

CTESIAS' *INDICA* AND PHOTIUS

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TWENTIETH-CENTURY scholars have on the whole looked with little favour on the *Indica* of Artaxerxes' physician Ctesias, the first Greek book to be wholly devoted to the exotic land of India.¹ In general the work is dismissed with a few caustic words ridiculing it for its absurd tales or castigating it for its apparently incoherent organisation. Remarkably little attention, however, has been paid to the question of what we really know of it. After all, this is an account preserved only in the summary made by Photius in the ninth century A.D., and in the excerpts and allusions of a series of other authors.² Yet judgement is passed on it on the basis of the summaries and excerpts with almost no discussion of the summarisers and the excerptors,

¹For the negative view see, for example, E. R. Bevan, *Cambridge History of India* 1 (Cambridge 1922) 397, and R. C. Majumdar, *The Classical Accounts of India* (Calcutta 1960) xi-xii; cf. also W. Reese, *Die griechischen Nachrichten über Indien bis zum Feldzug Alexanders des Grossen* (Leipzig 1914) 71-92, and A. Zambrini, "Gli 'Indika' di Megastene," *AnnPisa* 12.1 (1982) 126-134, who is much influenced by Reese. More balanced assessments are given by F. Jacoby, "Ktesias," *RE* 11 (1922) 2037-39, and by K. Karttunen, "The Reliability of the *Indika* of Ktesias," *Studia Orientalia* 50 (1981) 105-107; cf. also Karttunen, "Kynokephaloi and Kynomolgoi in Classical Ethnography," *Arctos* 18 (1984) 31-36, and "A Miraculous Fountain in India," *Arctos* 19 (1985) 55-65. P. Lindegger, *Griechische und römische Quellen zum Peripheren Tibet* 2 (Zurich 1982) 51-85, discusses a number of Ctesias' tales, though not always convincingly. But there is no comprehensive modern discussion. Still useful is the commentary in C. Müller's edition of the fragments of Ctesias (appendix to the Didot edition of Herodotus) and that of J. W. McCrindle, *Ancient India as Described by Ktesias the Knidian* (Calcutta 1882, reprinted from *The Indian Antiquary* 10 [1881] 296-322), as well as C. Lassen's assessment of the work in *Indische Altertumskunde* 2 (Leipzig 1874) 641-665, and the discussion of V. Ball, "On the Identification of the Animals and Plants of India which were Known to Early Greek Authors," *The Indian Antiquary* 14 (1885) 274-287, 303-311, 334-341. For recent bibliography on Ctesias in general see J. M. Bigwood, "POxy 2330 and Ctesias," *Phoenix* 40 (1986) 393-406. I have not seen K. Glombiowski, *Ktezjasz z Knidos grecki historyk perskiej monarchii Achemenidów* (Gdansk 1981). The works cited in this paragraph will be referred to by author's name alone or in abbreviated form.

Ctesias was at the court of Artaxerxes II from 405 to 398/7 B.C. For what is known of his stay in Persia see J. M. Bigwood, "Ctesias' Description of Babylon," *AJAH* 3 (1978) 32-52, at 32 f. His *Indica* was probably composed soon after his return to Greece, although the date is not known. India had earlier been described by Scylax of Caryanda *FGrHist* 709, by Hecataeus *FGrHist* 1 F 294-299, and by Herodotus 3.98-106 and 4.44.

²*FGrHist* 688 F 45-F 52. G. C. Hansen, "Ein unechtes Ktesiasfragment (*FGrHist* 688 F 63)," *Helikon* 5 (1965) 159-162, convincingly demonstrates that F 63 on the pepper-gathering Bessadai (one of the fragments of uncertain location) is incorrectly ascribed to Ctesias.

and of their methods and interests.³

The following pages, which cannot of course deal with all the problems raised by the work,⁴ seek to shed light on it by examining Photius' summary, by far our most important evidence for the original. Naturally they will consider such questions as how detailed the summary is and how accurate. In addition, by investigating some of the ways in which Photius' epitomising may mislead the reader, they will attempt to demonstrate that not all of the criticisms which have been levelled at Ctesias' description are equally valid. But before we embark on a discussion of the summary, a few words should be said about the other fragments.

I THE FRAGMENTS IN AELIAN AND OTHER AUTHORS

Ctesias' *Indica* was a well-known work in the ancient world and many authors refer to it or quote from it, although their quotations are not necessarily representative of the original. After all, several of them (Antigonos, Apollonius, and others) are paradoxographers, or they are men like Pliny with an appetite for marvels which is equally large.⁵ Naturally writers of this kind cite only the more fantastic tales in the work since this is where their interests lie.

A second group of excerptors is likewise concerned only with the more fantastic items, since their purpose is to discredit Ctesias. Aristotle, for example, who cites the *Indica* four times, picks on that bizarre monster the martichoras (the "man-eater") and other zoological absurdities, in each case dismissing Ctesias' statements with a contemptuous reference.⁶ It is the same with Arrian. When Arrian refers specifically to Ctesias, as he does on the question of the breadth of the Indus (*Anab.* 5.4.2 = F 45a), and on the size of India (*Ind.* 3.6 = F 49a), his concern is only to ridicule his claims.⁷

³P. A. Brunt, "On Historical Fragments and Epitomes," *CQ* NS 30 (1980) 477-494, emphasises the importance of such discussion in the case of lost histories in general.

⁴I hope to discuss some other features of the work elsewhere.

⁵Antigonos (*Hist. Mir.* 146, 150, 166 = F 47a, F 45s α, F 45e α) draws his information from Callimachus' book of marvels. Pliny most probably cites Ctesias at second hand.

⁶*HA* 2.1, 501a 24 = F 45d (which despite Aubert-Wimmer and Dittmeyer should not be considered an interpolation); *HA* 8.28, 606a8 = F 45k; *HA* 3.22, 523a26, and *Gen. An.* 2.2, 736a2 = F 48a and 48b. Aristotle occasionally uses information from the work without naming Ctesias, e.g., for the "Indian ass"; see *HA* 2.1, 499b18 and *Part. An.* 3.2, 663a18. But his use of Ctesias is limited.

⁷His criticisms may well derive from Eratosthenes: see below, 309. Ctesias' *Indica* inspired even more criticism in antiquity than his *Persica*; cf. Lucian *Ver. Hist.* 1.3 and Photius 72 p. 45a (T13). Even Aelian expresses reservations about the "man-eater" (*NA* 4.21 = F 45d β).

These citations, despite their one-sided emphasis on what is unbelievable, tell us of course something about the contents of Ctesias' book. Some of them, in fact, such as those in the Constantinian collection on animals, which are literal excerpts, also tell us something about the clumsy and repetitive way in which Ctesias wrote.⁸ One series, however, the one which we find in Aelian's *De natura animalium*, deserves some additional comment.

There are some twelve excerpts from Ctesias' *Indica* in this work of Aelian. Many of them are substantial extracts, being in the majority of cases more detailed than the parallel passages in Photius. One or two indeed, like F 45g, are much more detailed. Here Aelian provides an excerpt of some length from Ctesias' discussion of falconry. In Photius at this point there is only a single sentence (F 45.24).

It is not certain from where Aelian derives his material from Ctesias. Quite possibly some of it comes from the original.⁹ But whatever his exact source, he seems to reproduce the information accurately. Details by and large agree with those in Photius, while discrepancies are few and minor (see below, 308 ff.). Moreover, Aelian models himself on his source fairly closely. There are striking similarities of vocabulary between Aelian and Photius in passages where Photius is sufficiently detailed for meaningful comparison.¹⁰

Despite their closeness to the original, however, these excerpts are far from being literal excerpts. Aelian does not hesitate to introduce alien material, as the Homeric reminiscences in F 45m show.¹¹ In addition, for all his simple sentence structure, he is no primitive writer like his source: he

⁸F 45i β, F 45k γ, and F 45f α, excerpts which may of course contain slight alterations to the original. On the minor changes that occur in the Constantinian excerpts of extant texts see Brunt (above, n. 3) 483–484. For Ctesias' style see Bigwood 396–400.

⁹A. F. Scholfield, *Aelian On Animals* 1 (Cambridge, Mass. 1958) xv–xxiv, argues for some use of primary authorities by Aelian as well as encyclopaedic works. The excerpts from Ctesias' *Indica* may in fact come from more than one source. As has often been noted (cf. J. Richmond, *Chapters on Greek Fish-Lore* [Wiesbaden 1973] 4), many of them, i.e., 4.21, 4.26, 4.27, 4.32, 4.36, 4.41, 4.46, 4.52, 5.3, are given in the order of the original account, a fact which suggests a single source. But some of the remaining material may have a different origin. Of the two notes of which NA 3.3 is composed, the second is given at greater length in 4.32, which belongs to the above-mentioned group. The first note is given at greater length in 16.37 along with other material.

Richmond (70) has also suggested that NA 4.24 and 4.25 come from Ctesias, but there is nothing in these passages which links them specifically with this author. Moreover, although K. Głombiowski, "Fragments de Ctésias de Cnide chez Diodore et chez Élien non cités par Jacoby (FGrHist 688)," *Eos* 74 (1986) 77–83, is right in claiming that NA 4.32 comes from Ctesias (cf. Jacoby F 45i β, *app. crit.*), NA 4.19, which Głombiowski also attributes to Ctesias, could come from a number of different authors.

¹⁰And between Aelian and the literal excerpts of the Constantinian collection: compare NA 4.32 with F 45i β, and NA 16.37 with F 45f, p. 494 lines 3–6.

¹¹Lines 15–18 and 25–34 are surely not from Ctesias, as noted by Jacoby (p. 499, *app. crit.*). Allusions to Homer in Aelian are discussed by J. F. Kindstrand, "Homer

prides himself on the literary qualities of his work.¹² It is clear that he has rewritten Ctesias with some care, avoiding at least some of his repetitions (see Bigwood 399).

Aelian of course, like the other excerptors, may give a misleading impression of the content of Ctesias' *Indica*, for his interests, like theirs, are clearly in the more colourful tales. However, he also preserves a large amount of information from the work; hence his excerpts are of particular importance when we turn to consider Photius' account.

II SUMMARISING AND EXCERPTING IN PHOTIUS' EPITOME

Photius' *Bibliotheca*, a vast compilation of notes made by Photius in the course of years of reading,¹³ contains an account of two works of Ctesias. In codex 72 (p. 35b, 35 ff.) we have the important summary of Ctesias' history of Persia (Books 7–23), and following it, after a brief assessment of Ctesias as a writer, the summary of the *Indica* (p. 45a, 20 ff.).¹⁴

Photius' treatment of individual authors in the *Bibliotheca* is of course very varied. Some works are reviewed in a few lines, others in one or two pages; others again are accorded an extensive summary or pages of literal excerpts. The epitome of Ctesias' *Indica* is a very lengthy one. It is much more detailed in fact than that of the history, which is itself a substantial summary.¹⁵ Photius, who has a weakness for strange tales and exotic places,¹⁶ may have found the content of the *Indica* even more to his liking than that of the history. At any rate, his account of this single volume occupies some fourteen pages in the Budé edition. In contrast, Books seven to twenty-three of the *Persica* together receive only some twenty-seven pages. Moreover, Book eighteen of that work is awarded only four or five pages,

in den Tiergeschichten des Ailianos," *Hermes* 104 (1976) 35–53, who argues that they derive on the whole from Aelian's own reading.

¹²Cf. the end of the epilogue.

¹³Edited for the Budé series by R. Henry, *Photius, Bibliothèque* (Paris 1959–1977). A good introduction to the problems of the *Bibliotheca* in general is provided by W. T. Treadgold, *The Nature of the Bibliotheca of Photius* (Washington, D.C. 1980). T. Hägg, *Photios als Vermittler Antiker Literatur* (Uppsala 1975), who bases his arguments on selected summaries where the originals are still extant, gives a very useful analysis of Photius' methods. Both books provide references to the earlier literature. On the biographical material provided in the *Bibliotheca* see now J. Schamp, *Photios historien des lettres: La Bibliothèque et ses notices biographiques* (Liège 1987).

¹⁴Except where otherwise indicated, my references to the summary of the *Indica* are to Jacoby's edition.

¹⁵For a brief discussion of this summary see J. M. Bigwood, "Ctesias' Account of the Revolt of Inarus," *Phoenix* 30 (1976) 1–25, at 2–5. Both summaries may have been made long before Photius compiled the *Bibliotheca*.

¹⁶See Treadgold (above, n. 13) 101: Hägg (above, n. 13) 33 and 201.

although this is the volume of the Persian history, which, so far as we know, Photius summarised at greatest length.

Photius comments on the dialect of both the *Persica* and the *Indica* (T 10 and T 13)¹⁷ and he must in both cases have been working from the original, not from a summary or series of excerpts. We have no means of judging how much of the original account of India he has preserved.¹⁸ However, with the aid of the numerous parallel excerpts, and with some knowledge of the techniques which Photius uses elsewhere, we can evaluate in detail some of the other aspects of the epitome.

The summarising, as in many of Photius' epitomes, including that of the Persian history, is very uneven. In some places in the work, and this is true particularly in the opening sections, Photius does little more than indicate the topics which were originally discussed—the elephants which can break down walls (F 45.7), for example, or the dogs capable of engaging a lion (F 45.10). He may even have omitted entire sections, as he does in other summaries, although we lack the evidence to prove this here. In other passages, however, he gives what amounts to an excerpt from the text, which he clearly had before him.¹⁹ In the description of the wild ass (F 45.45), the words τὸν δὲ ἀστράγαλον κάλλιστον ὦν ἐγὼ ἑώρακα are obviously Ctesias' words, not those of Photius. Moreover, the preceding sentence, with its primitive-sounding duplication of ἀστραγάλους ἔχουσι . . . and of χολὴν ἐπὶ τοῦ ἥπατος must also be closely modelled on the original.²⁰ Wordiness, as we noted above (304), was a conspicuous feature of Ctesias' writing. Besides, the parallel description of Aelian (F 45q) is almost identical at this point, although Aelian gives the sentence in *oratio obliqua* and, as elsewhere, alters the vocabulary to avoid the exact duplications.

The repetitions, which are to be found in many sections of the epitome, are one of its very notable features. They are far more striking than any which occur in the summary of the *Persica* and they suggest that Photius may be adhering particularly closely to his source.²¹

¹⁷The dialect is discussed in Bigwood 400–406.

¹⁸T. S. Brown, *The Greek Historians* (Lexington, Mass. 1973) 103, n. 39, compares the 14 pages of the summary with the 129 pages of Herodotus' account of Egypt in Book 2 (Budé edition). But it is very unlikely that a work on the ill-known India was as long as this.

¹⁹As in many of Photius' detailed epitomes, the sections are often introduced by ὅτι, which is used only rarely in the summary of the *Persica*. In four passages (F 45, sections 20, 32, 48 and 49) ὅτι is superfluous, i.e., it is followed by λέγει or φησί as not infrequently in other very detailed codices (Treadgold [above, n. 13] lists some examples at 44 and 89). We should also note that ὅτι in Photius does not necessarily introduce an exact quotation or signify that material in the original has been omitted: see Hägg (above, n. 13) 30 f.

²⁰The entire description of the wild ass in Photius is a very detailed one.

²¹Repeated words of course are not invariably an indication of Photius' dependence

In many cases the repetition consists of a single word. In F 45.15, for example, κέντρον occurs eight times in the course of fifteen lines of the Budé text (seven times in F 45d β, in the equivalent part of Aelian). In F 45.49 (fifteen lines in the Budé edition) ὕδωρ is found seven times. In other passages phrases recur. The first part of the description of the strange milk-drinking tribe of F 45.44 duplicates that of the equally strange dog-headed people (F 45.37 ff.) in a whole series of details.²² The words μέλανες . . . εἰσιν ὥσπερ οἱ ἄλλοι Ἴνδοι appear in F 45.37 as well as in F 45.44; with ἐργάζονται δὲ οὐδέν (F 45.44) we may compare a similar phrase in F 45.40, but there are other repetitions in this passage.²³

If we turn to the section of the work which describes the dog-headed tribe itself, we find that it is written in a particularly clumsy and repetitive manner. τοῦ ἐνιαντοῦ ἡμέρας occurs twice in F 45.36; we meet δίκαιοι in F 45.37 and in F 45.43; ἀπάγουσι . . . τάλαντα τοῦ ἐνιαντοῦ (F 45.41) is virtually repeated in the following lines. Moreover, the description of the dog-heads' mode of communicating (F 45.37, p. 502, lines 9–12) more or less duplicates an earlier passage (p. 501, lines 15–16, and p. 502, lines 1–2). Jacoby in fact suggested (*app. crit.* p. 501) that the earlier lines are an error of the epitomiser which has not been erased. However, these too may be merely a reflection of Ctesias' repetitious style.²⁴

Quite apart from the repetitions, there are other reasons for believing that in many passages Photius adheres very closely to Ctesias' description. We noted earlier (304) the striking correspondence in wording between sections of Photius' epitome and the excerpts in Aelian. We should also note the verbal correspondences between Photius and some of the other fragments.²⁵ It is clear in fact that Photius (as well as Aelian) has often made extensive use of Ctesias' vocabulary in his epitome of the *Indica*.²⁶ And this is what we should expect given Photius' mode of operation in

on his source: see Hägg (above, n. 13) 190. Moreover, repetitions which derive from Photius' source can be more striking in the epitome than they are in the original, thanks to the omission of intervening material.

²²On the dog-heads see Karttunen, "Kynokephaloi," 31–36.

²³Surely ἐργάζονται has the same meaning ("work the land?") in both F 45.40 and F 45.44. McCrindle 23 and 25, and J. H. Freese, *The Library of Photius* 1 (London 1920) 116 and 117, make a distinction (cf. Jacoby, p. 503, *app. crit.*), giving in F 45.44 "do no work."

²⁴None of the repetitions appear in Aelian's account (F 45p γ), which is admittedly rather brief on the dog-heads, or in that of Psellus. For the latter see P. Maas, "Ein Exzerpt aus Ktesias' *Indika* bei Michael Psellos," *Zeitschr. f. vergl. Sprachf.* 52 (1924) 303–306 (= *Kleine Schriften* [Munich 1973] 71–74).

²⁵E.g., the excerpt of Psellus (above, n. 24): Antigone. *Hist. Mir.* 166 (F 45e); Apollon. *Hist. mir.* 17 (F 45n); Aristotle (F 45d α); Pausanias (F 45d γ).

²⁶Pace G. Goossens, "Le Sommaire des *Persica* de Ctésias par Photios," *RBPH* 28.1 (1950) 514–521, who comments that one would not expect to find the vocabulary of Ctesias in Photius' résumés (517).

his longer epitomes.²⁷ In addition, the three literal excerpts from Ctesias' *Indica* in the Constantinian work on animals (F 45i β, F 45k γ, F 45f) permit a closer look at Photius' techniques.

Photius' version of F 45i β, which deals with the remarkable sheep and goats of India, is less than one-fifth of the original description. The first sentence he excerpts, with one or two minor changes. In lines 4–16 he reproduces his source in abbreviated form, using on the whole the original vocabulary. The rest, from line 16 to the end, i.e., the entire second half of the excerpt, he wholly omits. His procedure in F 45k γ, which consists of a single sentence, is very similar. Here the first half of Ctesias' statement is reproduced word for word (with minor changes). The second half is omitted.

The third Constantinian fragment (45f) comes from Ctesias' description of the tribe of pygmies, a passage which perhaps had greater attractions for Photius. Here he makes a few brief omissions and does some rewriting. But the changes are slight. What Photius preserves from the original is almost a literal excerpt.

Such methods are very similar to those which Photius employs in other codices.²⁸ In fact, the evidence, if all of it is considered, suggests that although parts of the epitome of the *Indica* are genuine summary, considerable portions are much closer to excerpts.²⁹ We are talking of course of a rather free kind of excerpt, where the excerptor, as well as omitting material whenever he feels inclined, partly summarises the text, removing at least some of the repetitions, and partly excerpts (with very minor changes) whole sentences or portions of sentences.

III THE ACCURACY OF PHOTIUS' SUMMARY

But how carefully did Photius read Ctesias' *Indica*? Does his detailed account of it reproduce the data of the original accurately?³⁰ Once again the numerous excerpts in other authors permit us to make an assessment, and

²⁷On the question of how far codices in Photius which are summaries rather than excerpts employ the vocabulary of the original see Hägg (above, n. 13) 199 f.

²⁸Hägg (above, n. 13, 97–116) discusses the ways in which Photius can adapt his source when he is excerpting.

²⁹In several passages Photius reproduces the opening sentences in considerable detail, but drastically abbreviates the final ones or omits them.

³⁰Photius usually gives the subject matter in its original sequence, as we know from other summaries, though he sometimes makes minor rearrangements. A major discrepancy between Photius and Aelian in the ordering of the data, such as that in the description of the dog-heads (F 45.37–43: cf. F 45p γ) is therefore likely to be the result of reorganisation by Aelian, whose excerpting is much freer than that of Photius (cf. above, 304 f.). At any rate Baehr's transposition of F 45.37, which he places after sections 38–39, is unattractive. Sections 38–39 were probably a digression in Ctesias' account (cf. below, n. 46).

it will become clear that although there are some disagreements between our sources, these are comparatively few and on the whole insignificant.

Some minor discrepancies are in fact merely scribal errors. For example, in F 45.15 the tail of the martichoras is said to be more than a cubit long.³¹ But sense and the parallel passage of Aelian (F 45d β) demand that this is the length of the dart in the tail. Jacoby corrects the ὑπάρχουσιν of manuscript A, one of the two principal MSS of Photius, to ὑπάρχον, which will then refer to κέντρον.³²

In the case of one or two other disagreements the details given by Photius are probably to be preferred. Photius, for example, may well be right about the colour of the astragalos of the wild ass (F 45.45). Aelian (F 45q) describes it as black. Photius, however, calls it the colour of cinnabar, using a term of which Ctesias seems to have been fond.³³ Photius may be right too about the grossly exaggerated size of the Indus in Ctesias. He gives the maximum breadth as an enormous 200 stades (F 45.1), a figure which reappears, possibly under Ctesias' influence, in Nearchus (133 F 33) and in Onesicritus (134 F 26), as the width of the river just above the delta. When Arrian cites Ctesias on this point (F 45a), the figure which he gives is a mere 100 stades. However, Arrian is not necessarily a better authority than Photius for the original statistics. In all likelihood in fact he cites Ctesias only at second hand.³⁴

Similarly, Photius' statements about the size of the pygmies (F 45.21) are to be preferred to those of other authors.³⁵ Most members of this tribe according to Photius were one and a half cubits tall (2 1/4 feet), the tallest

³¹Cf. F 45.45 where Jacoby inserts καὶ ἡμίσεος after ἐνὸς πύχεος to eliminate the discrepancy between Photius and Aelian over the length of the horn of the wild ass.

³²Jacoby's correction is supported by the reading of the unreliable Monacensis 287, on which manuscript see A. Diller, "Some False Fragments," *Classical Studies Presented to B. E. Perry* (Chicago 1969) 27-30. There is in fact even greater scribal confusion than the apparatus in Jacoby suggests. According to T. Hägg, *GGA* 228 (1976) 46, manuscript M, the second of the two principal manuscripts of Photius, reads μείζων (for A's μείζω) ὑπάρχουσα.

A third possible scribal error occurs in F 45.40, where A, followed by Jacoby, reads αἰγας καὶ ὄνους, but Aelian (F 45p γ) writes of goats and sheep, and also manuscript M of Photius. The correct reading may in fact be εἷς. Cf. F 45.44, where again M writes of goats and sheep and A erroneously has ὄνους, although in this passage the reading ascribed to A¹ shows that the scribe subsequently corrected his mistake. For a discussion of the importance of M see H. Erbse, *Gnomon* 32 (1960) 610-612.

³³See J. M. Bigwood, "Diodorus and Ctesias," *Phoenix* 34 (1980) 195-207, at 199.

³⁴By way of Eratosthenes as P. A. Brunt, *Arrian* 2 (Cambridge, Mass. 1983) 450, plausibly suggests. According to the Suda s.v. "Semiramis," an account influenced by Ctesias, the Indus was more than 100 stades wide. The estimates of Strabo 15.1.32 (50 stades for the maximum breadth, 7 stades for the minimum) are felt by H. T. Lambrick, *Sind* (Hyderabad 1964) 104, to be much more plausible.

³⁵In Aelian NA 16.37 they are called Ψύλλοι, not Πυγμαῖοι as in Photius and *Exc. Const.* (F 45f). But this may be a confusion of Aelian. No other author locates Psylloi

being two cubits (three feet), and the details are confirmed by the Constantinian excerpt (F 45f). Aulus Gellius, as Jacoby notes in the *apparatus criticus* on p. 493, claims that the tallest were 2¼ feet (NA 9.4.11; cf. Pliny *HN* 7.26). However, little weight should be attached to Gellius' testimony. Almost certainly this is second hand information, which derives either from the compilation used by Pliny at this point or from Pliny himself.³⁶

One more passage should be discussed here, for it has a bearing on the question of how carefully Photius read the text before him. According to several translators there is a discrepancy between Photius and Aelian in the description of the darts of the infamous martichoras (F 45.15 and F 45d β). They believe that Photius' words—ἔχει δὲ καὶ ἐν ἄκρῳ ὥσπερ σκορπίος κέντρον mean that Photius' creature, unlike that of Aelian, has a dart on the top of its head like a scorpion, in addition to its other darts.³⁷

The noted feature of the scorpion is, however, the sting in its tail, and it seems unlikely that Ctesias would have been ignorant of this fact. Surely he knew that the scorpion has no sting on its head. When Aelian describes the dart at the end of the tail with which the creature destroys its foes, he must be reproducing Ctesias' account accurately.

Has then Photius misunderstood Ctesias? There is obviously some awkwardness in the summary at this point. The words ἔχει δὲ καὶ ἐν ἄκρῳ . . . κέντρον certainly suggest a dart different from those previously mentioned.³⁸ However, it should also be observed that Photius' entire description of the martichoras appears to be modelled very closely on that of Ctesias. Words are repeated (ἔχει, for example, as well as κέντρον). Photius also employs much of the original vocabulary, as we can see by comparing his version with that of Aelian. We note in particular that both authors use the verb κεντρεῖν of the creature's dart and compare it to that of a scorpion.³⁹ In both too we find the word ἄκρος. Aelian in fact uses it twice, both times in connection with the creature's tail,⁴⁰ and this must have been how the word was used in the original.

(a well-known North African people) in India.

There is another apparent error in Aelian's excerpts from Ctesias in the account of the dog-milkers (F 46a: cf. Pollux F 46b). This fragment cites Ctesias, but seems to confuse Ctesias' description of large dogs in India (F 45.10) with Agatharchides' account of the dog-milkers (*De Mari Erythraeo*, GGM 1.152–153): cf. Karttunen, "Kynocephaloi," 35.

³⁶R. Marache, *Aulu-Gelle, Les Nuits Attiques* 2 (Paris 1978) 213 f., suggests Pliny as the source.

³⁷Müller section 7: cf. Freese (above, n. 23) 119, McCrindle 11 and Henry (above, n. 13) 135.

³⁸There is a textual problem in the preceding lines, as noted above, 309, and there may be some further confusion in the manuscripts here.

³⁹Photius in fact twice refers to the scorpion, as probably his source did. The first reference compares the tail of the martichoras to the scorpion's tail: cf. Aristotle F 45d α.

⁴⁰Cf. also Pausanias F 455 d γ. No author who makes use of Ctesias' description of

ἐν ἄκρῳ then in Photius should mean "at the end of its tail" and not "on the top of its head." We need not believe that Photius misunderstood Ctesias here. The awkwardness of his account surely results from hasty summarising or from too close adherence to a clumsy and repetitious description in the original. There is not necessarily any error in this section of Photius' summary.⁴¹

Photius on the whole read his texts with care, although he is not invariably correct: occasionally he may misunderstand, or his summarising may misrepresent, an author. However, the agreement over details between the epitome of Ctesias' *Indica* and the numerous other fragments suggest that this summary is on the whole a very reliable one.

IV PHOTIUS AND THE STRUCTURE OF CTESIAS' ACCOUNT

But Photius does not supply us with good information about all aspects of Ctesias' book. In fact his summarising seriously distorts the original in a number of ways. In the first place there is the question of the work's structure, the shape of the original description. Some scholars have alleged that this was a wholly muddled and unsystematic account.⁴² However, they have overlooked the extent to which Photius' methods are responsible for the general impression of incoherence.

As in many of his summaries, Photius is concerned primarily with the subject matter of the work before him. He is much less interested in the form of the original description.⁴³ He does not, after all, give a line by line résumé of the whole account. Instead, he reproduces details which catch his attention, often divorcing them completely from their context and thus leaving a series of disconnected descriptions. Moreover, he feels no need to distinguish between a passing reference of the original and a lengthy report.⁴⁴ Often too he fails to indicate such matters as whether information is drawn from a digression or from the main narrative, how digressions are connected with the primary description, and where they end.⁴⁵ Yet Ctesias'

the animal refers to a dart on its head. Pliny *HN* 8.75 (F 45d δ) is of course in error when he puts the martichoras in Ethiopia.

⁴¹Photius, however, may be wrong in describing as one tribe (F 45.50) those whose women bear children once, whose hair is white at birth, who have eight digits on hands and feet and huge ears; cf. Reese 76. According to the evidence of Tzetzes, Scylax (709 F 7b) seems to have separated the Otoliknoi (the big-eared tribe) from the Henotiktontes (if we reject Kiessling's emendation). In later times Megasthenes distinguishes between an eight-toed tribe (715 F 28), a tribe with huge ears (F 27a and F 27b), and a tribe whose women bear child once (F 13d).

⁴²Reese 79 and Zambrini 128 ff.

⁴³In his literary assessment (T 13), he does, however, comment that Ctesias' history avoids the untimely digressions of Herodotus. On his obscuring of the literary form of works which he summarises cf. Hägg (above, n. 13) 32 f. and 201 ff.

⁴⁴I give an example below, 314.

⁴⁵Several scholars, including McCrindle (16) and Reese (74), assume that the digres-

Indica must have rivalled many a *logos* of Herodotus in the frequency of its digressions. Indeed no less than three followed the miracle of section 17 (F 45.18–23), or so it would appear, and there are further examples in later portions of the account.⁴⁶

In Photius' hands such a work turns into a muddled sequence of topics, but the sequence in the original would not have been confused. In very brief outline Ctesias' account would have resembled the following:

- the land and the river (sections 1–6);
- some marvels of the land (7–15);
- the Indian way of life and customs (16–32):
 - digression on climate and on the reason for the Indians' dark skin (18–19); on non-Indian marvels (20); on the pygmies (21–23);
 - poisons, medicaments and other marvels (33–50):
 - digression on the dog-heads (37–43); on the milk-drinkers (44); on the eight-toed tribe (50).

Our evidence does not allow us to be certain of every detail of the work's structure,⁴⁷ and its style, as we saw above (306 ff.), was clumsy and repetitious. However, this was scarcely an incoherent account. Much of the seeming lack of organisation is the result of Photius' epitomising.

V PHOTIUS AND THE CONTENT OF CTESIAS' *INDICA*

But Photius, like the other excerptors, is also misleading on the question of the subject matter of Ctesias' book. Although he censures Ctesias for

sion on the pygmies (F 45.21 ff.) includes the description of falconry (F 45.24) and the sections which follow. But Aelian's account of falconry, which does not appear to deal with pygmies, suggests that the digression in fact ends at F 45.23. Reese also believes (76 and 80) that the digression on the dog-heads includes sections 44–49, and he is followed by Wecker, "Kynokephaloi," *RE* 12 (1924) 25. But this digression surely ends with section 43.

⁴⁶The main digressions are indicated in the outline below. We may note that the excursus on the dog-heads (F 45.37 ff.) itself apparently contains a digression on two dyes (F 45.38–39). F 45.20 on non-Indian marvels is surely a digression of Ctesias, not an interpolation in Photius, as Reese (82 f.) claims. Antigonus F 45e α and Pliny F 45e β confirm that Ctesias mentioned Photius' last miracle, the famous unquenchable fire near Phaselis in Lycia, though he perhaps did not give it the name Chimaera as they do; see L. Malten "Hephaistos," *RE* 8 (1913) 317 ff. Photius read of this miracle also in Methodius cod. 234, p. 298b23 ff. For a modern account see G. E. Bean, *Turkey's Southern Shore*² (London 1979) 136–138. The miracle at Mount Etna is discussed by R. Holland, "Zu den Indika des Ktesias," *Hermes* 61 (1926) 235–237.

⁴⁷We may note, for example, the geographical content of sections 11–13 and regard the whole account up to section 15 as a description of the land and the river, one which included a large number of marvels. The description of the Indian way of life is discussed below, 315 f.

his *muthoi* or tall tales (T 13; cf. F 45.51), his own predilections are clearly for the marvellous, as was noted above (305). Much more space is allotted in the epitome to the exotic animals and peoples than to what many authors had related about India or to what would be otherwise well-known to Photius. Tribes of pygmies (F 45.21 ff.) and dog-heads (F 45.37 ff.), the man-eater and its darts (F 45.15), the wild ass with its magical horn (F 45.45), all these marvels and others like them Photius describes at length.⁴⁸ On the other hand, one line or less is allotted to the creatures which Photius considers more commonplace—monkeys (F 45.8), for example, or Indian dogs (F 45.10), or elephants (F 45.7). And yet we know from a substantial excerpt in Aelian (F 45b) and from some comments in Aristotle (F 48) that Ctesias treated at least this last-mentioned animal at considerable length.

Photius, it is obvious, emphasises the more sensational items in Ctesias' book. However, other aspects of the original deserve attention.⁴⁹ Naturally the work had close ties with previous ethnographical writing.⁵⁰ It clearly observed to some extent the traditional pattern, according to which foreign lands are described in terms of past history, geographical features, the way of life of the people, and the wonders of the region.⁵¹ There is no trace of history in any of the fragments of Ctesias' *Indica* and most probably the original description contained none.⁵² However, the work certainly included some account of the Indian way of life and some discussion of geographical matters, and it is worth considering how far it treated each of these topics.

When we look at the question of the geographical component of the original, we must of course bear in mind that Ctesias was describing a limited area. He dealt, quite understandably in view of the fact that his information would have been acquired at the Persian court, only with the parts of India closest to Persia, i.e., with the Indus Valley and the region

⁴⁸The same interest in the exotic characterizes Photius' summary of Philostratus VA (cod. 241). In fact a number of the marvels of the summary of Ctesias reappear in some detail in the summary of the VA (Philostratus having derived them directly or indirectly from Ctesias)—viz., the worm in the Indus, the wild ass, the pantarba gem, the griffin (Philostratus' description appears in the excerpts in Photius which illustrate style [p. 332b], as well as in the excerpts which illustrate content [p. 327a]). Photius may of course have read Ctesias and Philostratus at very different times.

⁴⁹Reese (71 ff.) and Zambrini (126 ff.) criticise the work severely for its preoccupation with the fabulous.

⁵⁰For Ctesias' other ethnographical works see F. Jacoby, "Ktesias," *RE* 11 (1922) 2036 f. and 2039 f.

⁵¹The pattern is well-known from Herodotus' ethnographical *logoi*; see F. Jacoby, "Herodotos," *RE* Supp. 2 (1913) 330–333.

⁵²In the *Persica* we have an early Indian king Stabrobates against whom Semiramis conducts a campaign (F 1.16.2 ff.), and in F 9.7 Indians assist the Derbices in their struggle against Cyrus the Great.

immediately to the East of it, and with the mountains to the North.⁵³ Information about other parts of the country is noticeably lacking in the fragments, and there is no reason to believe that in this they inaccurately reflect the original. Moreover, we must not expect from the author the knowledge of someone who had actually visited the land. Ctesias nowhere, so far as we know, claims to have himself set foot in India, territory which was exceedingly ill-known to Greeks in the period before Alexander.

Photius' summary begins with some geography, with some comments on the land, the people and the Indus River. But this part of the epitome, as was noted above (306), is particularly brief, and characteristically Photius' eye is on the marvels, not on geographical issues—on the incredible worm-like monster of the Indus, for example (F 45.3).⁵⁴ A later passage describes it in great detail (F 45.46). In Ctesias it had probably been mentioned only in passing in the early part of the work. Photius also draws attention to the remarkable gem associated with the river, the so-called pantarba (F 45.6). He refers to it, we may note, in two other epitomes.⁵⁵

Geographical material is not entirely absent from later parts of the summary of the *Indica*. F 45.11 alludes to the great mountains from which sards and other precious stones are obtained; F 45.12 comments on the heat; F 45.13 on the vast sea.⁵⁶ The original account was perhaps describing here the land and sea in the general vicinity of the Gulf of Cambay.⁵⁷ Elsewhere too we are given the occasional geographical detail, although one of the very striking features of the epitome is in fact the brevity with

⁵³Some, e.g., Kiessling, "Hypobaros," *RE* 9 (1914) 329–332, and E. H. Johnston, "Ctesias on Indian Manna," *JRAS* (1942) 29–35, identify Photius' "Hyparchus" (F 45.36) with the Ganges. However, the small size of Photius' river makes this unattractive. For the variants of the name—Υπαρχος (Photius), Hypobarus (Pliny), Υσπορος (Nonnus), Σάβαρος (Psellus), see W. Schulze, *Zeitschr. f. vergl. Sprachf.* 52 (1924) 306, who suggests that they derive from an Iranian *Vispabara, "bearing everything." J. André and J. Filliozat, *L'Inde vue de Rome* (Paris 1986) 370, n. 212, report S. Lévi's suggestion that the river is the Svāt. But they do not comment on the fact that this does not fit Pliny's description (F 45.0).

⁵⁴Reese (83) erroneously believes this to be an interpolation in the text of Photius. As noted above (n. 48), the creature is also described in the summary of Philostratus VA cod. 241, p. 325a.

⁵⁵In the summary of Heliodorus cod. 73, p. 51a, as well as in that of Philostratus VA cod. 241, p. 326b/327a. It has not so far been satisfactorily identified. For some suggestions see Müller 87 f.

⁵⁶That at least sections 11 and 12 belong together is suggested by a later description of these mountains as very warm (F 45.33).

⁵⁷The mountains are presumably Ptolemy's Mt. Sardonyx (*Geogr.* 7.1.20) near Ozene (Ujjain), from which, according to the *Peripl. M. Rubr.* 48, precious stones were brought to Barygaza (Broach) on the Gulf of Cambay; cf. W. Schoff, *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* (London 1912) 193 f. Lindegger (2.105) thinks that the Himalaya Mountains are intended.

which geographical issues are treated, and its imprecision on questions of location.⁵⁸

Was the original as unhelpful? It should be observed that Photius' summary of Ctesias' history is often hopelessly vague over exactly where in the vast Persian Empire events take place, an inexactitude which cannot entirely reflect the historian.⁵⁹ Similarly, that in his *Indica* Ctesias was not necessarily as imprecise as Photius is suggested by some of our other excerpts. In one or two passages Aelian comments briefly (though not very exactly) on the habitat of the creatures which he describes, observations which we do not find in Photius.⁶⁰ Moreover, if Pliny accurately reproduces Ctesias' description of the River Hyparchus (F 45 o), he supplies some information about its easterly direction which again Photius has omitted. Besides, was no river even mentioned, apart from the Indus and the Hyparchus? Was there no allusion to any town?⁶¹ Ctesias certainly lacked the resources for an elaborate description of the nature of the land, such as we find in later accounts of India. But surely he was less reticent in regard to geographical matters than a first glance at Photius' summary of his work suggests.

From geography we turn to the customs and way of life of the inhabitants, another standard ingredient of Greek ethnography. Photius in fact tells us specifically that Ctesias' work described the customs of the Indians.⁶² In F 45.16 we read—περὶ τῶν Ἰνδῶν ὅτι δικαιοτάτοι· καὶ περὶ τῶν ἔθῶν καὶ νομίμων αὐτῶν, though no indication is given about how extensive this discussion was and how much, if indeed any, of the material which is given in the following part of the summary is to be subsumed under this heading.

Possibly, however, sections 17 to 32 of the epitome (with the digressions) were part of what might be described as an account of the Indian way of life.⁶³ Photius' comments embrace a sacred place in the desert, falconry, different types of oil, precious metals, livestock, palm trees, the justice and virtues of the Indians, as well as their excellent health and long life. Yet we would have expected much more from the original. Ctesias, after all,

⁵⁸Reese (77 f.) attributes this to Ctesias' lack of interest in geography.

⁵⁹Note for example that Photius (F 16.64) gives no indication at all about where Artaxerxes II defeated Cyrus the Younger, but that Plutarch (*Art.* 8.2 = F 18), whose information on this point in all probability comes from Ctesias, names the place Cunaxa and states its distance from Babylon. For the sources of this part of Plutarch's narrative see J. M. Bigwood, "The Ancient Accounts of the Battle of Cunaxa," *AJP* 104 (1983) 344–345.

⁶⁰E.g., F 45m, p. 499 lines 7–9, and F 45q, p. 506 lines 15–16.

⁶¹Hdt. 3.102 and 4.44 refers to Kaspaturus, which appears in Hecataeus 1 F 295 as Kaspapuros. Hecataeus also mentions Argante (1 F 297).

⁶²Cf. also Photius' comment that the pygmies have the same *nomoi* as the Indians (F 45.23).

⁶³As was suggested in the outline above (312). I also assume here that the digression on the pygmies ended at F 45.23; cf. above, n. 45.

did not lack information about the way of life of individual tribes (pygmies, milk-drinkers, and others). His description of the dog-headed tribe (F 45.37 ff.) covered a wide range of topics—what they ate, what they wore, their weapons, trade, sexual practices, and other items. Photius' notes suggest that with regard to the Indians of the Indus Valley there was little about food, and nothing about clothing in general, or about cotton, which Herodotus and later authors found so interesting.⁶⁴ Was this really the case? Moreover, did Ctesias omit religious customs, apart from the material which Photius reproduces briefly at F 45.17, and did he omit such topics as marriage and the treatment of the dead?

Photius' summarising obviously conceals the extent to which the original dealt with Indian customs, as well as the extent to which it dealt with geographical questions. Photius clearly concentrates on the marvels, although of course there is little doubt that marvels loomed large in Ctesias' work and that the emphasis of the original description was on what would astound. It would have been surprising had this not been so. After all, from its beginnings Greek ethnography tended to give particular prominence to marvels and paradoxes. Moreover, the territory which Ctesias describes was for all Classical antiquity from earliest times a wonderland.⁶⁵

To sum up, Photius' lengthy summary presents us with a large amount of material from Ctesias' book and presents it by and large accurately. Moreover, since in part it is very close to being excerpts, it also preserves something of Ctesias' manner of writing. But for all its virtues, it is not a systematic summary of the whole. It is a collection of notes of material which Photius found interesting, a collection which emphasises the more sensational elements of the account, as well as disregarding its literary form. If we are to assess Ctesias' *Indica* fairly, we must bear this firmly in mind. Despite the author's devotion to tall tales and boundless credulity, this was a work very similar in structure and content to earlier Greek descriptions of far-off lands. It was not entirely the confused jumble of paradoxes which some critics have claimed.

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⁶⁴F 45.48 comments on Indian cheese and wine. Otherwise there are only passing allusions to items which were used or avoided as food (cf. F 45 k γ, F 45 i, F 45.45). For cotton see Hdt. 3.106, Nearchus 133 F 11, and Onesicritus 134 F 22 and F 23. In Ctesias F 45.41 ξύλινα ἱμάτια are mentioned in passing as an item received by the dog-heads in trade with the Indians (cf. also F 45f α).

⁶⁵For the conception of India from the period of Alexander onwards see A. Dihle, "Der fruchtbare Osten," *RhM* NF 105 (1962) 97–110 and J. W. Sedlar, *India and the Greek World* (Totowa, N.J. 1980) 252 ff.