influenced by other Greek sources when Philostratus embellished it. Indeed, Anderson argues only for the existence of Damis

---

<sup>129</sup> Bowie, 1976, p. 1652-1653; Dzielska, 1987, p. 13-14; Anderson, 1986, p. 135; Jones, 2005, p.11

<sup>130</sup> Anderson, 1986, p. 161.

and his memoirs but declines making many substantial claims about their exact substance. For example, Anderson admits that Damis' memoirs may only have been simply a collection of proverbs attributed to Apollonius, which may have provided Philostratus with plenty of foundation upon which to build his biography.<sup>131</sup> In this way, despite Philostratus' use of Damis' memoirs, the information derived from Damis may only be the basic facts, which Philostratus greatly lengthened and embellished using other sources available to him or his own imagination. The nature of Philostratus' use of the Damis source allows my study to take a highly tentative stance towards the historical reality of such a source, at least until my study has the ability to weigh in on the question of the Damis source's reality more heavily (although even then the conclusion by necessity will remain rather cautious).

J.A. Francis provides a final argument for the implications of the Damis question on my study.<sup>132</sup> Francis argues that focus on the historical accuracy of Philostratus' biography, specifically concerning the existence of Damis, forces a dichotomy between truth and fiction utterly foreign to ancient authors and readers.<sup>133</sup> According to Francis (and a number of other scholars of the ancient novel),<sup>134</sup> authors and their readers would not have ascribed truth to only historical accurate works, but rather could find a certain type of truth in works simultaneously acknowledged as fiction. Literary techniques such as fictional, recently uncovered sources are a way to authenticate the information presented and persuade readers that, though not every detail is to be literally believed, the story as a whole provides serious truths nonetheless. In this way, Francis argues: "... it is possible in fact to agree with Bowie that Damis is a pure fiction, invented by Philostratus, even that Philostratus intended his readers to recognize him as such, and argue nevertheless that, if anything, this is evidence that Philostratus intends to tell an important truth in VA and not simply contrive some artsy fabrication."<sup>135</sup> As such, the best approach to Philostratus' biography is

---

<sup>131</sup> Anderson, 1986, p. 165-166.

<sup>132</sup> Francis, J.A. (1998) 'Truthful Fiction: New Questions to Old Answers on Philostratus' 'Life of Apollonius"', *The American Journal of Philology*, Vol. 119, No. 3, pp. 419-441.

<sup>133</sup> Francis, 1998, p. 427.

<sup>134</sup> E.g. B.P. Reardon

<sup>135</sup> Francis, 1998, p. 429.

not to argue over its true historical accuracy, but rather to analyze what truth he wants to convey in his presentation of Apollonius.<sup>136</sup> This is the very goal of the second part of my study.

In this chapter I have provided a brief description of the historical Apollonius of Tyana's life, a brief description of the life of his most famous biographer, Philostratus, and a synopsis of the various arguments concerning the historical nature of Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*. Furthermore, I have argued that while I will proceed with the tentative hypothesis that the Damis source is fictional, I have argued that my study can accommodate the Damis source whether real or not. Moreover, I have used Francis' argument concerning the proper approach to the VA to show that my goal is to analyze the Apollonius which Philostratus wants to portray, regardless of the historical truth of Apollonius' life, which we will probably never know.

### **Apollonius' Visits to India and Ethiopia in the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana***

In book three and book six, Apollonius, his faithful companion Damis, and the rest of his band travel to India and Ethiopia. Here they meet and interact with two, rather different groups of philosophers, the Wise Men in India and the Naked Ones in Ethiopia. The conversation between Apollonius and these two groups of sages is foundational in depicting Apollonius as a philosopher and defining Apollonius' philosophy. Philostratus draws heavily from the long Greek tradition of depicting Indian sages in his own description of the Wise Men and the Naked Ones, and he does so in a very particular way in order to present Apollonius in as positive a light as possible to his readership. Foremost, Philostratus attributes positive aspects of the Indian sages in the Greek tradition – positive, at least, to contemporary society – to the Indian Wise Men and negative aspects to the Ethiopian Naked Ones. Furthermore, he manipulates the Greek tradition in order to further augment the Wise Men and demean the Naked Ones. Philostratus does all this in order to elevate Apollonius through his interactions with either group and the implications of these interactions. In this chapter, I will first outline the details of Apollonius' correspondence with the

---

<sup>136</sup> Francis, 1998, p. 436.

Indian Wise Men and the Ethiopian Naked Ones. Then, I will analyze the Greek tradition's influence on Philostratus' depiction of the Wise Men and the Naked Ones, particularly exploring how Philostratus models the Wise Men primarily on the Greek understanding of the Indian *Brachmanes* and the Naked Ones primarily on the Greek understanding of the Indian *Gymnosophistai*. Next, I will briefly propose some arguments for how the sections on Apollonius and the Indian Wise Men further suggest the fictional nature of the Damis source. And finally, I will offer some arguments for why Philostratus characterizes each group in this way, focusing on how these characterizations enhance Apollonius as a respectable philosopher and thus serve one of the stated goals of Philostratus' biography.

### The Indian Wise Men

In book three of Philostratus' biography of Apollonius, Apollonius and his small retinue, which includes Damis, visit the Indian wise men at their city. These wise men are called simply "the Wise" (οἱ σοφοί, e.g. at 3.10.1.3) or "godly and wise men" (οἱ θεῖοι τε καὶ σοφοὶ ἄνδρες, 3.29.1.6-7). Only a few times is the group called any specific name: at the beginning of the biography, Philostratus twice calls the wise men of India "Brahmans" (Βραχμῶνες) (1.2.1.8 and 1.18.1.3), and in a direct quotation Apollonius calls them "Indian Brahmans" (Ἰνδοὶ Βραχμῶνες) (3.15.1.3). Among the Wise Men, only one is referred to individually. Iarchas (Ἰάρχας) is the leader of the Wise Men and acts as their sole spokesman; indeed no other Wise Man says anything specific to Apollonius or his followers.

Once inside the Wise Men's city, Apollonius and his crew discover that the city contains sacred statues from India, Egypt, and Greece. The Greek statues are of the ancient manifestations of the gods: Athena Polias (Ἀθηνᾶ Πολιάς), Delian Apollo (Ἀπόλλων Δήλιος), Dionysus of the Marshes (Διονύσος Λιμναῖος), Apollo of Amyclae (τὸ τοῦ Ἀμυκλαίου), and others "of similar antiquity" which Philostratus does not name. Moreover, the Indians worship these Greek statues with Greek rites (Ἑλληνικὰ ἤθεα). The city is filled with many other marvels. The Indians claim that the city lies at the center of India and call the hill's peak India's navel (ὀμφαλός). Here, there is a sacred fire which the

Indians claim “to make personally with the rays of the sun” (ὁ φασιν ἐκ τῶν τοῦ ἡλίου ἀκτίνων αὐτοὶ ἔλκειν) (3.14.3.9-10). Furthermore, there is a deep well (φρέαρ) of sacred water which the Indians neither drink nor take water from, but rather consider it sacred enough to swear upon (ὄρκιον) (3.14.1.10). In addition, there is a crater of fire (κρατὴρ πυρός) which gives off a black flame. The Indians use this fire to purify accidental crimes and thus call the crater “the fire of pardon” (τὸ πῦρ ξυγγνώμης) (3.14.2.7). Here Philostratus says that the Wise Men call the sacred well “the well of testing” (τὸ φρέαρ ἐλέγχου). Thus, though Philostratus describes the two instruments no further, it seems that the well is used somehow to test an Indian’s crime through his oath (perhaps whether it was in fact accidental) before he is purified by the fire. Lastly, the Wise Men own two jars. The first contains rainstorms (ὄμβροι), and the Wise Men open it if India suffers from drought. The second contains winds (ἄνεμοι). It seems Philostratus had no sources which describe how the Indians used the second jar for he simply guesses – saying “I think” (οἶμαι) – that they open it to let the proper, seasonal wind blow and allow the land to prosper (3.14.2.13-15).

Philostratus quotes Apollonius himself to summarize what sort of men the Wise Men are (ὅποιοι μὲν δὴ οἱ ἄνδρες) and how they live (ὅπως οἰκοῦντες) (3.15.1.1). In a letter Apollonius ostensibly wrote to the Egyptians (a letter which no longer exists), he writes, “I saw the Indian Brahmins living on the earth without living on it, and walled without walls, and owning nothing and everything” (εἶδον Ἰνδοὺς Βραχμῶνας οἰκοῦντας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ οὐκ ἐπ’ αὐτῆς, καὶ ἀτειχίστως τετειχισμένους, καὶ οὐδὲν κεκτημένους καὶ τὰ πάντων) (3.15.1.3-6). Philostratus then cites Damis (Δάμις φησί) for an explanation. For the first riddle – or “rather philosophical” account (σοφώτερον) (3.15.1.6) – the Indians sleep on the ground, but the earth makes them a bed of grass ([φησί] τὴν γῆν δὲ ὑποστρωννύει πόας) (3.15.1.8). Also, the Wise Men levitate off the ground in their religious rites to the Sun. As for the second part, “walled without walls,” the Wise Men live out in the open air, but can cover themselves in shade, avoid being wetted by rain, and summon sunshine whenever they want (ὑπαίθριοι γὰρ δοκοῦντες ἀυλίξεσθαι σκιάν τε ὑπεραίρουσιν αὐτῶν, καὶ ὕοντος οὐ ψεκάζονται καὶ ὑπο τῷ ἡλίῳ εἰσίν,

ἐπειδὴν αὐτοὶ βούλωνται) (3.15.3.2-4). The final attribution is “interpreted” or “explained” (ἐξηγείται) by Damis as a reference to the earth’s tendency to produce water for the Indians whenever they are guests or hosts at dinner. In this way, though they make no plans, they get whatever they need (3.15.3.10-12).

The Wise Men’s attire is simple. They have long hair held by a white band (μίτρα λευκή) and go barefoot (γυμνὸν βάδισμα). They wear “something like a one-sleeved tunic” (παραπλησίως τὰς ἐξωμίσιν, 3.15.4.5). This tunic-like clothing is made of white cotton, though Philostratus calls it wool that grows from the earth (ἡ δὲ ὕλη τῆς ἐσθῆτος ἔριον αὐτοφυῆς ἢ γῆ φύει) (3.15.4.6). This “wool” is made into their holy cloth (ἱερὰ ἐσθής). Lastly, the Wise Men wear a ring (δακτυλῖος) and carry a rod or staff or magic wand (ῥάβδος), both of which are capable of doing anything (δύνασθαι μὲν πάντα) (3.15.4.11-13).

Philostratus presents the Wise Men’s religious duties as solely concerned with the Sun. They perform rites for the Sun at dawn, noon, and at midnight. The first rite Apollonius witnesses is a noon ritual. Perhaps Philostratus is getting this scene from Damis, since he claims at the beginning of the passage that Damis compared (ὁ Δάμις φησιν) one of the Wise Men’s sacred streams to the Dirce in Boeotia (3.17.1.1-2). According to Philostratus, the Wise Men disrobed and rubbed an amber colored ointment (ἤλεκτρῶδει φαρμάκῳ) on their heads, which caused their bodies to warm to the point of steaming. They then bathed in a sacred stream and proceeded to the temple garlanded (ἐστεφανωμένοι) and singing (μεστοὶ τοῦ ὕμνου). At the temple, they hit the ground with their staffs (ῥάβδοι) and launch themselves two cubits into the air. As they do this they sing “a kind of chorus” (ἐν χοροῦ σχήματι) and after they are in the air they sing a song like the paeon of Sophocles to Asclepius (ὁ παῖαν ὁ τοῦ Σοφοκλέους... τῶ Ἀσκληπιῶ) (3.17.2). The other religious rites are mentioned only in passing and without the first description’s detail.

While not expressly a religious rite, at one point the Wise Men’s conversations with Apollonius are interrupted by a messenger who brings Indians in need of healing. At 3.38-40, a number of ailing or

needy Indians come before the Wise Men. They cure a boy of possession, make a lame man walk again, give sight to a blind man, give new use to a man's withered arm, make an infertile woman fertile, and save a man's sons from death. Interestingly, none of the "miracles" are done with any magical salves, amulets, or incantations, at least not explicitly.<sup>137</sup> The Wise Men cure the boy's possession with a letter of threats and rebukes addressed to the demon (ἡ ἐπιστολὴ ξὺν ἀπειλῇ καὶ ἐπιπλήξει). The man's lame hip is massaged and thus is returned to proper use. The Wise Men tell the infertile woman's husband to release a live hare from the house during his wife's labor, otherwise she would miscarry again. The Wise Men give a pseudo-medical explanation to the man whose sons keep dying: the man's seed is too hot (θερμοτέρων σπερμάτων), so his male children cannot drink wine (which will overheat them). They instruct the man to feed his babes lightly boiled owl egg which, if tasted before wine, will foster a hatred of this over-heating substance. Philostratus does not describe how the Wise Men restore the blind man's sight and the other lame man's withered arm, only that they do. Philostratus says that both Apollonius and Damis listened to these appointments with amazement and marveled at the Wise Men's "unlimited wisdom" (ἡ ἐς πάντα σοφία) (3.41.1.1-2)

The Wise Men's foremost ability is their wisdom (σοφία), displayed in their omniscience and impeccable foreknowledge (πρόγνωσις). Indeed, it is this quality above all that inspires Apollonius' visit and makes him respect them above all others. Apollonius calls the Wise Men's ways "wiser and much more divine" than any other people's (ἐγὼ μὲν σοφώτερα τε ἡγοῦμαι τὰ ὑμέτερα καὶ πολλῶ θεϊότερα) (3.16.2.5-6). Furthermore, he claims that if he can learn nothing from them than he has nothing more to learn (3.16.2.6-8). First, the Wise Men (and the people who live around the Wise Men's city) speak fluent Greek. This fact and Iarchas' foreknowledge of Apollonius' name and the letter from the Indian king Phraotes amazes (θαυμάσαντος) Apollonius on their first meeting (3.16.4). Moreover, Iarchas intuits "as first proof of [the Wise Men's] knowledge" (σοφίας ἐπίδειξιν πρώτην) (3.16.3.3) Apollonius' entire lineage and all the past events of his life, telling it as clearly as if he himself had been a

<sup>137</sup> This is further reinforced when Iarchas describes to Apollonius and his followers that the greatest benefit of prophecy was medicine (τὸ τῆς ἰατρικῆς δῶρον), which was given to men from Apollo via Asclepius and his progeny (3. 44).

part (ὥσπερ κοινωνήσας αὐτοῖς τῆς ἀποδημίας) (3.16.3.8-9). And the Wise Men are revered for their wisdom in their own country, a reverence that borders even on fear. When Apollonius approaches the Wise Men's citadel, his guide is terribly frightened, "since the Indians feared them [the Wise Men] more than they feared the Indians' own king" (Ἰνδοὶ γὰρ δεδίασι τούτους μᾶλλον ἢ τὸν σφῶν αὐτῶν βασιλέα) (3.10.2.2-3). Even the king himself asks the Wise Men for advice in way similar to the way he approaches the gods (ὥσπερ οἱ ἐς θεοῦ πέμποντες).

But perhaps the most inspired and exceptional form of knowledge the Wise Men possess (although only Iarchas ever explicitly portrays it) is the ability to see an individual's past lives. When Apollonius asks Iarchas on his opinion of the soul, Iarchas responds that "it is as Pythagoras transmitted to you, and we [the Indians] to the Egyptians" (3.19.1.2-3). Pythagoras believed in the transmigration of the soul (metempsychosis) from one living being to another (which is why he advocated vegetarianism). Furthermore, Iarchas is able to see (ὄρω) both his own past lives and any other's. He tells Apollonius that he, Iarchas, was once the great king of India, Ganges, which he apparently proved as a four year old boy when he led men to the buried swords of the king (3.21.1). Iarchas is also able to see Apollonius' past lives, the last of which was as an Egyptian captain, and an Indian youth's, who had last been the Greek Palamades (3.23.1 and 3.22.2). Furthermore, Iarchas can "see" another's attributes and nature, as he does upon meeting Apollonius. Iarchas claims that Apollonius is "well endowed with Memory, who we [the Wise Men] worship most among the gods" (μεστόν σε ὄρω τῆς Μνημοσύνης, ἣν ἡμεῖς μάλιστα θεῶν ἀγαπῶμεν) (3.16.4.6-7).

The Indian Wise Men attribute their extraordinary abilities to a number of things. First, Iarchas claims that "We [the Wise Men] know everything, since we first know ourselves" (ἡμεῖς πάντα γινώσκομεν, ἐπειδὴ πρώτους ἑαυτοὺς γινώσκομεν) (3.18.1.6-8). Iarchas says this in response to Apollonius' question about whether they had self-knowledge, which Apollonius, like the Greeks (as Philostratus says), believed to be a very hard thing to acquire. Indeed, Iarchas goes on to say that not only do the Wise Men know themselves, but they had to even before they began their study of philosophy. At

this Apollonius remembers what the Indian king Phraotes had said about the Wise Men first testing themselves before starting training. Second, Iarchas claims that the Wise Men are gods (θεοί) because they are good men (ὅτι ἀγαθοί ἔσμεν ἄνθρωποι) (3.18.1.12-13). And lastly, the Wise Men attribute their powers to their piety. Shortly before Apollonius leaves the Wise Men's city, he discusses foreknowledge with Iarchas. Iarchas claims that foreknowledge makes men "divine" (θεῖοι) and requires a pure (καθαρός) soul free of sin (ἀμαρτήματος) (3.42.2.6). And as Philostratus points out, the Wise Men "do nothing without divine sanction" (μηδὲν ἔξω τοῦ θεοῦ πραττόντων) (3.25.3.14). Maybe this claim coupled with the Wise Men's unparalleled foreknowledge led Philostratus to claim that the Indians are "the most favored by the gods" (θεοφιλέστατοι) (3.25.3.13).

In one of the final scenes of Apollonius' visit to the Indian Wise Men, the Indians invite Damis to join as Apollonius asks them any questions he wishes. He asks five questions until the questioning is ended by the arrival of the sick Indians. The questions all concern the nature of the universe (3.34-37). According to the Wise Men, the universe consists of five elements: water (τὸ ὕδωρ), air (ὁ ἀήρ), earth (ἡ γῆ), fire (τὸ πῦρ), and ether (ὁ ἀίθήρ). "One must" (χρή) consider ether to be both the origin of the gods (γένος θεῶν) and what they breath (ἔλκοντα). The universe itself is a living being both male and female, since it produces and takes part in everything, even suffering (τὰ πάθη). Moreover, though the Indians claim the analogy is insufficient, they compare the universe with a ship which has a main captain who created and guides the ship. Under this creator-captain, other divine captains guide various parts of the ship. And lastly, the Indian answer the question "Is the land greater in size than the sea?" They say that the land is greater since it includes the sea, but if one saw all that is water then the land is lesser because water carries it (whatever exactly that means). This question and the first part of the answer is clearly taken from the Alexander accounts.<sup>138</sup> Damis reports (ὁ Δάμις φησιν) that he was beside himself that an Indian could speak such beautiful Greek and speak so well on such topics (3.36.1). Moreover, Damis praises the Indian's manner of speaking and claims that Apollonius improved in his own speaking, having listened to Iarchas.

<sup>138</sup> See above in the section "The West's Knowledge of Indian Sages and Philosophers."

Apollonius and his followers stayed with the Wise Men for four months (3.50.1.2). After his departure, Apollonius sails down the Indus and returned to Babylon. From here, he travels around the Mediterranean, until he decides to travel to Egypt and continue south to the land of Memnon, Ethiopia.

### **The Ethiopian (or Egyptian) Naked Ones**

In book six of Philostratus' biography of Apollonius, Apollonius and his followers travel to visit the Ethiopian sages, known as the "Naked Ones" (Γυμνοί). From the beginning, Philostratus (and his various sources) portray them as inferior in wisdom. Even before Apollonius meets the Naked Ones, he comes across a polluted suppliant (6.5.1-3). This polluted suppliant has been neglected by the Naked Ones, but Apollonius immediately recognizes that the suppliant involuntarily killed a man who was a descendent of an Egyptian who had once attacked and pillaged the Naked Ones' land. This descendent still hated the Naked Ones. As such, Apollonius claims, the Naked Ones are not wise men (οὐ σοφοὶ ἄνδρες) for leaving this man polluted, who involuntarily aided the Naked Ones. Furthermore, when Philostratus first describes the Naked Ones, he writes that they are "less wise than the Indians than they are wiser than the Egyptians" (σοφία δὲ Ἰνδῶν λείπεσθαι πλέον ἢ προὔχειν Αἰγυπτίων) (6.6.1.5-6) (i.e. they are more inferior to the Indians in wisdom than they are superior to the Egyptians in wisdom). This position as wise men who are nevertheless inferior to the Indians is a theme Philostratus and his sources emphasize throughout Apollonius' visit.

Besides "Naked Ones," Philostratus and Apollonius call them by few other names. Following a story about the choice of Herakles between virtue and vice, Apollonius calls them "wise ones of the Egyptians" (σοφοὶ Αἰγυπτίων) (6.11.2.5). This is one of the few times Apollonius will have something positive to say about them, and he nevertheless quickly asserts that he is "more advanced in wisdom" in comparison to the Naked Ones (σοφίας ἐπὶ τοσόνδε ἀφιγμένος, οὐκ ὀκνήσω λογιστάϊς ὑμῖν τῆς ἐμαυτοῦ βουλής χρήσασθαι) (6.11.3.1-3). The eldest (πρεσβύτατος) of the Naked Ones and their

leader is called Thespion (Θεσπεσίων). He, like Iarchas, acts as the mouthpiece of the entire group of Naked Ones.

The very ethnic identity of the Naked Ones is never clear. Either Philostratus confused his sources, or his sources were inconsistent and confused themselves. At first, it seems as if the Naked Ones are Ethiopians. As Apollonius is approaching the Naked Ones domain, they come to the sanctuary of Memnon, a legendary king of Ethiopia (Αἰθιοπία) (6.4.1-3). Since Apollonius and his crew had already been traveling south (sailing upriver, ἀναπλέοντα, on the Nile), it stands to reason that they were continuing at least in a southerly direction, i.e. not back towards Egypt. Furthermore, as I mentioned above, when Philostratus first introduces the Naked Ones, they are described as wiser than the Egyptians. Yet throughout much of book six, the Naked Ones are called Egyptian. As I mentioned above, Apollonius at 6.11.2.5 calls the Naked Ones “wise ones of the Egyptians.” At 6.11.1.7, Apollonius called the Naked Ones Egyptians (Αἰγυπτίοι). The Naked Ones even call themselves Egyptian at 6.10.6.21, when they name themselves “the naked men of Egypt” (Αἰγυπτίοι γυμνοί). But at the same time, when Apollonius leaves the Naked Ones and heads for the beginning of the Nile, he tells Thespion that it would be wrong for anyone who has traveled into Ethiopia to miss the head of the Nile (6.22.1).

Even the two ethnological histories of the Naked Ones and Ethiopians are not fully compatible. They do nevertheless provide explicit explanations for the degeneracy of the Naked Ones in comparison to the Indian Wise Men. The first history of the Ethiopians is given by the Indian Wise Men. Iarchas explains that the Ethiopians (Αἰθίοπες) were once an Indian tribe, but after they killed the peaceful king Ganges, their pollution drove them out of India (3.20.1-2). Yet Apollonius gives a second account when he is visiting the Naked Ones, partly as a rebuke to them. Apollonius claims that the Naked Ones once supported Pythagoras, when they still spoke well of the Indians since they were originally Indians. But when they were ashamed of having been driven out of India, they began slandering India, stripped naked, cast off their Ethiopian identity, and began worshiping Egyptian gods (6.11.13).

Philostratus, through anonymous sources (φασί), writes that the Naked Ones live on a reasonably sized hill (ἐπί τινος λόφου) not far from the bank of the Nile (ξυμμέτρου μικρὸν ἀπὸ τῆς ὄχθης τοῦ Νείλου) (6.6.1.3-5). There are few trees in the area and only a small grove (τι ἄλλος οὐ μέγα) where the Naked Ones gather to meet. The Naked Ones' shrines (explicitly stated as unlike the Indians) are spread about in different places on the hill. The Naked Ones have no homes or coverings (οἰκίαι ἢ καλύβαι), but rather live in the open air and under the open sky (ζῶντες ὑπαίθριοι καὶ ὑπὸ τῷ οὐρανῷ αὐτῶ) (6.6. 2.6-7). For visitors there is a small colonnade to act as a hotel.

Philostratus says little about the Naked Ones religious accoutrements (perhaps because they have so few). The Naked Ones are, of course, naked (γυμνοί) which Philostratus compares to Athenian sunbathers (εἰληθεροὶ Ἀθήνησι). Apollonius seems to dismiss their nakedness as mere vanity. At 6.8.7-9, Apollonius tells the messenger who invited Apollonius and his crew to stay in the colonnade that the climate in this region allows anyone to go naked. Philostratus says that this is Apollonius hinting that the Naked Ones go naked not out of endurance (καρτερίᾳ) but out of necessity (ἀνάγκη). Later, Apollonius tells the Naked Ones that all art or skill concerns itself with decoration (κόσμου γὰρ ἐπιμελήσεται τέχνη πᾶσα) (6.11.19.1.1). As such, even going naked is “done on account of decoration” (ἐπιτετήδευται ὑπὲρ κόσμου) (6.11.19.1.5-6).

Throughout the visit, it is continuously emphasized and illustrated that the Naked Ones lack the perfected wisdom of the Indian Wise Ones. As I discussed above, Philostratus introduces the Naked Ones as inferior in wisdom to the Indians, though wiser than the Egyptians. Moreover, the scene concerning the polluted suppliant is only the first illustration of the Naked Ones' inferiority. The Naked Ones have neither foreknowledge nor omniscient clairvoyance. When Apollonius is asked by a messenger to describe his purpose for meeting the Naked Ones, he replies that he is not surprised that they do not know his purpose. More pointedly, he punctuates this admonition with a reminder that the Indians did not have to ask (6.8.1). Early in the visit, Apollonius discovers, with the help of Damis, that one of his philosophical nemeses, Euphrates, had visited the Naked Ones shortly before Apollonius' arrival.

Euphrates had told the Naked Ones that Apollonius had been slandering them, and it is for this reason that the Naked Ones at first delay their meeting with Apollonius and treat him rather coolly. After Apollonius discovers Euphrates' subterfuge, he admonishes the Naked Ones for their foolishness. In fact, Apollonius begins this by claiming that the Indians would never have reacted in such a way, since they are experienced in foresight (σοφοὶ γὰρ προγιγνώσκειν) (6.13.1.10). The Naked Ones, by Apollonius' argument, clearly do not have this foresight. Not only do the Naked Ones lack the wisdom to see Euphrates' ploy, but, according to Apollonius, by believing such falsehoods the Naked Ones themselves have been slandered (διέβησαν).

Apollonius himself highlights and enumerates the Indian Wise Men's superiority to the Naked Ones. He tells the Naked Ones that the Indians are "prodigious in the divine arts and have the best, most practiced souls" (μοι ἔδοξεν ἀνδρῶν εἶναι περιττῶν τὰ θεῖα ψυχὴν τε ἄριστα ἡσκημένων) (6.11.7.6-8). And in his search for teachers, Apollonius thought to go to the Naked Ones, since they supposedly were very wise (ἐπειδὴ πλείστα ἐλέγεσθε ὑπερφυῶς εἰδέναι) (6.11.8.9-10). But his teacher at the time told Apollonius to seek out those who had actually discovered (εὔρον) great wisdom, the Indians, as opposed to those who adopted it (and as Apollonius later says, rejected it). Apollonius goes on to claim that the Wise Men, as opposed to the Naked Ones, are more refined or subtle (λεπτότεροι) and have truer beliefs about nature and the gods (ἀληθέστεροι τὰς περὶ φύσεώς τε καὶ θεῶν δόξας) (6.11.10.2-4). Apollonius believes that the Indians' superiority is a result of "living in purer sun rays" (καθαρωτέραις ὁμιλοῦντες ἀκτίσιν) and "being closer to the sources of life-giving and warm substance" (πρὸς ἀρχαῖς τῆς ζωογόνου καὶ θερμῆς οὐσίας οἰκοῦντες) (6.11.10.3 and 5-6). Apollonius makes his preference quite clear when he calls the Indians "real seers" (οἱ ἀτεχνῶς μάντιες) and compares the Naked Ones to mere old women who help cure sick animals (6.17.1).

The Naked Ones spend much of their discussion with Apollonius attempting to convince him of the superiority of their philosophy versus that of the Indian Wise Men. When Thespesion and the Naked Ones first meet Apollonius, Thespesion argues that the Indians use enchantments (ἰυγγες) – in the form

of their displays of power such as levitation – to beguile (δημαγωγούσι) visitors, whereas the Naked Ones do not, but are merely naked (γυμνοί) (6.10.2.12-13). Moreover, unlike the Indians, at the Naked Ones' dwelling, the earth is not forced to do anything against its will (ἄκουσα), but rather the Naked Ones make the earth itself their bed and live off its natural products (ζῶμεν μετέχοντες αὐτῆς τὰ κατὰ φύσιν). But, Thespesion stressed, the Naked Ones have the power to beguile (σοφίζεσθαι), and he proves it by commanding a tree to speak to Apollonius, which it does in an articulate and feminine voice (φωνὴ ἑναρθρός τε καὶ θῆλυς) (6.10.3). But the Naked Ones choose not to use these powers:

... since it is enough for a wise man to keep himself undefiled by the flesh of living things, by the desire that enters through the eyes, and by jealousy that comes as a teacher of evil to hands and hearts, and that truth does not need miracles and magic compulsion.<sup>139</sup>

ὡς ἀπόχρη τῷ σοφῷ βρώσεώς τε καθαρῷ εἶναι, ὀπόση ἔμπνους, ἡμέρου τε, ὅς φοιτᾷ δι' ὀμμάτων, φθόνου τε, ὅς διδάσκαλος ἀδίκων ἐπὶ χεῖρα καὶ γνώμην ἤκει, θαυμασιουργίας τε καὶ βιαίου τέχνης μὴ δεῖσθαι ἀλήθειαν. 6.10.3.9-13

Furthermore, Thespesion claims that “frugality is the teacher of wisdom and the teacher of truth, and when you accept this fact, you will be known unquestionably as wise” (εὐτέλεια γὰρ διδάσκαλος μὲν σοφίας, διδάσκαλος δὲ ἀληθείας, ἣν ἐπαινῶν σοφὸς ἀτεχνῶς δόξεις) (6.10.4.16-18). Of course, Thespesion adds, Apollonius will have to forget everything the Indians taught him.

Thespesion further develops the Naked Ones' philosophy of simplicity. He uses the Greek parable of the choice between the anthropomorphized Virtue and Vice that Herakles must make. Thespesion says that “Virtue goes barefoot and in plain clothes, and would appear naked, if she did not know what is becoming in womanhood” (ἀνυπόδετος ἢ Ἀρετὴ καὶ λιτὴ τὴν ἐσθῆτα, καὶ γυμνὴ δ' ἄν ἐφάνετο, εἰ μὴ ἐγίγνωσκε τὸ ἐν θηλείαις εὐσχημον) (6.10.5.10-12). In addition, Thespesion argues that the Wise Men's way of life is easy, but for the Naked One:

<sup>139</sup> Translation from the Loeb, 2005.

...it is right to sleep on the bare ground, to be seen toiling in nakedness, as we do, to think nothing welcome or pleasant that has come to you without toil, not to be boastful or a seeker of vanity, and also to avoid dream visions that lift you from the earth.

ὥς χαμευνεῖν μὲν ἐν ἀύχμῳ προσήκει, γυμνὸν δέ, ὡς περ ἡμεῖς, μοχθοῦντα φαίνεσθαι, ὃ δὲ μὴ πονήσαντί σοι ἀφίκετο, μήτε φίλον ἡγείσθαι μήτε ἡδύ, μηδὲ ἀλαζόνα εἶναι μηδὲ τύφου θηρατῆν, ἀπέχεσθαι δὲ καὶ ὄνεράτων ὄψεις, ὅποσαι ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς αἴρουσιν. (6.10.6.8-13)

In choosing the Naked One's philosophy, one neither dishonors truth (ἀτιμάζων ἀλήθειαν) nor avoids the simplicity of nature (τὴν κατὰ φύσιν εὐτέλειαν παραιτούμενος).

In response to the Naked Ones' arguments concerning their lifestyle, Apollonius explains to them why he chose his philosophy. This explanation is set forth in an expanded version of Herakles' choice between Virtue and Vice. According to Apollonius, Philosophy set out four philosophies before him, all which tried to convince him with their supposed benefits, though it is not entirely clear which four philosophies he describes. But outside of this group stands the philosophy which Pythagoras submitted to (ἡττήθη). She tells Apollonius that she will bring a joyless life full of toil, in which one cannot eat meat, drink wine, wear clothes made from animal, and lives the ascetic life of a wanderer. But in return, she will make the man self-controlled and just (σωφροσύνη καὶ δικαιοσύνη) and he will be envious of no one (ζηλωτὸν δὲ ἡγείσθαι μηδένα). Moreover, not only will he fear no tyrants, but they will fear him. In addition, the practitioner will please the gods more with bloodless sacrifice and have foreknowledge, among other benefits (6.11.5-6). Here Apollonius, as I discussed above, explains that the Indian Wise Men were the discoverers of this philosophy. In particular, he had to go to the Wise Men in order to find an entire people who believed in metempsychosis, that the soul neither perishes nor is reborn and is the source of creation (τὸ ἀθάνατόν τε καὶ ἀγέννητον πηγὰ γένεσεως) (6. 11.7.8-9).<sup>140</sup> Though at first

<sup>140</sup> Apollonius acknowledges that Plato, with inspiration and true wisdom (θεσπεσίως καὶ πανσόφως), expressed such a belief about the soul. But Plato's ideas were mocked by the Athenians, which forced Apollonius to look elsewhere for a people in agreement (6.11.8).

Apollonius was going to learn about reincarnation from the Naked Ones, Apollonius ultimately goes to the Indians, the true originators of this belief.

Apollonius stays with the Naked Ones for an unspecified amount of time. After traveling even further south to see the huge waterfalls at the source of the Nile, Apollonius and his crew return north, eventually going to Asia Minor to meet with the newly crowned emperor Titus.

### **Philostratus' Depiction of Indian and Ethiopian/Egyptian Sages and Its Predecessors**

Philostratus' Indian Wise Men in many ways resemble the *Brachmanes* of contemporary and earlier Greek literature on India, while his depiction of the Ethiopian/Egyptian Naked Ones more closely resemble prior accounts of *Gymnosophistai* and other naked Indian sages in the Greek corpus, especially those that Alexander and Onesicritus met.<sup>141</sup> In this section I will discuss what material Philostratus seems to use from the traditional Greek corpus concerning Indian sages in his descriptions of the Indian Wise Men and the Ethiopian/Egyptian Naked Ones. In addition, amidst this discussion I'll suggest some ways Philostratus further manipulates the tradition to portray the Wise Men as "better" than the Naked Ones, a comparison I have already shown above is foremost in Philostratus' mind.<sup>142</sup> And lastly, I'll look at two beliefs attributed to the Wise Men that likely came from prior, yet no longer extant, Greek sources on Indian sages.

First, Philostratus' typical name for the Indian sage, "Wise Men" (σοφοί), is very similar to Arrian's terminology for the Indian sages, "wise men" (σοφιστάί), and other authors' "philosopher" (φιλόσοφοι).<sup>143</sup> Moreover, Philostratus and Apollonius call the Wise Men *Brachmanes* (Βραχμᾶνες), the name Megasthenes first introduced into the Greek's body of knowledge. Indeed, the *Brachmanes* of

---

<sup>141</sup> Anderson notes that Philostratus clearly sets up a comparison between Indians and Ethiopians (1986, p. 207). For more on Philostratus' characterization of the Wise Men and Naked Ones, see Flintermann, J.J. *Power, Paideia, & Pythagoreanism: Greek Identity, Conceptions of the Relationship between Philosophers and Monarchs and Political Ideas in Philostratus' Life of Apollonius*. Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, 1995. pp. 86-88, 101-106; Anderson, 1986, pp. 199-220; Sedlar, 1980, pp. 190-198.

<sup>142</sup> Anderson also notes that Philostratus likely adapted the Greek tradition concerning India to suit his own needs and purposes (1986, p. 212).

<sup>143</sup> See Diodorus Siculus or Strabo.

Megasthenes and Bardesanes greatly influenced Philostratus' Indian Wise Men. In particular, Philostratus' focus on the Wise Men's priestly nature and ideas, as opposed to any strict asceticism and especially nudity, mirrors the *Brachmanes* more than the *Gymnosophistai*. But the similarity is not perfect. Though to a lesser extent, Philostratus also borrowed attributes of the *Gymnosophistai* and their equivalents in the Greek corpus on Indian sages. Philostratus chose details from these accounts in order to portray most fully the Indian Wise Men as supremely wise, particularly in religious matters, and as the ideal philosophers to teach Apollonius.

Philostratus portrays the Wise Men as particularly pious and wise. Both these attributes were well established of Indian sages by the time of Philostratus. The *Brachmanes* and *Samanaioi*'s primary duties and activities in Bardesanes' are religious in nature: the *Brachmanes* dedicate themselves all day and for some of the night to hymns and prayers to the gods (εἰς ὕμνους καὶ εὐχάς) (Porphyry, *De Abstinencia*, 6.17.30-31).<sup>144</sup> The *Samanaioi* spend all their time discussing the divine (ἐν τοῖς περὶ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγοις) and throughout the day they offer prayers (προσεύχονται) (Porphyry, *De Abstinencia*, 6.17.53). Both these groups have divine wisdom (θεοσοφία). In earlier sources too, the Indian sages are pious. In Megasthenes, quoted by Strabo, the *Hylobii* worship the divine (θεραπεύουσι καὶ λιτανεύουσι τὸ θεῖον) (3.15.60.6-7) and the Indian sages converse about what is believed to foster piety and holiness (ὅσα δοκεῖ πρὸς εὐσέβειαν καὶ ὁσιότητα) (3.15.60.29-30). Many authors, following Megasthenes, comment on the Indian sages' piety. In particular, Diodorus Siculus says that the Indian philosophers have proven themselves to be "most dear to the gods" (προσφιλέστατοι θεοῖς) (2.40.1), a remarkably similar comment to Philostratus same claim about the Indian Wise Men (see above).

Like the Indian Wise Men in Philostratus, the Indian sages, especially the *Brachmanes*, in prior Greek accounts act as advisors to the Indian kings, particularly in religious matters. According to Megasthenes, cited in Strabo, Indian kings approach the *Hylobii* for counsel and, through the *Hylobii* make offerings to the gods (3.60). According to Strabo, Nearchus, a companion of Alexander the Great,

---

<sup>144</sup> Hippolytus in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD also attributed the use of hymns to the Indian sages (*The Refutation of All Heresies*, 1.14).

says that the *Brachmanes* serve as counselors to the kings (3.66). Later sources, quoting Megasthenes, say similar things.<sup>145</sup> Quoted in Porphyry, Bardesanes' *Brachmanes*, like the Indian Wise Men, are not beholden to the Indian king – indeed the Indian Wise Men of Philostratus openly disdain one of the visiting Indian kings (3.26). Moreover, kings will come to both the *Brachmanes* and the *Samanaioi* in order to pray to the gods in times of need and seek council when necessary (Porphyry, *De Abstinencia*, 4.17.61-63).

The Indian sages' general wisdom was well established in the Greek tradition before Philostratus. Strabo wrote that Onesicritus (the first Greek, that we know of, to have substantial contact with the sages) was sent by Alexander to learn the sages' wisdom (σοφία) (15.1.64). So too do many of the Alexander historians speak of these sages' advice to Alexander with marked admiration.<sup>146</sup> When Megasthenes introduced the division of Indian sages into *Brachmanes* and *Garmanes*, he wrote that the *Brachmanes* are philosophers (φιλόσοφοι) and learned men (λόγιοι ἄνδρες). Even Lucian, a rough contemporary of Philostratus, who has less than positive things to say about Greeks who try to copy the Indians' self-immolation, claims nevertheless that Philosophy first went to the *Brachmanes* and that they learned from her well.<sup>147</sup> Moreover, Philostratus had a predecessor in depicting the Naked Ones as inferior to the Wise Men (described above). Megasthenes claims that the *Brachmanes*, the group on which I am arguing Philostratus modeled the Wise Men, are better regarded than the *Garmanes*, one of the groups on which I am arguing Philostratus modeled the Naked Ones (Strabo, 15.1.59).

Similar to Philostratus' Wise Men, prior accounts of the Indian sages highlight their knowledge in prophesy, medicine, and the natural sciences. Beginning with Megasthenes, cited by both Arrian and Diodorus Siculus, Indian philosophers were skilled at prophesy, particularly in regard to weather. Diodorus Siculus wrote that the Indian sages foretold droughts, rains, and "favourable winds" (ἄνεμοι εὐπρονοία) (2.40.1). This certainly is not so different from the power of Philostratus' Wise Men to control the rains and winds through their two magic jars. Moreover, Dio Chrysostom claimed that the

<sup>145</sup> See Diodorus Siculus, 2.39.5 and Arrian, *Indika*, 11.1-8.

<sup>146</sup> See, for example, Arrian, *Anabasis*, 7.2.1-4.

<sup>147</sup> Lucian, *The Runaways*.

*Brachmanes* know the future better than many men know the present (μᾶλλον ἴσασι τὰ μέλλοντα ἢ οἱ ἄλλοι ἄνθρωποι τὰ παρόντα αὐτοῖς) (*Orationes*, 49.7.9-10). Clement of Alexandria also said that Indian sages prophesized about the future (*Stromata*, 3.7.60.1). Beginning with Megasthenes, Indian sages often acted as medical experts. According to Strabo, Megasthenes wrote that the *Brachmanes* went to pregnant Brahman women and gave them prudent suggestions concerning their child (σωφρονικῶς τινας παραινέσεις) (15.1.59.9). Also according to Strabo, Megasthenes described certain Indian sages who acted as physicians, although Megasthenes claimed their cures were typically no good (15.1.60). Lastly, Megasthenes describes the *Brachmanes*' various opinions of questions of natural philosophy, such as their opinion on the universe and its elements (Strabo, 15.1.59). In addition to this, in Strabo's accounts of Onesicritus, the naked Indian sages discuss numerous opinions on natural topics, such as rains, drought, and diseases (15.1.65). Later accounts of the Gymnosophists Alexander or Onesicritus met also depict the sages as knowledgeable in natural philosophy, particularly in Alexander's testing session.<sup>148</sup>

In Philostratus, what sets the Wise Men most physically apart from the Naked Ones – geography aside – is their attire, or lack thereof, and prior Greek accounts of Indian sages often differentiated *Brachmanes* and *Gymnosophistai* along similar lines. According to Strabo, Indians in general wore white linen or cotton garments (15.1.58). Megasthenes, via Strabo, wrote that *Brachmanes* in particular wore linen garments (15.1.59). In the later Greek tradition, Bardesanes, via Porphyry, wrote that the *Samanaioi* wear robes (στολή) (4.17). As for the Wise Men's rings of power, Megasthenes, via Strabo, wrote that *Brachmanes* would wear jewelry of gold on their ears and hands (15.1.59). Just as the Wise Men have long hair bound by a ribbon, so too did Strabo write that Indians typically had long hair (and long beards), and that they wore head bands in their hair (κομᾶν δὲ καὶ πωγωνοτροφεῖν πάντα, ἀναπλεκόμενους δὲ μιτροῦσθαι τὰς κόμας) (15.1.71.6-8).

For the *Gymnosophistai*, unsurprisingly, nakedness is a defining feature, as it is for the Ethiopian Naked Ones (the *Gymnai*, an obvious allusion to the *Gymnosophistai*). That certain Indian sages were naked was attested by a number of Greeks, including Onesicritus, in Strabo, the Alexander historians,

<sup>148</sup> See Plutarch, Clement of Alexandria, and the *Alexander Romance*.

Megasthenes, in Strabo, in reference to the *Garmanes* (the Indian group other than the *Brachmanes*), and Clement of Alexander, to name a few.<sup>149</sup> Philostratus highlights the Naked Ones' nakedness, and thus their similarity to the *Gymnosophistai* of the Greek corpus, not only through their name, but also through their constant reminders of the virtue of nakedness, emphasized repeatedly in their professed philosophy.

While Philostratus distinguishes the Indian Wise Men and the Ethiopian Naked Ones, among other ways, by their attire, Philostratus depicts their other living arrangements, in their essence, as quite similar, just as the various Indian sage groups were portrayed in prior accounts. But, importantly, he qualifies the essentially same lifestyle so as to praise the Wise Men while denigrating the Naked Ones. For example, both the Wise Men and the Naked Ones live outside, under the open sky, without any physical shelter. In the traditional Greek depiction of Indian sages, this is a trait more consistently of the *Gymnosophistai*. Among others, both Megasthenes and Clement of Alexandria describe the *Garmanes* (in Megasthenes) or *Sarmanes* (in Clement) as living outside without shelter (Strabo, 15.1 and *Stromata*, 1.15.71.3-5). Many of the accounts of the *Gymnosophistai* in Alexander's conquests depict the Indians as living in the open.<sup>150</sup> As for the *Brachmanes* (specifically those contrasted to other Indian groups), Greek accounts depict them living either outside or in homes. Megasthenes, in Strabo, wrote that at one point in life, the *Brachmanes* lived in groves outside the city, but at another point in life, lived in a typical house (15.1.59). Bardesanes, via Porphyry, depicted both the *Brachmanes* and the robed *Samanaioi* living in shelters: huts or a monastery, respectively (4.17).

But Philostratus differentiates the essentially same lifestyles of the Wise Men and the Naked Ones through Apollonius' comments. Through Apollonius' cryptic suggestion that the Wise Men live "walled without walls," Philostratus implies that though the Wise Men do live without shelter, they aren't really like the traditional *Gymnosophistai* known to the Greeks. The Wise Men need not endure the Indian sun, which Strabo claimed was a difficult task, because they have the extraordinary ability to summon either shade or the sun at will and avoid the inconvenience of rain, as Damis explains (see above). And

---

<sup>149</sup> Strabo, 15.1.63.3-4 and 15.1.70.10-12; Clement of Alexander, *Stromata*, 3.7.60.3

<sup>150</sup> Arrian, *Anabasis*, 7.2.4.2-3; Quintus Curtius Rufus, 8.9.31-33

for the Naked Ones, who also live outside, not only do they have no magical abilities to avoid the downsides of such a lifestyle, but Apollonius instead claims that the Naked Ones go naked and live outside because the climate allows them, not because they have any particular virtue (6.8). So whereas Philostratus elevated the Wise Men past the traditional *Gymnosophistai*, since through their wisdom and power they do not have to endure the harsh climate, Philostratus denigrates the Naked Ones even below the traditional *Gymnosophistai*, since the Naked Ones aren't even really enduring any harsh climate.

Philostratus employs similar differentiation concerning the Wise Men's and the Naked Ones' sleeping arrangements. In prior Greek accounts, both the *Brachmanes* and *Gymnosophistai* sleep on the ground or, at least, very close to it. Megasthenes claims the *Brachmanes*, at least in one stage of their life, sleep on "straw mattresses and skin" (ἐν στριβάσι καὶ δοράτῃς) (Strabo, 15.1.59). Philo Judaeus reports that the *Gymnosophistai* sleep on the bare earth (*De somniis*, 8.2.56). And various Alexander historians and Strabo portray the *Gymnosophistai* laying around on the ground when Alexander/Onesicritus approaches them.<sup>151</sup>

And again, Philostratus uses this basic attribute, sleeping on the ground, to elevate the Wise Men and denigrate the Naked Ones. Though the Wise Men do sleep on the ground, it is not normal earth. Apollonius, in his cryptic description of the Wise Men's lifestyle, says they live on the ground but not on it. This is so because the earth itself makes, willingly, beds of grass for the Wise Men whenever they wish to sleep (see above). Again, the Wise Men's wisdom and power allows them to live in a similar, but better, way than the Indian sages in prior Greek accounts. Philostratus, through Apollonius, denigrates the Naked Ones and the fact that they truly just sleep on the ground. As I described above, the Naked Ones attempt to slander the Wise Men, claiming that they force the earth to provide them bedding. When the Naked Ones say this, we already know it is false, at least as Philostratus writes, because he made clear the earth made beds for the Wise Men willingly.<sup>152</sup> But on this point, Apollonius himself really puts the

<sup>151</sup> Arrian, 7.2.1; *Alexander Romance* Supplement H, 3..6; Strabo, 15.1.63

<sup>152</sup> At 3.33.1.1-2, Philostratus writes that "the earth presents beds to them [Apollonius and the Indians] as they drank, beds which she, of her own accord, spread out" (Πιόντας δὲ αὐτοῦς ἐδέξατο ἡ γῆ εὐνάτῃς, ἅς αὐτῇ ὑπεστόρνυ).

Naked Ones in their place, so to speak. Responding to the Naked Ones' general critiques of the Wise Men, Apollonius tells them that they discredit themselves by discrediting their ancestors (6.11.13). And this comes directly after Apollonius' discussion of the Naked Ones' philosophical and religious deterioration. Yet again, although Philostratus ascribes to both the Indians and Ethiopians a practice, sleeping on the ground, common to both the *Gymnosophistai* and *Brachmanes* of Greek literature, he nevertheless uses subtle distinctions in this similar practice – distinctions not found in Greek literature – to establish them as different in wisdom, power, and prestige.

Finally, the Wise Men and the Naked Ones express philosophical ideals which suggest influence from the traditional Greek depictions of *Brachmanes* and *Gymnosophistai*. The Wise Men emphasize three main philosophical and religious ideas (see above): (1) one must truly know oneself to be wise (and being wise/good makes one divine); (2) the soul is immortal and in a cycle of reincarnation; and (3) the universe was created, is composed of five elements, and is regulated by a supreme creator god.<sup>153</sup> Only the first idea has little, if any, precedent in earlier extant Greek works on Indian sages. We will discuss this below. The other two are beliefs attributed to the *Brachmanes*. First, the notion of an eternal, immortal soul is attested in a number of prior works. Megasthenes, via Strabo, writes that the *Brachmanes* believe that the soul is immortal (15.1.59). Hippolytus claims that the *Brachmanes* hold the body to be simply a covering for the soul and *Brachmanes* “putting off the body, like fishes jumping out of water into the pure air, behold the sun” (ἀποθέμενοι δὲ Βραχμᾶνες τὸ σῶμα, ὡσπερ ἐξ ὕδατος ἰχθύες ἀνακύψαντες εἰς ἀέρα καθαρὸν ὁρῶσι τὸν ἥλιον) (*Refutation of All Heresies*, 1.24). Arrian's Dandamis (admittedly a *Gymnosophistos*) tells Alexander that when he dies he shall be rid of his poor body, his “unseemly housemate” (οὐκ ἐπιεικοῦς ξυνοίκου τοῦ σώματος) (*Anabasis*, VII.3). Porphyry describes that both the *Brachmanes* and *Samanaioi* believe that the soul is released from the body upon death and this release secures immortality (*De Abstinencia*, 4.18).

The notion of reincarnation, which the Wise Men go into great detail about (for the notion of reincarnation underlies their lengthy conversation concerning prior lives), is rare in the earlier Greek

---

<sup>153</sup> Anderson also notes that there are similarities between Greek and historical Indian thought.

accounts, but there nonetheless. Clement of Alexandria is the first and only Greek to explicitly state that the *Brachmanes* believe in reincarnation (παλιγγενεσίαν) (*Stromata*, 3.7.60.2). Interestingly, this term never appears in Apollonius' biography. But more importantly, Megasthenes, much earlier than Clement, hints that the *Brachmanes* believe in reincarnation. Concerning their belief in the immortality of the soul I mentioned above, he writes in full that "they [the *Brachmanes*] weave myths, just like Plato, about immortality [or incorruptibility] of the soul" (παραπλέκουσι δὲ καὶ μύθους, ὥσπερ καὶ Πλάτων περιτε ἀφθαρσίας ψυχῆς) (Strabo, 15.1.59.62-63). The myth Megasthenes most likely refers to is the myth of Er in *The Republic*, which describes how souls forget their former lives after drinking from the river Lethe and are then reborn.<sup>154</sup> And Apollonius, when he tells the Naked Ones why he sought the Indian Wise Men, says specifically that he wanted to speak with a people who agreed unanimously on the nature of the soul which "Plato announced inspired and all-knowing" ([Πλάτων] ἀνεφθέγξατο θεσπεσίως καὶ πανσόφως) (6.8.1.2-3). Of course Plato's own myth was heavily influenced by the Pythagorean notion of reincarnation or metempsychosis.<sup>155</sup> And certainly Philostratus' Wise Men and their strength and wisdom in the reincarnated soul are in no small way influenced by Pythagorean ideals. The entire purpose of Apollonius' trip to the Wise Men is to shore up his Pythagorean credentials, but I will comment on this more below. Let it suffice for now that clearly Philostratus drew from prior Greek accounts concerning Indian *Brachmanes* as he portrayed the Wise Men's belief in reincarnation, specifically a belief similar to Plato's myth about the soul.<sup>156</sup>

Iarchas' specific ability to "see" the prior lives of both himself and those around him is both very Pythagorean (Pythagoras supposedly knew both his own and other's prior lives)<sup>157</sup> and very Buddhist. Indeed, Philostratus' focus on Iarchas' "second sight" (what I'll term the ability to see prior lives) might suggest Greek knowledge of this ability in Buddhist sages. As I've shown above, certain Greek accounts,

---

<sup>154</sup> 10.614a-621b. For other descriptions of metempsychosis and the immortality of the soul in Plato, see the *Meno*, 81a-81e and the *Phaedo*.

<sup>155</sup> Kahn, C.H. *Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans: A Brief History*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2001, p. 50.

<sup>156</sup> Indeed, the Naked Ones also describe the teachings of the Indian Wise Men as "myths" (μῦθος) (VI.10.4.18).

<sup>157</sup> Kahn, 2001, p. 5.

particularly Bardesanes', suggest knowledge of Buddhists without knowing the name, thus the lack of such nomenclature in Philostratus is unsurprising.<sup>158</sup> Among Indian religions, second sight is unique to Buddhism and the Buddha is supposedly the first man to attain such ability, upon his enlightenment.<sup>159</sup> And those who attain enlightenment from the Buddha's teachings (called in Sanskrit an *arhat*) can gain second sight as well. Interestingly, as Anderson suggests, "Iarchas" may be a transliteration into Greek from *arhat*.<sup>160</sup> Of course, the imprecision of this transliteration is disconcerting, particularly in light of the accuracy of the other Sanskrit transliteration (e.g. *Brahmanas* to *Brachmanes*). The ability to see former lives does find precedence in Greek descriptions of Pythagoras but not in extant literature on India, but it is also a very important Buddhist ability. So Philostratus focus on second sight might highlight knowledge of Buddhist attributes in Greek sources now non-existent, from which Philostratus would have drawn.

The Wise Men's beliefs concerning elements and a governed universe can also be traced to the beliefs of the *Brachmanes*. Megasthenes, in Strabo, writes that the *Brachmanes* believe the universe was created and that the god which created it and regulates it exists throughout all of it (15.1.59). As I described above, the Wise Men describe the universe as a ship which the creator god captains (ahead of a number of "first mate" deities, so to speak). And so too do the *Brachmanes* of Megasthenes speak of five elements, the fifth of which makes up the heavens and the stars (ὁ οὐρανός και τὰ ἄστρα) (15.1.59-60). Of course this is not exactly like the Wise Men claim, that the fifth element is what composes the gods and what they breath, but the leap from what make up the heavens to what make up the gods is not far.

The beliefs stressed most by the Naked Ones, unlike the Wise Men, are similar to those attributed to the *Gymnosophistai*, particularly those Alexander/Onesicritus met. And as I showed in the first section, this portrayal is highly influenced by Cynicism. The Naked Ones stress simplicity, frugality,

---

<sup>158</sup> If, in fact, Philostratus is drawing Iarchas' second sight from sources on India as opposed to attaching Pythagorean abilities to the Indians.

<sup>159</sup> Keown, D. *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 24-26.

<sup>160</sup> Anderson, 1986, p. 208.

asceticism. Frugality and asceticism are the key lessons of the *Gymnosophistai*. Just as Thespesion the Naked Ones tells Apollonius that “to think nothing welcome or pleasant that has come to you without toil (μὴ πονήσαντι)” (see above), Mandanis (Strabo’s Dandamis equivalent) tells Onesicritus that toil (πόνος) strengthens man (Strabo, 15.1.65.5). And, according to the *Gymnosophistai*, when strengthened by this toil and asceticism, the wise man will be able to give council on goodness to everyone (σύμβουλοι πᾶσιν ἀγαθῶν παρῆεν) (Strabo, 15.1.65.7). In this way too, claim the Naked Ones, frugality teaches wisdom and the truth (6.10.4.16-17). Moreover, like Thespesion’s call to go naked, Mandanis tells Onesicritus not to be ashamed to go naked (Strabo, 6.10.6). Lastly, the Naked Ones advice to not deny the simplicity of nature (ἢ κατὰ φύσιν εὐτέλεια) (6.10.6.15-16) clearly echoes the *Gymnosophistai*’s repeated suggestion to deny culture (νόμος) and embrace nature (φύσις).<sup>161</sup>

But what of the Wise Men’s belief that self-knowledge is necessary for wisdom and that a good man is a god? That a good man is a god is a very Neopythagorean and Neoplatonic idea.<sup>162</sup> I will discuss later the great amount of Pythagorean influence on the ideas and portrayal of the Indian Wise Men. As for the first claim, Philostratus, perhaps, puts the first notion, that complete wisdom requires self-knowledge, in the mouths of the Wise Men as a testament to their wisdom, in a way particularly meaningful to Greeks. The Greek themselves certainly acknowledged that self-knowledge is a sign of great wisdom. One of the most famous maxims above the entry to the oracle at Delphi was “Know Thyself” (γνώθι σεαυτόν). Indeed, Apollonius, when he asks the Wise Men if they have self-knowledge, assumes that they too, like the Greeks, think it is very difficult to achieve (οἰόμενος αὐτόν, ὥσπερ Ἕλληνες, χαλεπὸν ἠγείσθαι τὸ σεαυτὸν γνῶμαί) (3.18.1.3-4). But Iarchas’ response really emphasizes how advanced in wisdom they are: the Wise Men not only know themselves, but *began* their philosophical study already with this self-knowledge. That is, the Wise Men developed knowledge which the Greeks held to be one of the most difficult revelations even before they started their “real” philosophical study.

<sup>161</sup> See Strabo, 15.1.65 and Plutarch, *Life of Alexander*, 65.2.

<sup>162</sup> Kahn, 2001, p. 96-97. Also, Philostratus claims that some of the remarks of the philosopher Empedocles of Acragas, such as “I am an immortal god to you all, I, no longer mortal” suggest he was a Pythagorean (1.1.3.8).

But it is harder to find a Greek precedent for the Wise Men's claim that they know everything (πάντα) because of their self-knowledge (3.18.1.6). Instead, I argue, that here Philostratus introduces something accurately reflecting historical Brahman beliefs which is not found in any other extant Greek source. This claim, that to know oneself is to know all, is essential to the philosophy of the historic Brahmins. For a Brahmin, one of the most important goals is to know one's essential self or soul, called in Sanskrit *atman*. And the *atman* and the cosmos, encapsulated in the totality of the universe called *Brahman*, are one in the same.<sup>163</sup> And since the *atman* and the *Brahman* are the same, by knowing one, the Brahmin knows the other: in essence, having self-knowledge brings and is knowledge of everything. In one of the earliest sacred texts of the Brahmins, the *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad*, there is written: "It is by seeing, hearing, reflecting, and concentrating on one's essential self [*atman*] that the whole world is known."<sup>164</sup> Judging from how well sources such as Megasthenes and Bardesanes paraphrased and translated Indian ideas into Greek, I would certainly not argue any Greek source described the specifics of the *atman* or *Brahman*. But, judging from Philostratus, it seems plausible that somewhere in the Greek corpus on Indian sages, an author mentioned the Indians', perhaps even *Brachmanes*', very high regard for self-knowledge and its accompanying universal knowledge.<sup>165</sup>

In this section, I have analyzed some of the textual evidence of the Greek tradition's influence on Philostratus in his characterizations of the Indian Wise Men and the Ethiopian Naked Ones. I have argued that the Greek understanding of the *Brachmanes* especially influenced the Wise Men, particularly the *Brachmanes*' reputation for wisdom, skill at prophesy, and belief in reincarnation. On the other hand, Philostratus' depiction of the Naked Ones reflects the Greek understanding of the *Gymnosophistai*, who met with Alexander and Onesicritus, and their highly ascetic nakedness. Moreover, I suggested that even

---

<sup>163</sup> Keown, 1996, p. 28.

<sup>164</sup> From the *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad*, 2.4.5, quoted in Hamilton, S. *Indian Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001, p.30.

<sup>165</sup> From these same sources, Philostratus may also have taken the notion that the Wise Men consider themselves gods, since if the *atman* and the divine *Brahman* are one, then so too is man a part of the divine. But Philostratus equally might have been influenced by the newly resurgent Pythagoreanism, as I noted. Anderson also noted the similarity in Greek and Indian thought concerning the human as divine and the importance of self-knowledge (1986, p. 211).

in the attributes which the Wise Men and the Naked Ones share – attributes common to both the *Brachmanes* and the *Gymnosophistai* – Philostratus nonetheless manipulates these similarities to favor the Indians over the Ethiopians. Lastly, I have also identified attributes and knowledge of the Wise Men which find no obvious predecessors in the Greek tradition concerning India, but which resemble characteristics of sages in Pythagorean, Brahman, and Buddhist traditions. I tentatively suggested that this information came from non-extant Greek sources concerning Indian philosophers and religious groups which provided information no longer found in the extant tradition. But one might certainly ask what this evidence of Greek influence on Philostratus’ depiction of these Eastern sages means for the question on the historicity of the Damis source. I will now suggest a few arguments on how my analysis provides further evidence against a historical Damis source.

### **The “Damis Question” Revisited**

The fact that prior Greek accounts of Indian sages appear to have substantially influenced Philostratus’ portrayal of the Indian Wise Men has important implications concerning the question of the reality of Damis’ account of Apollonius’ journey to India. In light of Philostratus’ portrayal of Apollonius’ visit to India, there are three available conclusions to draw concerning the Damis source: one, that he provided an account of Apollonius’ travels to India which was very minimal, two, that the Damis source was itself influenced by prior Greek accounts of India. Or, three, and the option which I will argue is more likely, that Damis provided no account of Apollonius’ visit to India, and Philostratus had free reign to portray the Wise Men and their interactions with Apollonius as he saw fit, partly ascribing such a portrayal to the Damis source, but in reality drawing entirely from prior Greek accounts.<sup>166</sup>

---

<sup>166</sup> While I will not claim it directly, I think my arguments against the existence of an account by Damis concerning Apollonius’ visits to India can be used to argue against a historical visit to these two places by Apollonius. At the very least, these arguments provide fodder for the claim that even if Apollonius had visited India, Philostratus’ biography cannot be used to support such historical visits.

The first two conclusions concerning the Damis source are possible.<sup>167</sup> The lack of any extant fragments of this Damis source and the nature of Philostratus' own citations makes arguing for or against these possibilities inevitably inconclusive. Indeed, Flinterman argues that even if we can trace Philostratus' information on India to other sources, this does not make an additional Damis source impossible.<sup>168</sup> While the argument cannot be conclusive, I think there are a few substantial reasons to think these two possibilities – the existence of a minimal Damis source or a Damis source already influenced by Greek sources – are non-consequential and with an appeal to Ockham's razor, unnecessarily complicate the picture. First, all the information that Philostratus contributes to Damis can be found in prior Greek sources, which makes an already suspect Damis source superfluous. Second, the explicit *modus operandi* of Philostratus' use of the Damis source suggests that it is Philostratus who incorporated prior Greek accounts, rather than the Damis source. And third, the hypothetical acknowledgement of the existence of a Damis source and its incorporation of prior Greek sources on India does not seriously affect my analysis of the influence of prior Greek sources on Philostratus. Rather, it merely adds an intermediary in this influence. But in response to this hypothetical premise, I will suggest that Philostratus' account of India only bolsters many scholars' claims of the novelistic nature of Philostratus' use of the Damis source, and as such implies the invention of this source.

First, to gauge whether the Damis source simply provided a minimal background or foundation upon which Philostratus built his account of Apollonius' Indian trip, we need to look at the few instances where Philostratus directly cites Damis. Almost all of the information concerning the Wise Men can be traced to information found in prior Greek accounts.<sup>169</sup> In particular, even the information which Philostratus attributes specifically to Damis has Greek precedents. For example, as I showed above, the

---

<sup>167</sup> Anderson suggests that perhaps the Damis source was just a minimal outline of events or even just a list of proverbs and famous sayings of Apollonius (1986, p. 166).

<sup>168</sup> 1995, p. 83. Anderson makes a similar argument, 1986, p. 161.

<sup>169</sup> Anderson is right to argue that all the information concerning the Wise Men cannot be traced back to the Alexander historians (1986, p. 158). But as I have shown, most (if not all) the information can be traced back to Greek accounts including, but not limited to, the Alexander historians. Furthermore, Anderson's argument that Damis' contributions in India are most reliable does not help the case for a historical account of Damis (1986, p. 158). The entire depiction of the Wise Men, including Damis' specific contributions, is no more accurate than prior Greek accounts.

material ascribed to Damis concerning Apollonius' description of the Indian Wise Men – that they live within walls but without them, live on the earth but not on it, and have nothing but everything – has clear models in the earlier Greek descriptions of Indian *Brachmanes* and *Gymnosophistai*. In addition, Philostratus cites Damis as saying that Apollonius and Iarchas had secret conversations concerning prophecy and proper sacrifice and that on the basis of these conversations Apollonius wrote his books concerning prophecy and sacrifice (3.41.1). Again, that the Wise Men should be very knowledgeable in both prophecy and propitiation of the divine is well accounted in prior Greek accounts (see above). As a final example, Philostratus cites Damis' recording of Apollonius' questions to Iarchas concerning some of the fantastic Indian beasts, and the list of beasts includes some Greek favorites: manticores and "Shadow Feet" (men with enormous feet they use for shade) (3.45-49).<sup>170</sup> That Iarchas denies some of the crazier creatures, as opposed to confirming them as many Greek accounts do, suggests only that Philostratus was rightly incredulous of the unbelievable Greek accounts of the marvels of India.<sup>171</sup> So the information Philostratus attributes explicitly to Damis provides little, if any, evidence even for a minimal account from Damis. In other words, while the ability to trace information attributed to Damis to other sources does not conclusively rule out a Damis source, if all the information can be found in extant prior Greek sources available, at least theoretically, to Philostratus, why hypothesize the reality of another source whose existence is already questionable for a number of compelling reasons?<sup>172</sup>

One might object that Philostratus might not specifically cite Damis every time he drew from his account, and that there is some information, particularly the Wise Men's ability to "see" former lives and their belief that knowing oneself produces omniscience, that is not present in the earlier tradition. Even if

---

<sup>170</sup> These two wonders and many others are attributed to the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC author Ctesias, who wrote a notoriously fantastic work on India no longer extant. The 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD author Pausanias cites Ctesias in his description of the manticore (in which Pausanias does not believe) (*Descriptions*, 21.5). Pliny the Elder of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD cites Ctesias for the description of the "Shadow Feet" (*Naturalis Historia*, 7.2).

<sup>171</sup> And in fact Philostratus explicitly states his suspension of belief (and disbelief), writing: "...and I will not leave them [Apollonius' questions concerning the creatures] out, since there might be gain in neither believing nor disbelieving all of them" (μηδ' ἐμοὶ παραλείψω, καὶ γὰρ κέρδος εἴη μήτε πιστεύειν, μήτε ἀπιστεῖν πάσιν) (3.45.1.3-5).

<sup>172</sup> Philostratus, as Flintermann notes, explicitly references two other sources on India, Juba (at 2.13 and 16) and Orthagoras (at 3.53), and Flintermann suggests that it is highly probable other sources are influential as well – in fact, Flintermann names specifically Ctesias, Onesicritus, and Megasthenes (1995, p. 83). He seems to think that Philostratus used these sources directly, rather than through their inclusion in the existing Apollonius tradition.

we were able to attribute most, if not all, of the information in the Indian account to a real Damis, this still would provide no compelling argument for an actual account used by Philostratus. The Wise Men in Philostratus account do not reflect any historical Indian group, especially with their new attributes and beliefs not found in extant Greek sources on Indian sages. Moreover, as we have seen, the Wise Men have abilities and hold beliefs particular to either historical Brahmins or historical Buddhists, but not both. Were Philostratus using information from a historical account recording a visit to a single group of Indian sages, even allowing for mistakes in interpretation and understanding by the Greek travelers, we would still expect a reasonably consistent portrayal of some historical Indian group.<sup>173</sup> But this is not what we get. Rather, the better explanation for the Wise Men's portrayal, conflicting with any historical group, is that Philostratus built his account from information provided by prior Greek sources, resulting in an amalgamation of both Brahmin and Buddhist (among other possible groups) attributes.

To both these arguments, one might respond that perhaps the Damis source was itself influenced by prior Greek sources on India, whether it was based on a historical trip or not, and Philostratus simply reflects this influence in his use of the source. Indeed, Flinterman takes this route, though he argues it is impossible to know where Philostratus used the Damis source and where he used other sources.<sup>174</sup> To this claim I have two responses. First, it seems more likely that it would be the sophist Philostratus that would do this embellishing. In fact, supposedly Julia Domna gave the reports of Damis to Philostratus so that he might “alter” (μεταγράψαι) and “take care of” or “cultivate” (ἐπιμεληθῆναι) the work, since it was not so “properly” or “skillfully” written (δεξιῶς) (I.3.1.10-12). It does not seem too much of a stretch to think that Philostratus, who we know by his few citations had some of the Greek sources on India, would also have had the others (particularly the very commonly used Megasthenes and Onesicritus), and would bring these to bear on his bibliography of Apollonius.

---

<sup>173</sup> Again, this critique suggests that at best the Damis source was very minimal, including only the fact that a visit to India occurred and perhaps the most basic of a description of the Wise Men. Indeed such a minimal work could have only the smallest effect on Philostratus' biography, certainly not to the great extent that Philostratus suggests.

<sup>174</sup> 1995, p. 85.

My second response accepts the premise that the Damis source existed and was influenced by prior Greek accounts of India, but does so only to show that such an assumption simply expands the scope of my discussion above on the influence on Philostratus. If the Greek tradition on India influenced the Damis source, which then influenced Philostratus, then my analysis of such influence still holds true, but simply applies also to the Damis source (perhaps even expanded to the entire pre-Philostratean tradition on Apollonius as a whole). Greek accounts of India may very well have influenced a hypothetically real Damis source, but this simply means the Greek accounts of India influenced Philostratus *through* his use of the Damis source. Just as it is still valid to claim that Onesicritus' account of the *Gymnosophistai* influenced Philostratus, even though it may have been known to Philostratus only via Strabo (as it is for us today), so too is it valid to claim Onesicritus influenced Philostratus even if it passed through both Strabo *and* the Damis source (or perhaps through only the Damis source).<sup>175</sup> Even allowing the Damis source as an intermediary, prior Greek accounts of India still influenced Philostratus. Moreover, admitting that some of the influence of prior Greek sources came to Philostratus already embodied in the Damis source does not substantially affect the analysis I will present in the following section of how the biographer uses the information provided by all these sources. Even the scholars, such as Flinterman, who assume the reality of the Damis source, still acknowledge how much of an editor Philostratus was. As Flinterman says:

Philostratus combined material from the Damis source both with material from other sources on Apollonius and with material from a completely different provenance. He invented speeches and dialogues, whether they had their roots in the tradition or not. He transformed the traditional material into episodes, and assigned character who were assumed to have been present (whether on the basis of the available information or not) a role in the action or conversation. 1995, p. 85-86

---

<sup>175</sup> Of course, distortion of Onesicritus' account may very well have occurred each time it passed through a source. But without the original source, questions of distortion are empty and impossibly to even guess at. Yet since we do have Strabo's account of Onesicritus, whose actual account we have no reason to think Strabo didn't have, I can argue for Onesicritus' influence on Philostratus (at least filtered through Strabo) without having to question if the supposed Damis source distorted Onesicritus. Assuming, hypothetically, Onesicritus' influence on Philostratus is through the Damis source, Strabo's citations provide a check on any distortion. Even if the Damis source had distorted Onesicritus' account and thus mislead Philostratus, Strabo's account allows me to gauge what information actually (or at least very likely) in Onesicritus reached and influenced Philostratus' biography.

So in an analysis of how Philostratus uses the Greek tradition of depicting Indian sages, in many ways it makes no difference how, or in whom, the tradition first had its influence. The fact remains that Philostratus' work strongly suggests such influence, even if the entry point of such influence in the Apollonian tradition cannot be conclusively pinpointed in Philostratus. The key aspect still remains how Philostratus synthesizes his sources, through his unique diction, through inclusion and emphasis of certain ideas, and through arrangement and juxtaposition of episodes and characters – all things he admits he has done.

Lastly, many skeptics of a historically real Damis have pointed to the similarities between Philostratus use of Damis and other novelists' of the Second Sophistic use of fictional "sources."<sup>176</sup> Many of these similarities are present in Philostratus' account of the visit to India. For example, Philostratus makes Damis a second-hand source for some of Apollonius' conversations with the Wise Men by claiming that Damis was not personally at the conversations but only heard about them later from Apollonius.<sup>177</sup> A similar literary trope is used in the novel *Leucippe and Clitophon*, in which the main narrator recounts a story he heard from another man he met in his travels. So too does the main narrator of the novel *Daphnis and Chloe* tell the story of a picture he saw of events he took no part in personally. In addition, Philostratus questions the veracity of Damis' claims.<sup>178</sup> This technique is familiar to the novels of the Second Sophistic, used to create an air of authenticity of fictional sources.<sup>179</sup>

An analysis of the influence of prior Greek accounts of Indian sages and the possibly new information Philostratus presents in his account strongly suggest that Philostratus was not working from any actual source or travelogue recounting Apollonius' visit to India. In light of this, it seems that, at least in Book Three, Philostratus ascribes certain pieces of information to a fictional travel log by Apollonius' companion Damis in much the same way contemporary novelists ascribe their stories to fictional sources.

---

<sup>176</sup> See, for example, Bowie, 1978; Dzielska 1986; C.P. Jones, 2005.

<sup>177</sup> E.g. 3.27.1.5 and 3.41.1.8.

<sup>178</sup> 3.45.1.3-5. Flinterman argues that this suggests Damis is a real source, for why would Philostratus create a source whose opinions he doesn't always agree with (1995, p. 85)? But the existence of just such a technique in contemporary novels suggests that this would have not been so illogical for Philostratus, but would rather serve to substantiate his faux-source.

<sup>179</sup> Jones, 2005, p. 5.

In reality, Philostratus likely gathered his material on the Indian Wise Men entirely from existing Greek accounts of various Indian sages and simply embellished details as he saw fit, ascribing some facts to the fictional Damis source. At the very least, Philostratus' depiction of the visit to the Indian Wise Men provides no evidence for or against a historical Damis. But putting the Damis question aside, how does Philostratus use and manipulate the Greek tradition on India and its sages – through whatever avenue this tradition came to him – in his depiction of the Indian Wise Men, Ethiopian (and Egyptian) Naked Ones, and their interactions with Apollonius? That will be the issue discussed in the next section.

### **Philostratus' Use of the Indian Wise Men and Ethiopian Naked Ones**

One of Philostratus' express purposes for his biography of Apollonius is to defend Apollonius from what Philostratus sees as unjust criticisms: the first, that Apollonius was a false philosopher, and the second, that he was a magician (μάγος and βιαιώς σοφός).<sup>180</sup> In light of such claims, Philostratus devotes his book to “rehabilitate” (to borrow J.A. Francis' terminology) the reputation of Apollonius.<sup>181</sup> In the introduction of book one, Philostratus writes: “I have therefore decided to remedy the general ignorance and to give an accurate account of the man [Apollonius], observing the chronology of his words and acts, and the special character of the wisdom by which he came close to being thought possessed and inspired” (Δοκεῖ οὖν μοι μὴ περιιδεῖν τὴν τῶν πολλῶν ἄγνοιαν, ἀλλ' ἐξακριβῶσαι τὸν ἄνδρα τοῖς τε χρόνοις, καθ' οὓς εἶπέ τι ἢ ἔπραξε, τοῖς τε τῆς σοφίας τρόποις, ὑφ' ὧν ἔψαυσε τοῦ δαιμόνιός τε καὶ θεῖος νομισθῆναι) (1.2.3.1-4).<sup>182</sup> Philostratus, having gathered many of the prior sources on Apollonius, hopes to create a portrayal of Apollonius more acceptable to contemporary society. Moreover, in his various refutations of prior, less positive literary portrayals of

<sup>180</sup> For the charge of false philosophy, Philostratus claims that people do not recognize Apollonius' philosophy as “true” or “genuine” (ἀληθινή), nor that he practiced said philosophy “philosophically” (φιλοσοφῶς) or “honorably,” “soundly,” or “correctly” (ὀρθῶς) (LSJ 3.1, 3.2) (1.2.1.5-6). For the seriousness of the charge of magic in the ancient world of the early Roman Empire, see Dickie, M.W. *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*. London: Routledge, 2001, pp. 142-161.

<sup>181</sup> Francis, in *Subversive Virtue: Asceticism and Authority in the Second-Century Pagan World*, provides an excellent analysis of how Philostratus attempts to “rehabilitate” the reputation of Apollonius from socially unacceptable, radical ascetic, to a socially constructive, acceptable religious leader.

<sup>182</sup> From the Loeb translation, 2005.

Apollonius – in particular the biography by Moeragenes – Philostratus presents a figure not only acceptable but indeed highly respectable to general society. At the end of the introduction, Philostratus inaugurates his work: “May my work bring honor to this man [Apollonius], on whom it is written, and let it offer aid to those who love to learn [true things]; for they might learn what they do not yet know”

(ἐχέτω δὲ ὁ λόγος τῷ τε ἀνδρὶ τιμὴν, ἐς ὃν ξυγγέγραπται, τοῖς τε φιλομαθεστέροις ὠφέλειαν· ἦ γὰρ ἂν μάθοιεν, ἃ μήπω γιγνώσκουσιν) (1.3.2.9-11).

In the introduction in book one, Philostratus outlines some of the basic arguments against Apollonius (philosophic falsity and sorcery) and gives a cursory defense, most explicitly regarding the charge of magic. As Philostratus writes:

Though he [Apollonius] lived in times that were neither ancient nor modern, people do not know him for the genuine wisdom which he practiced philosophically and sincerely. Instead, they single out only this or that of his deeds, while because of his association with Babylonian magicians, Indian Brahmans, and the Naked Ones of Egypt, some think him a sorcerer and misrepresent him as a philosophic imposter, but in this they are wrong.<sup>183</sup>

...καὶ γενόμενον κατὰ χρόνους οὔτ' ἀρχαίους οὔτ' αὖ νέους. οὐπω οἱ ἄνθρωποι γιγνώσκουσιν ἀπὸ τῆς ἀληθινῆς σοφίας, ἣν φιλοσόφως τε καὶ ὑγιῶς ἐπήσκησεν, ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν τό, ὁ δὲ τὸ ἐπαινεῖ τοῦ ἀνδρός, οἱ δέ, ἐπειδὴ μάγοις Βαβυλωνίων καὶ Ἰνδῶν Βραχμᾶσι καὶ τοῖς ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ Γυμνοῖς συνεγένετο, μάγον ἡγοῦνται αὐτὸν καὶ διαβάλλουσιν ὡς βιαίως σοφόν, κακῶς γιγνώσκοντες.

1.2.1.3-10

In book one, Philostratus rebuts this criticism by citing famous prior philosophers, such as Empedocles, Pythagoras, Democritus, and Plato, who also visited and studied with these foreign sages (1.2.1). These philosophers, Philostratus points out, are not condemned for their time with these foreigners; nor does society accuse them of philosophical charlatanism or, more explicitly, sorcery on these accounts. So why should society condemn Apollonius in similar circumstances? According to Philostratus, Apollonius' ability to prophesy was also condemned as magic. Yet, Philostratus claims, Apollonius' ability stemmed not from the magical arts but from wisdom, in the same way as the honored Socrates and Anaxagoras

<sup>183</sup> From Loeb translation, 2005.

were able to predict natural phenomena (1.2.2). Philostratus equates Apollonius with a long line of famous, respected Greek thinkers in order to validate Apollonius actions as truly philosophical and enlightened.<sup>184</sup>

Throughout the book, Philostratus portrays Apollonius in ways that refute these criticisms against his character, and depicts Apollonius speaking in his own defense on a number of different occasions.<sup>185</sup> But in this section, I will offer arguments concerning aspects of Apollonius' rehabilitation mentioned only tangentially by scholars and not explicitly stated by Philostratus, namely how Philostratus portrays the Indian Wise Men and Ethiopian Naked Ones in order to reinforce Apollonius' stature as a true philosopher and to refute claims of sorcery.<sup>186</sup> To do this, Philostratus portrays the Wise Men and the Naked Ones in two ways. First, Philostratus portrays the inferior Naked Ones as embodiments of all the negative traits – those which would have gained Apollonius censure in the early Empire – associated with Indian sages, primarily traits resembling those of the Western Cynics. And second, he depicts the Wise Men as embodying all of the traits associated with Indian sages that were acceptable, indeed laudable, to contemporary society of the 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. Philostratus presents the Wise Men as ideal Pythagorean sages embracing the positive attributes of the Greek depiction of Indians in order to legitimize Apollonius as a true, and indeed exceedingly learned, philosopher.

#### *Indian Wise Men vs. Ethiopian Naked Ones*

As I showed in the prior section, Philostratus clearly draws from the prior Greek tradition concerning Indian sages in his depictions of the Indian Wise Men and the Ethiopian Naked Ones. In

---

<sup>184</sup> Francis claims that Philostratus' "rehabilitation begins with giving Apollonius an intellectual pedigree, placing him in the succession of the luminaries of classical culture" (p. 97).

<sup>185</sup> See Francis, 1995. Apollonius' lengthiest personal defense is his speech to the Roman Emperor Domitian at 8.7. Apollonius defense against the Ethiopian Naked Ones is discussed above and will be discussed again below.

<sup>186</sup> Flintermann suggests and discusses briefly the Wise Men and Naked Ones as models of Pythagoreanism and Cynicism, respectively. He claims that the bias against Cynicism, most prevalent in Apollonius' rebuke of Thespion, while certainly tweaked by Philostratus, nonetheless was likely prevalent in the prior Damis source, which he believes was real (albeit a psudepigraphic work of unknown origin). His argument for such a bias in the Damis source rests almost entirely on the references to the source in the relevant accounts concerning the Naked Ones; a fair argument if one already accepts the reality of the Damis source, but presumptuous if not (1995, pp. 86-87). Flintermann's suggestion concerning the Pythagorean/Cynic nature of the two groups stems from an earlier work by R. Reitzenstein (*Hellenistische Wundererzählungen*, 1906).

particular, Philostratus seems to model the Wise Men primarily on the Greek understanding of Indian *Brachmanes* (and other similar Indian groups), while he models the Naked Ones primarily on the Greek understanding of Indian *Gymnosophistai*. But why should he do this? What purpose does this serve? I will argue that Philostratus distinguishes the Wise Men from the Naked Ones in this way in order to project the more unsavory attributes – particularly radical, Cynic asceticism – of the Indian sages in the Greek tradition on figures other than the Indian Wise Men. The Wise Men are the ideal philosophers and teachers of Apollonius and any imperfections in them, whether explicit or implicit, would reflect poorly on Apollonius. But an educated reader of the biography would bring preconceived notions concerning Indian sages based upon the many Greek accounts prior to Philostratus, preconceptions involving both positive and negative traits. So Philostratus, in order to most effectively rehabilitate Apollonius, must distance the Wise Men from such negative traits and, in doing so, highlight their embodiment of only the good traits of the Indian sages in their Greek portrayal. Philostratus creates this distance by introducing the Naked Ones, whom Apollonius meets and quite definitively refutes, and imbues them with all the radical asceticism of the *Gymnosophistai* which echoes the Cynics contemporary with Philostratus.<sup>187</sup> But first, I need to show that the contemporary society of Philostratus' readership would have disliked Cynicism, at least its proponents who advocated radical asceticism.

The literature of the Second Sophistic (during which Philostratus lived and wrote) routinely depicted Cynic philosophers as rascals, charlatans, and blights on the civilized world. In his study on asceticism and its subversive nature in early Imperial society, J.A. Francis describes in great detail the many reasons that broader society and literature disapproved of Cynicism.<sup>188</sup> Most important for our study, the Cynic exhortation to reject social norms especially in physically visible ways, e.g. immoderate inattention to clothing or hygiene, gained its followers great condemnation from contemporary literature. Perhaps the best and most pertinent example of such disapproving literature is Philostratus' near

---

<sup>187</sup> On the Cynic influence and portrayal already present in the Greek depiction of the *Gymnosophistai* of Onesicritus and Alexander, see Stoneman, 1995. Even just the Naked Ones exhortation to Apollonius to not deny the simplicity of nature illustrates Philostratus' intention to depict the Naked Ones as Cynic.

<sup>188</sup> Francis, 1995, pp. 60-66.

contemporary, the satirist Lucian who wrote a generation before Philostratus. Lucian wrote an entire book, *On the End of Peregrinus*, satirizing, quite viciously, the Cynic philosopher Peregrinus. Peregrinus, practicing the serious asceticism advocated by Cynicism, coats himself in mud, shaves half his head, and takes up the philosophy of “indifference” (ἀδιόφορον) (17).<sup>189</sup> In doing so, he gains a large following; a following which Lucian continually intimates is the sole reason for his actions. Throughout the work, Lucian lambasts Peregrinus for his philosophical hypocrisy, abuse of power, and ultimate lust for attention.

Lucian’s satire focuses mostly on Peregrinus’ decision to end his life with a final performance, to burn himself upon a pyre at the next Olympian games. This work highlights the association of Indian sages with this contemporary, pernicious Cynicism, for Lucian explicitly notes that Peregrinus meant, in his fiery finale, to emulate the Indian Brahmins (ὅπως τὴν καρτερίαν ἐπιδείξεται καθάπερ οἱ Βραχμᾶνες) (25.5-6). In addition, shortly after this remark, Lucian briefly describes the typical depiction of the Indian sage calmly setting himself ablaze, writing that this is “as Onesicritus, the helmsman of Alexander, says when he saw Calanus burning” (ὡς Ὀνησίκριτος ὁ Ἀλεξάνδρου κυβερνήτης ἰδὼν Κάλανον καόμενόν φησιν) (25.11-12). It is important to note here that Lucian calls these self-immolating Indians *Brachmanes*, although he shortly after cites as a prime example Calanus, who in most other accounts is one of the *Gymnosophistai* Onesicritus/Alexander meet. If (and indeed I argue this in the earlier section “The Greeks’ Knowledge of Indian Wise Men”) literature in the Second Sophistic had begun to blur the distinction between *Gymnosophistai* and *Brachmanes*, at least in regards of who practiced self-immolation, it is understandable that Philostratus rarely calls the Indian Wise Men

---

<sup>189</sup> In order to not complicate the term “Cynic,” I will not discuss in detail the fact that some forms of Cynicism were not condemned in Second Sophistic literature. For example, Lucian, in another work, positively depicts the Cynic Demonax. But, importantly, as Francis notes, Lucian portrays Demonax positively because Demonax’s Cynicism is very moderate and avoids the radical, physical, and externally visible asceticism which Lucian condemns in other Cynics (1995, p. 75). It is this sort of immoderate Cynic I denote in the term “Cynic.” It is worth noting that this distinction in Lucian’s dislike of Cynics highlights that it is this immoderate and socially unacceptable asceticism that Lucian, and indeed broader society, disdains.

*Brachmanes*.<sup>190</sup> But even in Lucian, who attributes the unacceptably flamboyant, ascetic practice of self-immolation to Indian sages, the *Brachmanes* are not wholly divorced from virtue.

In another one of Lucian's works, *The Runaways*, he describes a group of escaped slaves who take up the visibly extreme asceticism of Cynicism. Like in *The End of Peregrinus*, the work alludes to the Indian sages, but in a rather positive light. Lucian describes a conversation between anthropomorphized Philosophy and Zeus at the beginning of the story. In this discussion on the decrepitude and degeneration of certain schools of false philosophy (primarily Cynicism), Philosophy describes how she first brought philosophy to mankind (6). She says she was first going to visit the Greeks, but decided to go instead to the "barbarians" (βάρβαροι) thinking they would be the greater challenge. Yet when she visits the Indians first, she finds them willing and quick learners and enlists an entire people (γένος), the *Brachmanes*, to follow her precepts (6.13-14). Moreover, she claims that not only do they live accordingly to her philosophical ideals and are honored for it, but they also die a "remarkable kind of death" (ἀποθνήσκουσι παράδοξόν τινα τοῦ θανάτου τρόπον) (6.18-19) – clearly alluding to the Greek belief in Indian self-immolation. But to this, Zeus replies "Do you mean the Gymnosophists? Then I have heard about these men" (Τοὺς γυμνοσοφιστὰς λέγεις; Ἄκούω γοῦν... περὶ αὐτῶν) (7.1.1-2).<sup>191</sup> Zeus claims that their self-immolation is nothing special (οὐ μέγα), since just recently he saw some man burn himself to death at Olympia, of course, alluding to Peregrinus. But Philosophy rejects this appraisal, telling Zeus that she did not even go to this man's death since him and his followers are "the most despicable men" (οἱ κατάρρατοι) (7.9). Thus Philosophy denies the virtue of these Greek suicides, implicitly, especially considering her earlier praise of the *Brachmanes*, lauding Indian virtue – at least Brahmin virtue – and, in some ways, condoning or at least accepting Indian self-immolation. Lucian's use of the *Brachmanes* and *Gymnosophistai* illustrates that Indian sages were on one hand acknowledged as wise and skilled in philosophy, but on the other hand also recognized as

<sup>190</sup> Francis also points out that Philostratus never references any self-immolation concerning the Indian Wise Men (1995, p. 99).

<sup>191</sup> The Loeb, 2005, places simply a period after λέγεις, but even then it acts as a clarifying statement, denoted by the following sentences γοῦν. Also, Zeus' clarification suggests that "*Gymnosophistai*," at least the term, was more readily recognized than "*Brachmanes*," perhaps especially in reference to self-immolation.

embodying certain traits, especially a Cynic-like asceticism, not proper for Greek society and general moral sentiment.<sup>192</sup>

Early imperial society's tendency to condemn Cynics and associate Indian sages with contemporary Cynics presents Philostratus with a serious problem. By using Indian sages as the ultimate teachers of Apollonius, Philostratus risks positively associating Apollonius with men who embody, at least partially, the very philosophical tendencies Philostratus means to deny to Apollonius, namely false, corrupt, and socially unaccepted philosophic ideals. And his solution alleviates this problem admirably: he imbues the Indian Wise Men only with the desired traits – wisdom and piety – of the *Brachmanes* of Megasthenes, while imbuing an entirely different group, the Ethiopian Naked Ones, with the condemnable, Cynic traits – immoderate asceticism (e.g. nakedness) and an express rejection of societal customs – of the *Gymnosophistai* of Onesicritus and the Alexander historians. This distinctive relationship, both the differences and the similarities, between the Indian Wise Men and the Ethiopian Naked Ones would likely not have seemed unbelievable or contrived for Philostratus' readership. Indeed, in depicting the Ethiopians as ethnically related to Indians, Philostratus draws from an established ethnological tradition.<sup>193</sup> Of course, Philostratus especially emphasizes the Ethiopians' resultant degeneracy from such origins, an emphasis not found in other sources.<sup>194</sup> Nevertheless, Philostratus' readership would not be surprised by a proposed relationship between the Indians and the Ethiopians. Yet Philostratus' distinctions between the Wise Men and the Naked Ones and his devaluing of Ethiopian

---

<sup>192</sup> So here Lucian seems to provide another way through which Philostratus might have been able to justify certain Indian practices not condoned by Western society: namely, by depicting certain Indian ideas/actions as simply unsuitable for Greek emulation. But I can guess at a rather compelling reason Philostratus might have chosen his method, by separating desirable and undesirable traits into two different philosophical groups, over Lucian's. Had Philostratus left both desirable and undesirable teachings in the mouths of the Indian Wise Men, he would undermine their philosophical authority. Philostratus would be unable to depict Apollonius refuting such unacceptable Indian practices without tarnishing the desirability of their other ideals. Moreover, this would create a heightened sense of "otherness" to the Indian's philosophy, which would undermine their positive relationship to Apollonius and his Pythagoreanism. Indeed, Philostratus seems to do just the opposite and depicts the Wise Men as particularly Hellenic (on the "Hellenization" of the Wise Men, see Flinterman, 1995). So while Lucian's method of justifying Indian practices that were unacceptable to Western society may have been open to Philostratus, he would have undermined some of his primary objectives in his biography of Apollonius.

<sup>193</sup> For Ethiopian's relationship with India see Arrian (*Indika*, 6.2.4-9) and Strabo (15.1.13).

<sup>194</sup> Although, Lucian claims in *The Runaways* that after India, Philosophy went to the Ethiopians (8), so perhaps this suggests a tradition of depicting Ethiopia as inferior to India in wisdom.

wisdom (at least relative to Indian) not only distances Apollonius from any negative connotations and implication of associating and learning from Indian sages, but also offers Apollonius a chance to directly refute Ethiopian, Gymnosophic, and thus Cynic ideals as well as claims of Indian magic (which would reflect poorly on him), further rehabilitating Apollonius from his disrepute.

During Apollonius' visit with the Naked Ones, Philostratus spends much of his conversation with these sages refuting their philosophy, defending his own Indo-Pythagorean beliefs, and dismissing claims that the Indians practice magic. In so doing, Apollonius distances himself from the Ethiopian Cynic philosophy and also refutes any claim that he might have learned magic from the Indians. One of the Naked Ones' primary arguments against the Indians, as I discussed above, is that the Indians "enchant" (δημαγωγοῦσι) their visitors with their impressive displays of power and prestige. This word, of the same root as "magician" (μάγος), of course implies that the Indians are practitioners of magic, a similar claim, Philostratus protests, unjustly applied to Apollonius. Moreover, the Naked Ones' charge of magic against the Indians continues with their claim that they force the earth to do their bidding unwillingly (βασανίζοιτο ἄκουσα) (6.10.2.18). The Naked Ones, they say, do not need magic (βιάιος τέχνη) (6.10.3.12-13).<sup>195</sup> The notion of force, particularly of forcing nature (as the Naked Ones claim the Wise Men do), is one of the most definitive distinctions between magic and religion in the ancient Mediterranean. To perform magic is to subvert the natural order through supernatural force.<sup>196</sup>

By this point in Apollonius' visit, the Naked Ones' inferiority to the Wise Men is already well established, both through Philostratus' editorializing narration and Apollonius' own estimations. So already, their critique's validity is undermined simply because of its source. But Apollonius offers this explicit defense: the Indian sages' so-called magic is only appropriate decorum and adornment, a common and agreeable practice many sources of wisdom employ (such as the oracle at Delphi) (6.11.15-20). All art adorns itself (κόσμου γὰρ ἐπιμελήσεται τέχνη πᾶσα), for this is one of its very purposes (6.11.19.1), and we do not condemn those who excel at such adornments and are thus most worthy of

<sup>195</sup> For the definition of βασανίζοιτο as "to be forced" see LSJ II.3. For the definition of βιάιος τέχνη as magic see "βιάιος" LSJ 2.

<sup>196</sup> Dickie, 2001, p. 140.

them. Moreover, Apollonius criticizes the Naked Ones for hypocrisy, saying that even their nakedness is a form of adornment and “pursued for the sake of affectation” (ἐπιτετήδευται δὲ ὑπὲρ κόσμου) (6.11.19.5-6). This claim of affectation in its ostensible rejection is a common attack against Cynicism’s theatrics and asceticism for the sake of fame.<sup>197</sup> Also, Apollonius’ rebuttal reminds the reader of his earlier critique of the Naked Ones: that they go naked not out of endurance but because Ethiopia’s climate demands it (though they claim it’s the former) (6.8). And like Apollonius’ other critique of the Naked Ones’ hypocrisy, contemporary literature of the early Empire also often accused Cynics of this sort of improper motivation for their asceticism.<sup>198</sup> And lastly, as I noted above, within Apollonius’ defense of Indian wisdom he describes how he rejects many other philosophies in favor of the philosophy of Pythagoras (6.4). While it is unclear exactly which philosophies are laid out before him, the last one seems to be Cynicism.<sup>199</sup> Apollonius says that she “boasted that she would keep me from such things [the whole array of earthy pleasures], and she was rude, quarrelsome, and utterly unabashed” (αὐτῶν ἴσχειν μὲν τῶν τοιούτων ἐκόμαζε, θρασεῖα δὲ ἦν καὶ φιλολοῖδορος καὶ ἀπηγκωνισμένη πάντα) (6.11.4.17-18).<sup>200</sup> This and Apollonius’ other explicit rejections of the Naked Ones’ Gymno-Cynic philosophy and their attacks against the Indian Wise Men definitively distance Apollonius from the two major assaults against Apollonius’ character – false philosophy and magic.

Philostratus’ rehabilitation of Apollonius through his manipulation of the Greek tradition on Indian sages does not stop here. Before he depicts Apollonius’ discrediting of the Naked Ones, he presents the Indian Wise Men as ideal Pythagorean sages, an identification to which their model, the Indian *Brachmanes*, easily lends itself. This, in turn, presents Apollonius, upon the completion of his visit with the Indians, as not just an equal of Pythagoras but indeed his superior. It is to this Philostratean maneuver that I now turn.

---

<sup>197</sup> Francis, 1995, p. 62-63.

<sup>198</sup> Francis, 1995, p. 62.

<sup>199</sup> C.P. Jones, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, Loeb, p. 123.

<sup>200</sup> Compare to Lucian’s remark about Cynics: “[their] sharp temper, and pettiness, and easiness to upset exceeds newborn children” (τὸ δ’ ὀξύχολον καὶ μικραίτιον καὶ πρὸς ὀργὴν ῥάδιον ὑπὲρ τὰ βρεφύλλια τὰ νεογνά) (*The Runaways*, 19.13-14).

Apollonius, the Indian Wise Men, and Pythagoras

A connection between Pythagoreanism and Indian philosophy and religion had existed in Greek literature and the Greek mind for at least as long as Alexander's adventures to the East. Onesicritus claims that when the Indian gymnosophist Mandanis described his ascetic philosophy, he asked if any Greeks held similar views. Onesicritus responded that indeed Pythagoras taught such things, as did Socrates and Diogenes (Strabo, 15.1.65). Similar identifications of the Indians' teachings and Pythagorean ideals appear in Plutarch.<sup>201</sup> At least by the Hellenistic period, scholars began to claim that Pythagoras himself visited the Indians, from whom he received his teachings.<sup>202</sup> As J.J. Flinterman notes, the notion that Pythagoreanism had Indian origins not only predates Philostratus but certainly predates Apollonius as well.<sup>203</sup> So in this way, Philostratus' readership would likely not have been surprised or incredulous to hear Pythagorean ideas from Indian mouths. But Philostratus certainly emphasizes the Pythagoreanism of the Indian philosophy, highlighting the Indian ideals already in the Greek tradition which were similar to Pythagoreanism and making the Indians expert at them. He does this in order to legitimize the Indian philosophy, establish the Wise Men as supreme Pythagorean philosophers, and then imbue Apollonius with the same prestige via his adoption of and education in their philosophy.<sup>204</sup> Moreover, Philostratus depicts Pythagoras himself in such a way that Apollonius becomes his better.<sup>205</sup> And lastly, Philostratus stresses the Pythagoreanism of the Indians' beliefs and abilities in order to further distance Apollonius from the charge of magic, clarifying Apollonius' abilities of prophecy and other "miracles" as a result of special wisdom and purity rather than magic. But first, just as I had to show that Cynicism during

---

<sup>201</sup> *Life of Alexander*, 65.2.

<sup>202</sup> See, e.g., Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 1.15.71.3, 1.15.72.4.

<sup>203</sup> Flinterman, 1995, p. 86

<sup>204</sup> This "Pythagoreanization" of the Indian Wise Men is only a part of the general Hellenization of the Indians illustrated in great depth by Flinterman, 1995. As Flinterman says: "The practice of deriving Greek wisdom from 'Barbarian' sources always served to emphasize the respectability of Greek philosophical conceptions by connecting them with traditions that were characterized by antiquity and divine inspiration. All the same, this procedure is bound to have created certain tensions, since idealizing 'barbarian' wisdom necessarily implied a certain playing down of Greek wisdom. The Hellenization in the image of India in the VA... neutralizes these tensions" (p. 103).

<sup>205</sup> Flintermann notes this in "'The ancestor of my wisdom': Pythagoras and Pythagoreanism in VA," 2009, p. 156.

Philostratus' time was routinely condemned for my argument concerning the Naked Ones to hold, I also need to show that Pythagoreanism was acceptable for my argument concerning the Wise Men.

During Philostratus' time, indeed since the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, Pythagoreanism saw a great growth of popularity in the Greco-Roman world.<sup>206</sup> Many Roman authors, such as Cicero, Ovid, and Seneca, portray Pythagoras and his philosophy positively and with admiration.<sup>207</sup> By the Second Sophistic a new branch of Pythagoreanism had developed, called Neopythagoreanism, which fused many Platonic ideas with Pythagorean. Indeed many of Pythagoras' teachings influenced Plato, and a number of his works (e.g. the *Phaedo*) show significant Pythagorean influence. It was through Platonic works that many people knew of Pythagorean ideals.<sup>208</sup> The numerous admiring biographies written about Pythagoras (e.g. by Porphyry and by Iamblichus) during the early centuries of the Roman Empire attest to people's interest, if not admiration, of Pythagoras. In addition, Philostratus' juxtaposition of the Pythagorean Wise Men and Cynic Naked Ones may be a reflection of knowledge of their intertwined history. Early Pythagoreanism of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC had included sects of radically ascetic Pythagoreans. But following the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC and the development of Cynicism, the Cynics absorbed many of these radical Pythagoreans, leaving only the more moderate Pythagoreanism in its stead.<sup>209</sup> But Pythagoreanism was not perfect in the eyes of society contemporary with Philostratus. As Flinterman points out, Pythagoreanism had a history of connection to magic, or at least the supernatural (2009, p. 156). But as Flinterman and others also note, as I too show, Philostratus does many things to distance Apollonius and Pythagoreanism from this stigma, however prevalent, of magic.<sup>210</sup> Nevertheless, contemporary references and literary works concerning Pythagoras and his philosophy suggest that, for the most part, Pythagoreanism, if presented properly, was an acceptable philosophy for Greco-Roman society. But how does Philostratus depict Indian Wise Men and their relationship to Pythagoreanism?

---

<sup>206</sup> Flinterman, 1995, p. 63.

<sup>207</sup> Kahn, 2001, p. 86.

<sup>208</sup> Kahn, 2001, p. 49. This likely explains why Apollonius equates metempsychosis not with Pythagoras but with Plato.

<sup>209</sup> Kahn, 2001, p. 49.

<sup>210</sup> Flinterman, 2009, pp. 156-157; Anderson, 1986, p. 139; Dzielska, 1986, pp. 91-94.

Although I mentioned above where one can see Pythagorean influence in Philostratus' depiction of the Indian Wise Men, I want to briefly recollect the best examples and highlight exactly what is Pythagorean about them. The foremost example of the Pythagoreanism of the Wise Men is their ability to see the former lives of themselves and the men around them. As I noted, this quite possibly could have a source in prior Greek accounts of India (for seeing former lives was a trademark of Buddha and other enlightened Buddhists), but it is also highly Pythagorean. Indeed some of the details concerning this Wise Man ability directly allude to the Pythagorean tradition. For example, Apollonius, when asking about the Wise Men's views on the soul, describes how Pythagoras had known that in his former life he had been the Trojan Euphorbus (3.19), a fact that Philostratus had already established in the introduction (1.1). Moreover, the Wise Men follow Pythagoras in tracing others lives to those who fought in the Trojan War, e.g. the Indian youth who was formerly the Greek Palamedes (3.22.2). In addition, Iarchas' proof of knowing his former lives through finding long-lost swords buried in the ground highly resembles the Pythagorean tradition, in which Pythagoras proves that he was once Euphorbus by pointing out Euphorbus' shield at the temple of Delphi.<sup>211</sup> Another main Pythagorean ideal embodied in the Indian Wise Men is the ideal of the divine, morally superior man.<sup>212</sup> According to Aristotle, the Pythagoreans believed in three types of rational beings: men, gods, and those like Pythagoras.<sup>213</sup> Philostratus emphasizes the Wise Men's Pythagorean "divine" (θεῖος) status repeatedly.<sup>214</sup> And this Pythagorean ideal is driven home by the Wise Men's express claim of the divinity of a good man, which they themselves are (3.18). Lastly, the Wise Men's unsurpassed skill at prophecy and sacrificial rites reminds the readers of one of Pythagoras' most admired abilities. The Pythagorean tradition included numerous tales of Pythagoras' foresight and precognition, for example, according to Porphyry, Pythagoras once predicted the exact number of fish in a fisherman's catch and also predicted the presence of a dead man on an

---

<sup>211</sup> For Iarchas' revelation, see 3.21.1. For the Pythagorean tradition, see Diogenes Laertius, *Pythagoras*, 8.1. Anderson also notes this similarity (1995, p. 221).

<sup>212</sup> Flinterman, 2009, discusses the notion of the Pythagorean "divine man" in great detail and suggests it did not literally mean the man was a god, but rather that he was "like a god" in his supreme virtue and moral superiority (p. 171). The Wise Men's claim does not seem to include this nuance.

<sup>213</sup> Cited in Flintermann, 2009, p. 63.

<sup>214</sup> For e.g. 3.16.2.5-6.

incoming ship (*The Life of Pythagoras*, sections 25 and 28). Pythagoras supposedly learned all the proper ways to sacrifice to the gods in his various travels to the Egyptians, Chalcideans, and Babylonians.<sup>215</sup> In all these ways, Philostratus establishes the Wise Men as supreme Pythagorean philosophers.

But Philostratus not only emphasizes the Wise Men's legitimate and profound philosophical talents, but also compares and equates Apollonius with these sages. Obviously Philostratus' description of Apollonius' intense devotion to Pythagorean philosophy, detailed in book one, and his narration of Apollonius' education and its completion under the Indian Wise Men is meant to establish, ultimately, Apollonius' philosophical and intellectual equality to the Wise Men. Indeed, a number of scholars suggest that Apollonius' trip to the Ethiopian Naked Ones functions as a philosophical test for Apollonius, which he undeniably passes after his victorious debates concerning the virtues of Indo-Pythagorean philosophy.<sup>216</sup> Through the philosophical defeat of the Naked Ones, Philostratus establishes Apollonius' completion of the Wise Men's training and his mastery of their teachings. But Philostratus emphasizes Apollonius and the Wise Men's similarity in more subtle ways as well. For example, when the Wise Men first meet Apollonius, Iarchas tells Apollonius that Apollonius is clearly well-endowed with memory, which the Wise Men honor before all else (3.16.4). In addition, Apollonius, just as the Wise Men, is called a "divine man" a number of times throughout the biography. In particular, Iarchas tells Apollonius that the ability to prophesy makes one divine (θεῖος), and then goes on to congratulate Apollonius on his prophetic ability, implying Apollonius' divine qualities (3.42.1). Moreover, shortly following this exchange, Damis describes his admiration for Apollonius, including that Apollonius is more than a man, a sort of supernatural being (δαίμονιον τί μοι ἐγένετο) (3.43.1.8).<sup>217</sup> Indeed, as Elsner argues, the very nature of Apollonius' travels would suggest to Philostratus' audience that Apollonius is a god-like man.<sup>218</sup> Apollonius, at least, seems to think himself an equal to the Indian Wise Men. In his defense against the charges leveled by Emperor Domitian, Apollonius, when asked why people call him a god, repeats the

---

<sup>215</sup> Kahn, 2001, p. 6.

<sup>216</sup> Elsner, 1997; Francis, 1995; Anderson, 1986.

<sup>217</sup> See Flinterman, 2009 for a discussion on the similarity and difference in a θεῖος ἄνθρωπος and δαίμονιον.

<sup>218</sup> Elsner, 1997, p. 32.

Indo-Pythagorean dictum that a good man is a god (5.3.5.1). Yet Philostratus uses the Pythagorean link between the Indians and Apollonius to an even greater effect than simply elevating Apollonius to the status of an ideal Pythagorean sage. In his descriptions of Indian Wise Men's relationship to Pythagoreanism, primarily its dissemination, Philostratus sets Apollonius not just as an equal to Pythagoras but even as a superior.

Philostratus, from the introduction on, is quite explicit in the superiority of Apollonius to Pythagoras. In the introduction, Philostratus writes: “[Apollonius] approached wisdom in a more inspired way than Pythagoras” (καὶ θεϊότερον ἢ ὁ Πυθαγόρας τῇ σοφίᾳ προσελθόντα) (1.2.1.2-3). One of the foremost ways Philostratus illustrates Apollonius' superiority is through his trip to the Indian Wise Men. As I have shown, Philostratus depicts the Indian Wise Men as ideal Pythagorean sages, but he also emphasizes that they are the original source of Pythagorean ideas. The Wise Men tell Apollonius that the idea of metempsychosis came from them first to the Egyptians and then to Pythagoras (3.19). As scholars have noted before, Philostratus, by sending Apollonius to the origin of Pythagorean thought, is making him an independent and expert source, outside of the Greek Pythagorean school.<sup>219</sup> And more important, as these same scholars also note, Philostratus further elevates Apollonius by highlighting how Pythagoras did not go to the Indians but rather got his ideas only from the Egyptians. That is, Apollonius went further than Pythagoras in uncovering the “undiluted,” original Pythagorean ideas. Indeed, Philostratus goes beyond the tradition of the Indian origin of Pythagoreanism and emphasizes the corrupt nature of the Pythagorean ideas inherited by the Egyptians. Philostratus establishes that the Indian version of Pythagoreanism is better than the Egyptian version through Apollonius, who tells the Naked Ones that at first he was going to come to Egypt to learn about Pythagoreanism, but was told by his teacher that it was better to go to the true father – not adopted – of these ideas. Apollonius goes on to describe how the Indians are more philosophically refined than the Egyptians (6.11.8-10). More poignantly, Apollonius condemns the Naked Ones for betraying their ancestral, Indian beliefs and corrupting it with Egyptian practices (6.11.13). So logically, if, as the Indians say, they passed their philosophy on to the Egyptians,

---

<sup>219</sup> Anderson, 1989; Elsner, 2009; Parker, 2008; Flinterman, 2009.

but, as Apollonius claims, the Egyptians (via the Naked Ones) somehow corrupted this philosophy, then that means Pythagoras received faulty teaching, or at least teaching dissimilar to the Indians', during his visit to the Egyptians.

Philostratus never states explicitly the logical conclusion that Pythagoras received a faulty Indo-Pythagorean philosophy. In fact, Philostratus seems to try to downplay such a logical conclusion. Likely, Philostratus wanted to allude to Apollonius' superiority to Pythagoras for the sake of Apollonius' reputation, but at the same time wouldn't want to entirely discredit the famous Greek philosopher, which would also undermine Apollonius' status. First, despite the seeming logical inconsistency, Apollonius, even as he is scolding the Naked Ones for their departure from their Indian roots, praises Pythagoras. For example, Apollonius calls on "the wisdom of Pythagoras" (σοφία Πυθαγόρου) for his admonition of the Naked Ones and even claims that until they broke from their Indian philosophy, the Naked Ones were "supporters of Pythagoras" (Πυθαγόρα ξύμβουλοι) (6.11.13). In addition, just before Apollonius' rebuke, he described how he chose Pythagoreanism – explicitly stating it as the same philosophy as Pythagoras – instead of any other philosophy, of course including the Naked Ones'. In this way, Philostratus seems to subtly suggest Apollonius' superiority to Pythagoras through Apollonius' direct appeal to the original Pythagoreans, the Indian Wise Men, whose philosophy was denigrated by the Egyptians (from whom Pythagoras received his training). And yet, at the same time, Philostratus eases some of the damning, logical conclusions of such an argument on Pythagoras' philosophy through Apollonius' continual praise of Pythagoras and his philosophy and Apollonius' suggestions that Pythagoras' philosophy was not one in the same as Egypt's. Philostratus seems to try, and perhaps succeeds, at having his proverbial cake and eating it too.

Finally, Philostratus' depiction of the Wise Men as ideal Pythagorean sages allows another opportunity to rebuke Apollonius' critics who accuse him of magic. Just as the Naked Ones and their critique of the Indian Wise Men supposed use of magic provides Apollonius a chance to refute such claims, the Indian Wise Men's Pythagoreanism allows Apollonius a chance to affirm that he learned nothing magical from the Indians, but rather affirms that it is only knowledge and religious and physical

purity that allows prophecy and other “miracles.”<sup>220</sup> The discussions between Apollonius and the Wise Men emphasize this knowledge and purity. At 3.42, Iarchas tells Apollonius that he is able to prophesy because he is pure (καθαρός), free of sin, and contains much *aether* in his soul. Before this, Iarchas explained that the fifth element *aether* is what composes and nourishes the divine (3.34). And elsewhere in the biography, Apollonius describes how his moderate, Pythagorean asceticism, which he shares with the Wise Men, keep his soul pure and thus able to receive divine knowledge, prophecy, from the gods (1.8 and 5.3.7). Moreover, Iarchas tells Apollonius that armed with the knowledge concerning purity, it is no wonder Apollonius is so successful a prophet (3.42). In addition, Flinterman notes how Philostratus and Apollonius repeatedly highlight that Apollonius’ foresight is the product of divine inspiration, i.e. knowledge given by the gods, which is a subtle but important distinction from seeing the future without the approval of the gods.<sup>221</sup> To see the future via force, taking it without the approval of the gods, just as forcing nature to bend to one’s will, would strike Philostratus’ readers as magic. So Philostratus makes clear that Apollonius’ foresight is not the result of magical force or compulsion. Lastly, Philostratus depicts the Wise Men’s medical abilities in 3.38-40, as based again in knowledge as opposed to the use of magic, which often used salves and other medical materials. Indeed, the Indians claim their medicinal skills come from the knowledge given to men by Asklepios and his father Apollo (3.44). The Wise Men provide mostly advice to heal the Indian invalids who come before them. As I described above, they merely give a letter that will expel the demon from a woman’s son, tell a man how to make sure his wife gives birth safely, and explain to another man how drinking wine is the cause of his sons’ deaths. None of the cures involve the stereotypical salves or “medicines” of magic.<sup>222</sup> In the Pythagorean portrayal of the Indian Wise Men and their wisdom in prophecy, Philostratus defends his claim in the introduction that Apollonius’ foreknowledge comes from wisdom (σοφίασ προγιγνώσκειν), not magic (μάγη τέχνη) (1.2.1.13-14). So too does Philostratus depict the Wise Men’s knowledge of medicine in order to distance them (and Apollonius) from any claims of magic.

<sup>220</sup> Or in Anderson’s words, “‘rational’ miracles” (1986, p. 139).

<sup>221</sup> 2009, p. 166.

<sup>222</sup> For example of such magical salves in Second Sophistic literature, see Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, 3.24-25.

In the introduction of Apollonius' biography, Philostratus describes how history has not treated the memory of Apollonius well. Apollonius, at least according to Philostratus, acquired a reputation as a magician and a philosophical fraud. Philostratus presents his biography as an antidote to this notoriety. Philostratus attempts to rehabilitate Apollonius and his reputation in a number of ways. In this past section, I have argued that Philostratus seeks to characterize Apollonius as an enlightened Pythagorean philosopher as opposed to a radically ascetic Cynic through Philostratus' portrayals of the Indian Wise Men and the Ethiopian Naked Ones. In particular, Philostratus characterizes the Wise Men as ideal Pythagorean sages, whom Apollonius emulates, and the Naked Ones as iconoclastic Cynics, whom Apollonius refutes. Philostratus does this because, for his contemporary readership, Apollonius' asceticism would have made him an easy target for condemnation as a Cynic. But through Apollonius' refutation of the Cynic Naked Ones, Philostratus helps protect Apollonius from such critiques. Moreover, through the Pythagorean Wise Men, Philostratus emphasizes the respectability and wisdom of Apollonius' own philosophy and distances him from criticisms both of philosophical chicanery and magic.

In this chapter, I have described Philostratus' portrayal of the Indian Wise Men and the Ethiopian Naked Ones and their interactions with Apollonius. Then, I traced the influence of prior Greek accounts concerning Indian sages on Philostratus' account concerning the two Eastern groups and illustrated how the Wise Men and the Naked Ones are modeled on the *Brachmanes* and the *Gymnosophistai* of the Greek tradition, respectively. Third, I considered the implications of this analysis on the question of the historicity of the Damis source and argued that it provided further evidence against a real Damis source. And lastly, I discussed why Philostratus depicts the Indian Wise Men and the Ethiopian Naked Ones as he does. I suggested Philostratus' characterizations of the two groups helped rehabilitate the reputation of Apollonius from a fake philosopher and magician to a respectable Pythagorean sage who condemns the antisocial asceticism of Cynicism.

### **Conclusion**

In this paper I traced the development of the Western literary conception of the Indian sage. I began with the works recounting the first prominent interaction in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, between Alexander the Great and Indian ascetics. My discussion on the Western tradition ended at the accounts of the Christian, Syrian scholar Bardesanes who met an Indian embassy traveling to Rome in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. The Greek tradition reveals an understanding of certain historic Indian philosophical and religious sects, which is surprisingly sophisticated and accurate, especially considering the significant geographical, cultural, and linguistic barriers between the two civilizations. Of course, there is much in the Greek tradition that is confused and fantastic, the result of misunderstanding, literary invention, and cultural influence. Nonetheless the number and variety of Greek authors who reference the Indian sages illustrate a deep curiosity and interest in these far Eastern philosophers. And the Greek interest in Indian ascetics extended beyond ethnographic and historical treatises into philosophical and religious discourses and even fictional satires and novels. Indeed by the early centuries of the first millennium A.D., Greek literature had come to employ Indian ascetics as exemplars of mystic wisdom and extreme endurance in order to support arguments unrelated to any discussion on the actual nature of Indian culture. The Greek literary tradition developed its own understanding of the Indian sage, namely as an ascetic mystic who spurns material possessions in favor of philosophical or religious edification, modeled on information gleaned from historical interactions between Greeks and Indians but not wholly devoid of Greek emphasis and influence on the traits that most intrigued and amazed the Western world.

No author better illustrates this particular aspect of the Greek tradition than the third century sophist Philostratus. In his pseudo-historical biography of Apollonius of Tyana, Philostratus manipulates the, by then, well developed Greek depiction of the Indian sage in his own semi-fictional account of Apollonius' visits to the Indian Wise Men and Ethiopian Naked Ones. In this paper, I analyzed the manifold evidence of influence by the Western literary tradition on Philostratus depiction of the Wise Men and Naked Ones and how this helps answer the often studied question on the nature of Philostratus' supposed main source, the works of Apollonius' companion Damis. Furthermore, I argued that

Philostratus manipulates the Greek conception of the Indian ascetic to serve his own work's purpose: to rehabilitate Apollonius as an enlightened and proper philosopher after what Philostratus characterizes as a century's worth of slander concerning chicanery and magic. In particular, I claimed that Philostratus splits the common attributes of the Indian ascetic into those that would have been admired by his contemporary readership, namely enlightened wisdom and piety, and those that would have been condemned, namely Cynic-like antisocial asceticism. He imbues the former, positive attributes into the Indian Wise Men, to whose wisdom and piety Apollonius aspires and equals, and the latter, negative attributes to the Ethiopian Naked Ones, whose lifestyle Apollonius definitively refutes. Moreover, Philostratus emphasizes the Wise Men's Pythagorean teachings, a feature already established in the Greek tradition concerning Indian philosophers, and the Cynic elements of the Naked Ones, also an established feature of the Greek idea of Indian ascetics. Philostratus' manipulation serves to elevate Apollonius as an ideal Pythagorean philosopher while distancing him from charges of philosophical dishonesty and magic.

My study is but a small piece of the greater body of possible research not only concerning Apollonius' visit to India and Ethiopia in Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, but also of Indian sages and their equivalents in other works of Greek fiction, such as Heliodorus' *Aithiopika* and the various satires of Lucian. Moreover, while some studies have offered a good starting place, much work remains on other groups' uses of Indian sages, such as the various Christian treatises of, say, Clement of Alexandria and Hippolytus. And finally, Philostratus' emphasis, found in the Greek tradition, on associating certain philosophies, namely Pythagoreanism, with Indian sages raises many questions about the intellectual and historical interactions between certain Indian and Greek philosophies.<sup>223</sup> Nonetheless, my research provides one stroke in the grand picture of Greece's intellectual relationship with Indian philosophers and wise men.

---

<sup>223</sup> McEvelley, T. (*The Shape of Ancient Thought: Comparative Studies in Greek and Indian Philosophies*. New York: Allworth Press, 2002) offers an impressively comprehensive discussion of some hypothesized similarities.

**Works Cited:****Primary**

Aelian. *Varia historia*. Loeb Classical Library. Trans. N. G. Wilson. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.

Apuleius. *Metamorphoses*. Vol. 1. Loeb Classical Library. Trans. J.A. Hanson. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.

Arrian, Lucius Flavius. *Indica*. Vol. II. Loeb Classical Library. Trans. P.A. Brunt. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983.

\_\_\_\_\_ *Anabasis*. Vol. II. Loeb Classical Library. Trans. P.A. Brunt. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983.

Clement of Alexandria. "Stromata." *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Vol. II. Trans. A. C. Coxe. Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975.

\_\_\_\_\_ "Stromateis." *The Fathers of the Church*. Vol. 85. Trans. J. Ferguson. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1991.

*Collected Ancient Greek Novels*. Ed. B.P. Reardon. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.

Eusebius. "Reply to Hierocles." *Apollonius of Tyana*. Vol. III. Loeb Classical Library. Trans. C. P. Jones.

Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006.

\_\_\_\_\_ *Preparation for the Gospel*. Vol. I. Trans. E.H. Gifford. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1981.

Hippolytus. "The Refutation of All Heresies." *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Vol. V. Trans. A. C.

Coxe. Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975.

Judaeus, Philo. *De Abrahamo*. Vol. VI. Loeb Classical Library. Trans. F. H. Colson. Cambridge:

Harvard University Press, 1971.

\_\_\_\_\_ *De Somniis*. Vol. V. Loeb Classical Library. Trans. F. H. Colson. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968.

\_\_\_\_\_ *Quid omnis probus liber sit*. Vol. IX. Loeb Classical Library. Trans. F. H. Colson.

Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971.

Laertius, Diogenes. *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*. Vol. I. Loeb Classical Library. Trans.

R. D. Hicks. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938.

\_\_\_\_\_ *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*. Vol. II. Loeb Classical Library. Trans.

R. D. Hicks. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938.

*The Law Code of Manu*. Trans. P. Olivelle. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Lucian. *The Passing of Peregrinus*. Vol. V. Loeb Classical Library. Trans. A. M. Harmon. Cambridge:

Harvard University Press, 1959.

\_\_\_\_\_ *The Runaways*. Vol. V. Loeb Classical Library. Trans. A. M. Harmon. Cambridge: Harvard

University Press, 1959.

Philostratus. *Letters of Apollonius*. Vol. III. Loeb Classical Library. Trans. C. P. Jones.

Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006.

\_\_\_\_\_ *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*. Vol. I. Loeb Classical Library. Trans. C. P. Jones.

Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005.

- \_\_\_\_\_ *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*. Vol. II. Loeb Classical Library. Trans. C. P. Jones. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005.
- \_\_\_\_\_ *Lives of the Sophists*. Loeb Classical Library. Trans. C. P. Jones. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005.
- Plato. *Meno*. Vol. 3. Loeb Classical Library. Trans. W. R. M. Lamb. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967.
- \_\_\_\_\_ *Phaedo*. Vol. 1. Loeb Classical Library. Trans. H.N. Fowler. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966.
- \_\_\_\_\_ *Republic*. Vol. 5. Loeb Classical Library. Trans. P. Shorey. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969.
- \_\_\_\_\_ *Republic*. Vol. 6. Loeb Classical Library. Trans. P. Shorey. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969.
- Plutarch. 'Alexander.' *Lives*. Vol. 7. Loeb Classical Library. Trans. B. Perrin. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1919.
- Pseudo-Callisthenes. *The Greek Alexander Romance*. Trans. R. Stoneman. London: Penguin Books, 1991.
- Rufus, Quintus Curtius. *The History of Alexander*. Trans. J. Yardley. London: Penguin Books, 2004.
- Siculus, Diodorus. *Bibliothèque*. Vol. II. Loeb Classical Library. Trans. C.H. Oldfather. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935.
- Strabo. *Geography*. Vol. VII. Loeb Classical Library. Trans. H. L. Jones. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006.
- The Upanishads*. Trans. J. Mascaro. London: Penguin Books, 1965.

## Secondary

- Anderson, G. *Philostratus: Biography and Belles Lettres in the Third Century A.D.* London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1986.

- Basham, A.L. *The Wonder that was India: A survey of the history and culture of the Indian sub-continent before the coming of the Muslims*. New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1967.
- Berg, B. (1970) 'Dandamis: an early Christian portrait of Indian Asceticism', *Classica et medievalia*, Vol. 31, pp. 269-305.
- Bhagat, M.G. *Ancient Indian Asceticism*. New Delhi: Munishiran Manoharlal Publishers, 1976.
- Bowie, E.L. (1978) 'Apollonius of Tyana: Tradition and Reality', *ANRW*, II.16.2, pp. 1652-1699.
- Dickie, M.W. *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*. London: Routledge, 2001
- Dihle, A. (1964) 'The Conception of India in Hellenistic and Roman Literature', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, N.S. 10, pp. 15-23.
- Dzielska, M. *Apollonius of Tyana in Legend and History*. Rome: 'L'Erma' di Bretschneider, 1986.
- Elsner, J. (1997) 'Hagiographic Geography: Travel and Allegory in the Life of Apollonius of Tyana', *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, Vol. 117, pp. 22-37.
- Francis, J.A. *Subversive Virtue: Asceticism and Authority in the Second-Century Pagan World*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1998) 'Truthful Fiction: New Questions to Old Answers on Philostratus' 'Life of Apollonius"', *The American Journal of Philology*, Vol. 119, No. 3, pp. 419-441.
- Flinterman, J. *Power, Paideia, & Pythagoreanism: Greek Identity, Conceptions of the Relationship between Philosophers and Monarchs and Political Ideas in Philostratus' Life of Apollonius*. Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, 1995.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 'The ancestor of my wisdom': Pythagoras and Pythagoreanism in *Life of Apollonius*.' In E. Bowie and Jas Elsner (Eds.) *Philostratus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 155-175.
- Hamilton, S. *Indian Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Kahn, C.H. *Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans: A Brief History*. Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2001.
- Keown, Damien. *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

- Jones, C.P. 'Introduction' in Philostratus. *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*. Vol. I. Loeb Classical Library.  
Trans. Christopher P. Jones. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005.
- Majumdar, R.C. *The Classical Accounts of India*. Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay Publishers, 1960.
- McEvelley, T. *The Shape of Ancient Thought: Comparative Studies in Greek and Indian Philosophies*.  
New York: Allworth Press, 2002.
- Parker, G.R. *The Making of Roman India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Pearson, L. *The Lost Histories of Alexander the Great*. Oxford: B.H. Blackwell, 1960.
- Dundas P. *The Jains*. London: Routledge, 1992
- Sedlar, J.W. *India and the Greek World*. Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1980.
- Sedley, D. (Ed). *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge  
University Press, 2003.
- Stoneman, R. (1995) 'Naked Philosophers: The Brahmans in the Alexander Historians and the Alexander  
Romance', *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, Vol. 115, pp. 99-114.
- Stoneman, R. (1994) 'Who are the Brahmans? Indian Lore and Cynic Doctrine in Palladius' *De  
Bragmanibus and its Models*', *The Classical Quarterly*, New Series, Vol. 44, No. 2, pp. 500-510.