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Author(s): Charles E. Muntz

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DIODORUS SICULUS AND MEGASTHENES: A REAPPRAISAL

CHARLES E. MUNTZ

RECENTLY THERE HAS BEEN a growing recognition that Diodorus Siculus, often seen as little more than a mechanical abbreviator, is in fact a competent historian whose views need to be considered in evaluating his work. However, the basic assumptions about Diodorus' sources, in particular the belief that he relies on a single source for a given section of his work, have not received much attention. *Quellenforschung* can still be a useful practice for establishing Diodorus' working methods and how reliably he can be used as a window into other authors. In this paper I will reexamine the sources for Diodorus' account of India (2.35–42), which is believed to derive from Megasthenes. This section is particularly suited for a reevaluation due to the survival of two other ancient accounts of India, by Strabo and Arrian. It is my contention that, contrary to the traditional view, Diodorus is actually picking, choosing, and blending from a multitude of sources, particularly Eratosthenes, to produce his own account of India.¹

Megasthenes wrote his *Indica* in the period following Alexander the Great's death. He served as an ambassador to the Indian ruler Chandragupta, and so had firsthand experience of India.² Thanks to Strabo and Arrian, the work of Megasthenes is well attested, and Felix Jacoby prints some thirty-five pages of fragments, including Diodorus' entire section on India (*FGrH* 715 F4, in small type), although Diodorus does not cite Megasthenes. This attribution of Diodorus 2.35–42 to Megasthenes is widely accepted, and goes back to the earliest edition of Megasthenes by Schwanbeck, who referred to this section as "Epitome Megasthenis." Eduard Schwartz agreed.³ The most recent edition of Megasthenes, by Duane Roller, again gives the entirety of Diodorus 2.35–42 as F4 of Megasthenes. Roller remarks that the "origin [is] certain" and concludes that "Diodorus . . . was highly selective in his use of the *Indika*, greatly condensing his account and emphasizing those ideas that fit into late

1. The text of Diodorus is that of Vogel 1888–1906; of Strabo, Radt 2002–9; of Arrian's *Indica*, Roos and Wirth 1968. Berger 1880 is the standard Greek text of the geographical fragments of Eratosthenes, with Roller 2010a providing a new numbering scheme, translation, and commentary. I have given both editors' fragment numbers. Translations from Diodorus are from Oldfather 1933–67. Translations from Arrian are from Brunt 1983. Other translations are my own. On Diodorus' originality, see Sacks 1990 and Green 2006, esp. 34–38. On ancient historians and their use of earlier material, see Bosworth 2003b. On the problems with fragments and epitomes in general, see the sensible comments in Brunt 1980.

2. On Megasthenes, see especially the two-part article by Zambrini 1982 and 1985; Karttunen 1989, 96–100; and 1997, 69–93. On the date of Megasthenes' embassy, see Bosworth 1996c.

3. Schwanbeck 1846; Schwartz 1905, 670–78.

Hellenistic political theories.”⁴ Almost all studies dealing with Megasthenes accept that 2.35–42 is derived from Megasthenes as well.⁵

That Megasthenes is one of Diodorus’ sources for his account of India is certain. This can be seen in several passages where Diodorus’ text closely parallels passages in other authors who do attribute their information to Megasthenes. The first is Diodorus’ description of the Silla, the only river in the world upon which nothing floats, which flows from a like-named spring (2.37.7). This closely follows F10a of Megasthenes, as cited by Arrian, who calls the river Sila. There are some parallels in phrasing and vocabulary that may suggest a common source. Explaining that the river flows from a spring of the same name, Diodorus says ῥέοντα δ’ ἐκ τινος ὁμωνύμου κρήνης (2.37.7), while Arrian uses the phrase ῥέειν δὲ ἀπὸ κρήνης ἑπωνύμου τοῦ ποταμοῦ (6.2). Strabo (15.1.38) also mentions the amazing river (but not the spring), spelling it Sila and using the same word to describe its action (ἐπιπλεῖν) as both Arrian and Diodorus. Strabo appears to be following Megasthenes here, but discusses the views of other authors on the remarkable river.

Although this passage indicates Diodorus’ use of Megasthenes, even here there are some doubts to be raised. The earliest mention of the Silla appears to be in Hellanicus (*FGrH* 4 F190, who spells the river Silla), but Diodorus’ source for the first part of Book 2, Ctesias (*FGrH* 688 F47, who spells the river Sila), also mentions it, and according to Strabo both Aristotle and Democritus do as well. So while Megasthenes is the likely source for Diodorus, he may have also used another source that spelled the river Silla, not Sila. Diodorus does cite Hellanicus once (1.37.3), so it is possible that he was familiar with that author.⁶

The second passage where Diodorus clearly uses Megasthenes is on the Indian castes (2.40–41). Both Arrian (11–12 = F19a) and Strabo (15.1.39–49 = F19b) include very similar accounts and attribute them to Megasthenes.⁷ In introducing their sections, Diodorus and Strabo even echo each other’s vocabulary and phrasing: τὸ δὲ πᾶν πλῆθος τῶν Ἰνδῶν εἰς ἑπτὰ μέρη διήρηται (2.40.1) / φησὶ δὴ τὸ τῶν Ἰνδῶν πλῆθος εἰς ἑπτὰ μέρη διηρησθαι (15.1.39).

Despite this parallel, each author has written the passage in his own style. Even the designations of the castes vary among the three, and there is no pattern of one author regularly differing from the other two. Diodorus and Strabo both refer to the first caste as φιλοσόφοι, while Arrian prefers the term σοφισταί. For the second caste of farmers, all three use the term γεωργοί, but for the military caste, Diodorus refers to στρατιωτικόν, while Strabo and Arrian refer to πολεμισταί.

Looking at the specifics of each caste, all three go into similar levels of detail, with minor differences. For the philosophers, all three agree that they

4. Roller 2010b, *Commentary* on F4. On Diodorus’ use of Posidonius, see Kidd 1997, 234.

5. E.g., Robinson 1993, 84; Bosworth 2003a, 308. Sacks (1990, 70 n. 77) remarks that “Schwartz, *RE* 5, 670–78, is still generally convincing on the sources for books i–vi.” One possible dissenter is Karttunen (1997, 73 nn. 25–26), who notes that while Megasthenes was certainly a source for Diodorus 2.35–42, other passages contradict confirmed fragments. The only scholar who denies the attribution is Majumdar (1958), but he lacks a detailed textual argument.

6. On the Silla, see especially Karttunen 1985; Sachse 1982.

7. On the Indian background to the castes, see Thapar 2000, 488–517; Karttunen 1997, 82–87.

sacrifice and issue prophecies. Strabo and Diodorus say that philosophers attend an assembly at the start of the year to make prophecies, but this is absent in Arrian. All three agree that errant philosophers are forced to remain silent for the rest of their lives, but Arrian and Strabo say a philosopher has to make three mistakes first, while Diodorus gives no threshold. So these passages are close, but not identical.

On farmers, all three say at the outset that they are the most numerous of all the castes. All three also agree that farmers do not serve in the military, and that when the Indians are fighting one another, farmers and farmland are left alone. Diodorus and Strabo both add that the farmers pay a rent to the king in addition to a quarter part of their earnings. Again, the three authors are very similar in their facts, but each writes in his own style and own vocabulary, with slight differences in emphasis and detail, throughout the entire section. This shows that there is a common source, but also that all three are compressing it, probably only slightly, as the three accounts are approximately the same length.⁸ The biggest deviation comes from Strabo, who inserts a digression on elephants and other unusual animals after the third caste.

All three also conclude their description of the castes with a remark that it is unlawful to marry outside of one's caste, or to switch castes. There is a disagreement among the three about the philosophers, however. Arrian says that philosophers (sophists) can come from any class (12.9), but Diodorus uses the example of an artisan becoming a philosopher to illustrate illegal caste crossing (2.41.5). Strabo, explicitly citing Megasthenes, says that a philosopher is allowed to engage in the work of other castes (15.1.49). The original cannot be determined.

Both Diodorus (2.42.1–2) and Arrian (13–14 = F20a) move on to discuss elephants. Arrian's account is much more detailed, and corresponds closely to the account Strabo inserts into his caste description (15.1.42–43 = F20b). Strabo cites Nearchus and Onesicritus for alternate lengths of the elephant's life span, suggesting that his main source for the passage is still Megasthenes. Strabo and Arrian describe the capture of elephants and conclude with a brief passage on breeding, and it is this topic that Diodorus includes here. At 42.1–2 Diodorus declares that Indian elephants surpass all others in strength and size. He adds that they give birth like horses, and the females suckle the young for six years. The average life span is similar to humans, although some elephants live two hundred years. Strabo's figures are the same, although Arrian says the suckling period is eight years instead of six. Otherwise, the parallels indicate that all three authors are drawing on a common source.

In these passages, Diodorus appears to be following Megasthenes quite closely, compressing in places but not altering details, as far as can be seen. These sections make up approximately one-third of Diodorus' account of India. The remainder of Diodorus' account, however, also overlaps with topics Megasthenes is known to have covered from the attributed fragments. Here the parallels between Diodorus and Megasthenes are not nearly as clear.

8. As a rough measurement, Diodorus' caste section occupies about two and a half pages of Greek text in the Loeb edition, Strabo's a similar amount, and Arrian's about three pages.

Diodorus begins with a brief physical description of the four-sided (τετράπλευρος, 2.35.1) subcontinent. He gives the boundaries of India as the Great Sea on the south and east, the Indus River on the west, and the Emodus mountains on the north, adding that the mountains separate India from a part of Scythia inhabited by the Sacae. Strabo (15.1.11) describes India as rhomboidal (ῥομβοειδής) and gives the same boundaries for India, although he refers to the sea as the Atlantic, and names the northern mountain range Taurus. However, Strabo gives a number of other names for the mountains, including Paropamisus, Emodus, and Imäus. So the two authors are in close agreement in terms of the boundaries of India and the shape. Both Jacoby (in small print until Strabo directly cites Megasthenes) and Roller include this passage of Strabo (15.1.11–12) as F6c of Megasthenes. However, the final sentence of Strabo 15.1.10 leads into this passage, reading, “The account given by Eratosthenes is as follows” (ἔστι τοιαῦτα, ἃ λέγει ὁ Ἐρατοσθένης). Stefan Radt makes this the first sentence of 15.1.11 and translates, “Was Eratosthenes sagt ist Folgendes.”⁹ Hugo Berger prints this passage as FIIB6 of Eratosthenes. Roller also includes it as a fragment of Eratosthenes (69), but argues that Eratosthenes’ description of the shape of India “is almost entirely from Megasthenes.”¹⁰ But Strabo explicitly cites Eratosthenes, not Megasthenes, for this description. A few lines later, Strabo does cite Megasthenes as agreeing with Eratosthenes on the length of India, so he evidently had both accounts available when he wrote this passage. This indicates that the description of the boundaries of India comes from Eratosthenes, not Megasthenes. A passage elsewhere in Strabo confirms this. At 2.1.31 (IIIB3, IIB7 = 49), Strabo cites Eratosthenes as describing India as both “rhomboidal and four-sided” (τετράπλευρος . . . καὶ ῥομβοειδής). That this description is directly from Eratosthenes and not Megasthenes is shown by Eratosthenes’ use of geometric terminology to describe the layout of the world elsewhere—for example, Ariana is described as having three sides forming part of a parallelogram (2.1.22 = IIB19 = 79). This indicates that Strabo’s later description of India as “rhomboidal” and Diodorus’ description as “four-sided” are both based on Eratosthenes’ own analysis of the shape of India.

Arrian (2.1–7) agrees with both Diodorus and Strabo on the boundaries of India. He refers to the ocean as the “great sea” like Diodorus, but prefers Taurus for the northern mountains, giving Paropamisus, Emodus, and Imaon as alternates. Arrian does not indicate a source for this passage, but a few lines later states that “Eratosthenes of Cyrene was more trustworthy than any other writer, since he concerned himself with a general chart of the earth” (ἐμοὶ δὲ Ἐρατοσθένης ὁ Κυρηναῖος πιστότερος ἄλλου ἔστω, ὅτι γῆς περιόδου περί ἔμελεν Ἐρατοσθένει, 3.1 = IIB10 = 72), suggesting that Eratosthenes was his source for the boundaries of India.¹¹ Thus Strabo and Arrian are in agreement on the boundaries of India, one explicitly citing Eratosthenes, the

9. Radt 2002–9, 4: 148–49.

10. Roller 2010a, 176.

11. Brunt (1983, 309 n. 1, on 2.4) remarks, “This chapter comes from E[ratosthenes].” Berger includes most of this passage as fragments IIIA4 and IIB14 of Eratosthenes, but Roller does not.

other implicitly. The evidence for Diodorus' source for the boundaries of India points to Eratosthenes.¹²

Further evidence of Diodorus' usage of Eratosthenes is found in his mention of the Sacae. Neither Strabo nor Arrian mentions the Sacae here as Diodorus does, nor are they referenced in the other extant fragments of Megasthenes. But a passage from Strabo (11.8.8 = IIIB20, IIIB63 = 108) confirms that Eratosthenes did discuss them in his description of Ariana. This fragment places the tribe in relation to the river Iaxartes. And Dionysius Periegetes, in a geographical poem dating from the reign of Hadrian, places the Sacae not only in relation to the Iaxartes, but also the Oxus river, which he notes flows from the Emodus mountains (746–51). So, like Diodorus, Dionysius is locating the Sacae north of the Emodus mountains. Dionysius was drawing on Alexandrian geographical scholarship, and it is very likely that Eratosthenes was his major source.¹³ This might also explain Diodorus' preference for the name Emodus here. His inclusion of the Sacae seems mysterious, given that they are not in India. But this fits in well with the rest of his narrative in Book 2. The previous chapter (2.34) concludes the description of the Medes with their war with the Sacae. So with his mention of the location of the Sacae in the description of India, Diodorus is providing a link between these two parts. The Sacae also provide a link to his account of the Scythians that follows the Indian narrative (2.43.5). This shows that Diodorus, far from mechanically copying one source, is arranging material in order to fit better into and unify his own work, transferring information from another section of Eratosthenes to his description of India.

Diodorus next discusses the exact size of India (2.35.2). Both Strabo (15.1.11–12 = F6c) and Arrian (3.6–8 = F6b) also give dimensions. Citing Megasthenes, Arrian says that India is 16,000 stades east to west and 22,300 north to south. Strabo, citing Eratosthenes, calculates the east–west distance as 16,000 stades, and cites Megasthenes as agreeing with this figure. Strabo goes on to cite Megasthenes as giving the north–south distance as over 20,000 stades. Diodorus gives the dimensions of India from east to west as 28,000 stades and from north to south as 32,000 stades (35.2), so he cannot be following Megasthenes or Eratosthenes. Strabo cites Daimachus (*FGrH* 716 F2a) as making the north–south distance over 30,000 stades, making that author a plausible source for Diodorus here.¹⁴ Strabo adds that Ctesias, Nearchus, and Onesicritus all gave different dimensions for India, but unfortunately does not give specific figures for them.

Diodorus adds that India takes in a greater part of the sun's course than any other part of the world. As a result, in many places at the Cape of India, sundials do not cast shadows and the Bears (the Dippers) are not visible at night. Diodorus adds that in the most southerly portions Arcturus cannot be seen and the shadows point to the south (2.35.2). Here we have a much

12. On the boundaries of India in the Greek tradition in general, see Karttunen 1997, 104–5.

13. Knaack (1905, cols. 920–21) argues for the attribution to Eratosthenes. Thomson (1948, 228–29) agrees. Roller (2010a, 33) remarks that Dionysius made extensive use of Eratosthenes.

14. Karttunen (1997, 103–4) agrees. Roller (2010b, *Commentary* on F4) notes simply that “[t]he dimensions of India are different elsewhere.”

closer correspondence with a definite fragment of Megasthenes, in a passage in Strabo on the latitude of India (2.1.19–20).¹⁵ Strabo cites Daimachus as contradicting Megasthenes' statement that in southern India the Bears set and shadows fall in the opposite direction (2.1.19 = F7a). This corresponds with two of the examples Diodorus gives. Strabo also cites Eratosthenes and the followers of Nearchus (*FGrH* 133 F16) as stating that the Bears set in southern India.

While Megasthenes could be Diodorus' source, the issue is more complicated. Apparently drawing on two separate sets of observations, Diodorus gives two pairs of astronomical data: that at the Cape of India the Bears are not visible and sundials do not cast shadows, and that in the most southerly regions Arcturus is not visible and shadows point south. If Strabo's citation of Megasthenes is correct, Megasthenes gave one pair of observations for southern India, about the Bears and the shadows, which does not parallel either of the pairs Diodorus gives.

It may be possible to get a better sense for what Diodorus' sources may have been for these observations.¹⁶ Pliny the Elder (2.184–85 = *FGrH* 134 F10) cites Onesicritus as saying that there are places in India where there are no shadows and the seven stars [of the Great Bear] are not visible, matching the first pair of observations that Diodorus gives at the Cape and suggesting Onesicritus as a source. The second pair is more problematic. Diodorus says that in the most southerly parts Arcturus is not visible and the shadows point south. However, the most southerly part of India is the Cape. It is doubtful that one of the original sources on India would make this mistake. One explanation is that Diodorus failed to recognize that the Cape was the southernmost point of India when he combined two different sources. But Nearchus (*FGrH* 133 F1.25 = Arrian *Indica* 25) claimed that as he sailed along the coast of India and advanced far to the south, the shadows pointed south, there were no shadows at noon, and of the stars, some were invisible, some were seen near the horizon, and others that were normally always visible were seen to rise and set. Diodorus could have interpreted this to mean that these observations were made even farther south than the Cape of India. In Nearchus we have the details of the shadows pointing the wrong way, as in Diodorus. No mention is made of Arcturus, but Arrian may have compressed a more detailed description of which stars were visible and which disappeared, while Diodorus simply picked out the most important star to highlight. In this case, Diodorus is simply unclear that he is referring to observations taken at sea.¹⁷

Diodorus goes on to describe the physical characteristics of India in the most general terms: lofty mountains, many fertile plains, and a multitude of rivers (2.35.3). He mentions that the larger part of the country is so well watered that it yields two harvests a year. This parallels nicely with Strabo 15.1.20, who cites both Megasthenes (F8) and Eratosthenes (IIB17 = 75) as noting India's two harvests. Diodorus follows this with a mention that the fer-

15. On this passage, see Dicks 1960, 125–28.

16. See Karttunen 1997, 125–28.

17. Eck (2003, 167) suggests Nearchus may have been Megasthenes' source, rather than Diodorus'.

tility of India also plays a role in engendering large elephants, which are captured and trained for warfare (2.35.4). However, as already noted, Diodorus discusses elephants at 2.42.1–2, in a passage based on Megasthenes. Both passages state that India has the “most and biggest elephants” (καὶ πλείστους δὲ καὶ μεγίστους). But at 35.4 Diodorus explains that the Indian elephants, nourished by the fertility of the land, are more powerful than Libyan elephants (a comparison missing from the fragments of Megasthenes), and consequently made captive and used for warfare by the Indians. The later passage is about the breeding habits of elephants, so this is not a true doublet. Still, having two separate passages on elephants so close together is odd, and I see two possible explanations.

If Diodorus were following Eratosthenes or another source discussing India’s fertility, the placement of elephants here might reflect the organization of that source, just as the placement of the second elephant passage may reflect the organization of Megasthenes. The overlap with the later passage could then be attributed to carelessness. Alternatively, if Diodorus used Megasthenes as his only source for elephants, he has split the account into two parts. The placement of elephants in chapter 35 fits in well with the narrative on the fertility of India, while the passage in 42 seems distinctly out of place in Diodorus’ narrative. This suggests that Diodorus originally followed the order of his source but decided that a description of elephants made more sense in the earlier part of his narrative. So he inserted a brief mention of elephants at 35, perhaps intending to expand it later, but never deleted the later reference. In support of this theory, if the elephant passage at 35.4 is deleted, then 36 follows 35.3 smoothly. I believe that the second explanation is more likely, both for these reasons and because the mention of elephants at 35.4 sets up a passage further along.

Diodorus continues to describe the results of India’s fertility in chapter 36.1–3. This passage is clearly very condensed, as Diodorus himself acknowledges, but none of the specific details he gives here can be found in any of the extant fragments of Megasthenes. Diodorus does mention several types of plants that grow in India, irrigated by the abundant rivers—grain, millet, pulse, rice, and a plant called “bosporus” (36.3). No other author on India is known to speak of bosporus, but Strabo cites Onesicritus as describing bosmoron, which appears to be the same (15.1.18 = *FGrH* 134 F15).¹⁸

Diodorus adds that in the winter the Indians plant wheat, and during the summer they plant rice, bosporus, sesame, and millet (36.4). This can be paralleled in Strabo, who says that in the winter the Indians plant wheat, barley, pulse, and other plants unknown to the Greeks, and in the rainy season they plant flax, millet, sesame, rice, and bosmoron. This list is more comprehensive than Diodorus’, but it does not contradict him. Strabo does not note a source for this information, but it follows on a sentence attributed to Eratosthenes, “It is due to the vapors rising from so many rivers and to the Etesian winds, as Eratosthenes says, that India is watered by the summer rains and that the plains become marshes” (15.1.13 = *IIIB* 12 = 74). This implies

18. Note also Eck 2003, 168.

that his description of the harvests also derives from Eratosthenes, although the mention of “bosmorum” could also suggest Onesicritus again. Strabo also cites Megillus and Aristobulus as describing various types of plants grown by the Indians, but not Megasthenes (15.1.18).

Diodorus continues with a brief discussion of wild plant life (36.5). He explains that sweet roots grow in marshy places, and attributes this to the regular warm rains. The heat in turn ripens (ἔχοντος τοῦ καύματος) the roots in the marshes, particularly of tall reeds (καὶ μάλιστα τῶν μεγάλων καλάμων). A close parallel can be found in Strabo (15.1.20), who also talks about the roots of plants, especially tall reeds (καὶ μάλιστα τῶν μεγάλων καλάμων), which were sweet both by nature and heating (καὶ φύσει καὶ ἐψήσει). Strabo explains that his source uses the word “heating” (ἔψησις) to describe what others called “ripening.” The overlaps in terminology between the two authors point to a common source, but Strabo’s source for this passage is not clear. The description of the sweet roots is preceded by the following (15.1.20):

Μεγασθένης δὲ τὴν εὐδαιμονίαν τῆς Ἰνδικῆς ἐπισημαίνεται τῷ δίκαιον εἶναι καὶ δίφορον (καθάπερ καὶ Ἐρατοσθένης ἔφη, τὸν μὲν εἰπὼν σπὸρον χειμερινόν, τὸν δὲ θερινόν, καὶ ὄμβρον ὁμοίως· οὐδὲν γὰρ ἔτος εὐρίσκεσθαι φησι πρὸς ἀμφοτέρους καιροὺς ἄνομβρον, ὥστ’ εὐετηρίαν ἐκ τούτου συμβαίνειν ἀφόρου μηδέποτε τῆς γῆς οὕσης).

Megasthenes indicates the fertility of India by its biannual harvests and crops. And Eratosthenes says this too, speaking of the winter sowing and the summer sowing, and similarly of the rain; for he says that he finds that no year lacks rain in both seasons, the result of this being a prosperous land, with a never-barren earth.

Thus Strabo is citing both Eratosthenes and Megasthenes in this passage, which leads into the description of the “heating” of the tree roots. The question is, which author does he continue to use? Radt puts parentheses around the sentence καθάπερ . . . οὕσης to delineate it as the fragment of Eratosthenes.¹⁹ Strabo continues:

τούς τε ξυλίνους καρποὺς γεννᾶσθαι πολλοὺς καὶ τὰς ρίζας τῶν φυτῶν καὶ μάλιστα τῶν μεγάλων καλάμων, γλυκείας καὶ φύσει καὶ ἐψήσει χλιαινομένου τοῦ ὕδατος τοῖς ἡλίοις τοῦ τ’ ἐκπίπτοντος ἐκ Διὸς καὶ τοῦ ποταμίου. τρόπον δὲ τινα λέγειν βούλεται διότι ἡ παρὰ τοῖς ἄλλοις λεγομένη πέψις καὶ καρπῶν καὶ χυμῶν παρ’ ἐκείνοις ἔψησις ἐστὶ καὶ κατεργάζεται τοσοῦτον εἰς εὐστομίαν ὅσον καὶ ἡ διὰ πυρός.

And that the trees produce many fruits, and the roots of plants, in particular those of large reeds, are sweet both by nature and by heating, since both the water that falls from Zeus as well as that of the rivers is warmed by the sun. In a sense, therefore, he means to say that what among other peoples is called “ripening,” both of fruits and juices, is called among those people a “heating,” and that ripening is as effective in producing a good flavor as heating by fire.

Jacoby and Roller print the entirety of this description of the “heating” as Megasthenes F8. However, the grammar does not seem to support this. The first sentence has the infinitive γεννᾶσθαι as the main verb. Either this is continuing the natural result clause in the preceding clause, which seems to

19. Radt 2002–9, 4: 160–61.

be the most natural way to take the grammar, since the abundance of plants is a result of the rains, or we have indirect discourse after $\phi\eta\sigma\acute{\iota}$ in the preceding sentence. In either case, the information being expounded must continue to be from Eratosthenes, as there is no indication at all in the Greek that the subject has changed back to Megasthenes. This analysis indicates that Roller, Radt, and Jacoby are incorrect to take this explanation as that of Megasthenes.

We do need to consider whether, as Roller suggests, Eratosthenes simply got this explanation from Megasthenes.²⁰ But nowhere else in the extant fragments of Megasthenes is there an attempt to explain a natural phenomenon scientifically. Eratosthenes, on the other hand, did offer scientific explanations for natural phenomena. For example, he provided an explanation for the Indian monsoon based on the Etesian winds and evaporation (Strabo 15.1.13 = IIB12 = 74). And in his account of Mesopotamia, Eratosthenes explained that a section of the Tigris was sweet and full of fish because of peculiarities in its flow (Strabo 16.1.21 = IIB88, IIIB31 = 87). This points to Eratosthenes, not Megasthenes, as Diodorus' source for the fertility of India.

Following this, Diodorus explains that the customs of the Indians themselves also contribute to the lack of famine because during war farmers and farmland are left unharmed by all sides (2.36.6–7). But this information, as noted above, is also included in Diodorus' account of the farming caste, which derives from Megasthenes. As with the elephant passages, if Diodorus is following a source other than Megasthenes here at 2.36.6–7, this is proof that this passage is not an epitome of Megasthenes. Or, if Diodorus shifted this material from the later section on the castes, then he had a greater hand in shaping his narrative than is often allowed.

In the next chapter (2.37), Diodorus discusses briefly the rivers of India, and here we have a substantial fragment of Megasthenes for comparison. Megasthenes had a detailed account of the rivers of India, while Diodorus focuses primarily on the Ganges (2.37.1–3), with brief mentions of other rivers. According to Arrian (4.2 = F9a), Megasthenes wrote that the Ganges is much larger than the Indus, adding that all authors who mention the Ganges agree with this. But Diodorus writes that the Indus is nearly the equal of the Ganges. Further contradicting Megasthenes, Diodorus gives the width of the Ganges as thirty stades (2.37.2), while Arrian (4.2.7) gives the width as one hundred stades. Strabo (15.1.35 = F9b) explains that some say the average width of the Ganges is thirty stades, others three, and that Megasthenes says it is one hundred stades wide on average.

A passage later in Diodorus gives some insight into his source for this section. At 2.37.3 Diodorus explains that along the east bank of the Ganges is the tribe of the Gandaridae, which has the biggest elephants in the greatest numbers in India. Consequently, even Alexander refrained from attacking them. Diodorus mistakenly states here that Alexander reached the Ganges.²¹ This information is repeated in Book 18.6.1–3, in an overview of Alexander's

20. Roller 2010a, 180–81.

21. Bosworth (1996a, 195–96) says that this is an “easily comprehensible” mistake on Diodorus' part.

empire referred to as the Gazetteer, and believed to be based on Hieronymus.²² There Diodorus again says that there is a kingdom against which Alexander did not campaign due to the number of elephants, separated from the rest of India by a river thirty stades across. The river is not named, but editors add “Ganges” to the text. However, in Book 18 Diodorus correctly does not state that Alexander reached the river. The manuscripts have the name *Τυνδαρίδαι* for the tribe in Book 18, an easy corruption for *Γανδαρίδαι* in Book 2.²³ These two parallel passages in Books 2 and 18 have received a substantial amount of attention, as they constitute some of the most important evidence for understanding Alexander’s knowledge about the Ganges River.²⁴ But how much of the passage in Book 2 is derived from Megasthenes? Diodorus read Megasthenes’ account of the rivers, since this section concludes with the Silla. Terence Robinson argues that the passage is actually a mixture of information from Megasthenes and the Gazetteer. The one element Robinson is convinced derives from Megasthenes is Diodorus’ statement at 2.37.3 that no foreign king ever subdued this people.²⁵ But while Megasthenes emphasized the lack of foreign invasions (F11a, b), Diodorus is here talking about the Gandaridae as unconquered, not the Indians as a whole. I believe it is impossible to separate one specific element in 2.37.1–3 as definitely from Megasthenes.

A. B. Bosworth states that Diodorus “grafts on to his digest of Megasthenes’ account of India” this account of the Ganges.²⁶ But the account of the Ganges in Book 2 fits in smoothly with the remainder of the passage. There is no contradiction or abrupt transition involved. And although the underlying argument would appear to be that Diodorus only switched sources so he could make the connection to Alexander, he has preferred the figure of thirty stades for the width of the river, a figure that Bosworth admits is more accurate than Megasthenes’ one hundred.²⁷ In other words, rather than simply “grafting” one account onto another, Diodorus is making decisions between two or more sources here. These passages show that Diodorus is not simply abridging a single author, but rather selecting between different versions to create his own account. Only the chance survival of other material enables us to see this here.

However, this passage does reveal more about Diodorus’ ability to rework his source material. As noted above, there are two passages dealing with Indian elephants, at 2.35.4 and again at 2.42.1–2. And here Diodorus describes the Gandaridae as having the greatest number of the largest elephants. Since Diodorus has already emphasized that India produces the largest and most powerful elephants at 2.35.4, the statement about the immensity of the elephants of the Gandaridae gains even more emphasis, and makes their immunity to foreign conquest all the more understandable. From this, I believe that we can draw some conclusions about how Diodorus composed this section. Originally, he included a description of elephants after the section on

22. Hornblower 1981, 80–87.

23. Bosworth 1996a, 188–89.

24. See most recently Bosworth 1996a, 186–200; Robinson 1993.

25. Robinson 1993, 92–93.

26. Bosworth 1996a, 188.

27. Bosworth 1996a, 194.

castes, perhaps following the order in Megasthenes reflected also in Arrian. But in preparing his description of the Indian rivers, he realized that he wanted to mention Alexander and the Gandaridae with the Ganges. This in turn required that the greatness of Indian elephants be mentioned earlier and so Diodorus chose an appropriate place to relocate it. Then, either through carelessness or a failure to give Book 2 a final edit, the later mention of elephants was left in place.²⁸

The remainder of chapter 37 is a very brief account of other Indian rivers. Diodorus again identifies the Indus as the boundary of India, and notes its large number of tributaries, including the Hypanis, Hydaspes, and Ascenius (2.37.4). Elsewhere Diodorus (17.93.1) refers to the Hypanis as the Hyphasis. If Arrian is correct (4.8 = F9a), Megasthenes also used the spelling Hyphasis. Strabo (15.1.26–34) calls the river the Hypanis (15.1.27, 32), but his source is unclear—he attributes the section to those who were with Alexander, and mentions Aristobulus, Onesicritus, and Nearchus at various points in the narrative, but not Megasthenes. So it is possible that Diodorus is following one of them for this section on the Indus.

Diodorus follows with a brief explanation for the multitude of rivers in India, which he attributes to “the philosophers and students of nature among them” (οἱ παρ’ αὐτοῖς φιλόσοφοι καὶ φυσικοί, 2.37.5).²⁹ His explanation (2.37.6) is simply that the higher elevations all around collect water that flows into India, but this cannot be paralleled in any of the extant fragments of Megasthenes. Otto Stein, followed by Bernard Eck, suggests that this theory actually comes from historians of Alexander who discussed the science of bodies of water, especially Aristobulus (cf. *FGrH* 139 F35 = Strabo 15.1.17–19).³⁰ Finally, Diodorus discusses the Silla.

Diodorus then discusses the earliest Indians, all of whom are autochthonous (2.38.1). According to Diodorus they never received a colony (ἀποικία) from the outside, nor sent one abroad. Both Strabo (15.1.6) and Arrian (5.4), citing Megasthenes (F11a, b), declare that the Indians never sent an army abroad, nor were they ever invaded and conquered by an outsider, with the possible exceptions of Dionysus, Heracles, and finally, the Macedonians. But there is a difference between colonization and conquest, and this suggests that Diodorus is not using Megasthenes here, or is interpreting him in a different way from Strabo and Arrian.

Diodorus continues with a brief account of the lifestyle of the earliest Indians, which he attributes to “their myths” (μυθολογοῦσι, 2.38.2). The early Indians ate the fruits of the earth and wore the skins of animals. Gradually, with “necessity itself showing the way to a creature which was well endowed by nature and had, as its assistance for every purpose, hands and speech and sagacity of mind” (τῆς χρείας αὐτῆς ὑφηγουμένης εὐφυεῖ ζῶφ καὶ συνεργοῦς

28. Green (2006, 7–9) suggests that the *Bibliothēke*, as we have it, never received a final edit, which may be a better explanation for at least some of the incongruities in the work than assuming that Diodorus was extremely careless.

29. Jacoby (*FGrH* 715 F4) and Roller (2010b) put this phrase in 37.6, a more natural sentence division. Eck (2003, 171) notes that this phrase is essentially hendiadys for οἱ φυσικοί.

30. Stein 1931, 301; Eck 2003, 171.

ἔχοντι πρὸς ἅπαντα χεῖρας καὶ λόγον καὶ ψυχῆς ἀγχίνοιαν, 2.38.2), man learned other things that were useful or necessary for life. Even so, in the earliest times before the coming of Dionysus, the Indians were still dwelling in scattered villages. Arrian (7.1–8.3 = F12) has the fragment of Megasthenes that is the closest parallel to this passage of Diodorus. Arrian specifically attributes to Megasthenes the figure of 118 different ethnic groups in India and goes on to explain that the earliest Indians were nomadic, like the Scythians, instead of autochthonous and dwelling in villages as in Diodorus. Like Diodorus, Arrian says that the earliest Indians wore the skins of wild animals. But whereas Diodorus says they ate the fruits of the earth, Arrian says they ate the bark of trees called “tala” and the raw meat of wild beasts. Thus the overlap between these two passages is rather superficial—essentially that the earliest Indians wore the skins of animals and ate some sort of plant. In addition, Arrian lacks a key point for Diodorus, the role of necessity in teaching the Indians how to improve their lives.

There is a much closer parallel for this passage in a section in the first book of Diodorus often referred to as the *Kulturgeschichte* (1.8). Here, early man is described as living a bestial life. Gradually, necessity taught mankind to live a better life. Diodorus concludes this passage with almost the exact phrase as we find at 2.38.2: “Indeed, speaking generally, in all things it was necessity itself that became man’s teacher, supplying in an appropriate fashion instruction in every matter to a creature which was well endowed by nature and had, as its assistants for every purpose, hands and speech and sagacity of mind.” The sources for the *Kulturgeschichte* have been much discussed. Walter Spoerri argued that it was compatible with widely held theories in Diodorus’ own time.³¹ In response, Thomas Cole, based on parallels between this passage and other authors, reconstructed a probable ur-source, which he attributed to Democritus. Even he allowed that Diodorus had substantially reworked the *Kulturgeschichte*.³² More recently, Kenneth Sacks has argued that the strong emphasis on necessity (χρεία) in this passage is a reflection of Diodorus’ own beliefs.³³ This passage in Book 2 confirms this, and shows that whatever his source(s) said, Diodorus was not afraid to interpret it in accordance with the principles he established in the first book.

Diodorus proceeds to the great civilizers of the Indians, Dionysus and Heracles.³⁴ The role of Dionysus in India appears to have originated with the expedition of Alexander the Great, but the extant sources refer to it with varying degrees of skepticism.³⁵ Strabo, at the start of his account of India, remarks that Megasthenes and a few others consider the stories of Dionysus and Heracles in India as credible, but most, including Eratosthenes, believe them to be mythical and unreliable (15.1.7). Strabo dismisses these stories as

31. Spoerri 1959.

32. Cole 1967, 15–24 and 174–92.

33. Sacks 1990, 55–83, esp. 68–70.

34. On Dionysus and Heracles in India, see Karttunen 1989, 210–19.

35. Bosworth (1996b) traces the development of Dionysus in India in the Greek sources back to Alexander the Great.

concoctions of the flatterers of Alexander for a number of reasons, including the presence of alternate versions among historians (15.1.9).

In the case of Arrian, it does seem certain that he is following Megasthenes for his account of Dionysus and Heracles (7 = F12). But while there are similarities between Arrian and Diodorus here, there are also significant differences, enough to cast doubt on Diodorus' usage of Megasthenes, at least as the sole source. According to Diodorus, Dionysus came from the west with an army, but traversed India without opposition since no cities existed to oppose him (2.38.3). But when his soldiers were stricken by a plague, Dionysus took his army into the cooler hills, and because the name of this area was Meros the Greeks picked up the story that Dionysus was nourished in a thigh (μηρός, 2.38.4).³⁶ Arrian does not mention an army at all, but simply that Dionysus "came and became the possessor of India" (7.4). However, at the start of the *Indica*, Arrian does mention that Dionysus fought wars in India (1.4–5), which contradicts Diodorus' depiction of an unopposed conquerer. Arrian also mentions the origins of the name Meros (1.6) in conjunction with the town of Nysa (absent from Diodorus), but indicates that the name came from the incident at Dionysus' birth, not that the name inspired the myth (cf. Arr. *Anab.* 5.1–3).³⁷

Both authors then give a brief account of Dionysus' efforts at civilizing the Indians. In Arrian, Dionysus founds cities, establishes law, dispenses wine, and teaches them to sow and use oxen instead of leading a nomadic life, and to honor the gods by playing cymbals and beating drums (7.5–9). In Diodorus, Dionysus teaches the Indians to store fruits and to make wine, and founds cities by consolidating villages. He also introduces law and the proper worship of the gods (2.38.5). All of this is close to Arrian, but there are no particular similarities in ordering or phrasing that would show a common source. Furthermore, these achievements are so basic to the Greek culture hero that they do not presuppose a common source.³⁸

In addition, even where the two accounts contradict each other, they are internally consistent. Thus Diodorus speaks of the Indians as already living in villages, which Dionysus combines to form cities, while Arrian continues to speak of them as nomadic. In Diodorus, Dionysus' own army used cymbals and drums, while Arrian connects the cymbals and drums to religious rites, and says they only later have military connotations. It is conceivable that Diodorus, in compressing Megasthenes, transferred the custom of cymbals and drums from present-day Indian armies to the army of Dionysus. But given that this is consistent with his statement that Dionysus had an army to begin with, it is more probable that this comes from another source.

Both authors also conclude their accounts of Dionysus differently. For Arrian, Dionysus left India and placed his friend Spatembas in charge, who passed rule on to his son, until eventually kings were appointed based on merit

36. Jacoby (*FGrH* 715 F4) sets off 38.4 in double brackets, and notes "zusatz Diodors?" in his apparatus. He draws a comparison with 3.63.5, but as Eck (2003, 172) notes, "les deux passages sont différents."

37. Note Bosworth 2003a, 305–6. Arrian also remarks that he does not wholly agree with Eratosthenes that these stories are the invention of Alexander's flatterers (5.3.1 = IB24 = 23).

38. On the culture hero and its prominence in Diodorus, see Sacks 1990, 61–82.

(8.1–2). But in Diodorus, Dionysus ruled India until his death and passed the throne to his sons and their descendants until democracy took hold. Bosworth suggests that Diodorus, in compressing Megasthenes, simply garbled this.³⁹ But this passage seems like a further development of the myth, from claiming that Dionysus left behind a companion to found the dynasty to claiming that Dionysus himself founded the dynasty.⁴⁰

Arrian (8.4–9.8 = F13a) and Diodorus (2.39) then move on to the Indian version of Heracles. Both say that the Indians claim Heracles to be indigenous, that his attire was the same as the Greek Heracles, and that he had a number of sons as well as a single daughter. But here the similarities end. For Arrian, Heracles is important for his discovery of pearls (*margaritas*), which is specifically attributed to Megasthenes (8.8–13). Arrian goes on to give details about Heracles' sole daughter, Pandaia, whom Heracles personally impregnated at the age of seven so their offspring would be kings of India (9.1–7). Arrian attributes this story to the Indians, but to rationalize it he cites Megasthenes for information that even the fruits mature quickly in India (9.8).

Aside from mentioning the unnamed daughter and the fact that Heracles made her a queen, Diodorus does not include any of this information. Instead, he explains that Heracles founded a number of cities, most famously Palibothra, and he fortified it with ditches filled with water from the river. After Heracles died, he was honored as a god but his descendants refrained from any activity beyond India. Arrian, in the chapter following the description of the Indian Heracles, does describe Indian cities, including Palibothra, or Palimbothra as he calls it (10.5–7). No connection to Heracles is made, but Arrian cites Megasthenes for its dimensions. Arrian also mentions a ditch dug around the city, but does not mention if it was filled with water. So if Diodorus used Megasthenes for the city of Palibothra, he evidently reworked him to attribute the founding of the city to Heracles. Alternatively, this could reflect a later development of the myth.

Ultimately, there is little overlap between Megasthenes and Diodorus on Dionysus and Heracles. This is very suggestive, especially considering that in the passages noted above, where Diodorus is following Megasthenes, he appears to be doing so fairly closely. Either Diodorus is substantially reworking what Megasthenes wrote to emphasize different points, or he is drawing on a different source for these passages. Strabo mentions that other authors besides Megasthenes wrote on Dionysus and Heracles (15.1.7). One possibility is Daimachus (or Deimachus, *FGrH* 716), about whom almost nothing is known except that he was an ambassador at the Mauryan court in India, which would have taken him to Palibothra, and that he composed an *Indica* in at least two books, which Strabo criticized.⁴¹ Diodorus' figures for the dimensions of India are closest to Daimachus. If, as was suggested above, Diodorus is reflecting a later development of the myths of Dionysus and Heracles in

39. Bosworth 2003a, 311 n. 58.

40. Roller (2010b, *Commentary* on F4) suggests that Diodorus himself may have made some adjustments to this story to fit his own ideas.

41. Karttunen 1989, 100.

India, Daimachus appears to be a possible source. But the evidence is far too limited to say more.

Diodorus next points out the most remarkable custom of India, in his view: the lack of slavery (2.39.5). This is mentioned in Arrian (10.8–9 = F16) and Strabo (F32 = 15.1.54). Arrian notes that it is also true of the Spartans, who have helots while the Indians have no slaves at all. When Arrian and Diodorus were writing this was no longer true of the Spartans, so if Diodorus is following Megasthenes here, he should be given credit for removing an outdated statement.⁴²

The sections on the castes and elephants follow here. Diodorus concludes with two more facts about India. First, there are special magistrates among the Indians whose duty is to assist foreigners. If a foreigner becomes ill, they bring him a doctor; if he dies, they bury him and turn over his property to his relatives (2.42.3). The parallel with Megasthenes is in Strabo, who includes a more detailed list of the types of Indian officials following his account of the Indian castes. One type of official is indeed tasked with helping foreigners in the same manner Diodorus describes (15.1.51 = F31). Although phrasing and vocabulary differ between the authors, the information suggests a common source. It is peculiar that Strabo gives a detailed account of different magistrates, apparently expanding on Megasthenes' seventh caste, but separate from the actual caste descriptions. And now Strabo refers to them as ἄρχοντες instead of his earlier σύμβουλοι or σύνεδροι. This change in terminology suggests that Strabo (and presumably Diodorus) is using a different source from Megasthenes, but this cannot be certain. Diodorus' final comment on India is that judges examine all arguments accurately and go after anyone guilty of wrongdoing (2.42.4). Strabo 15.1.53 (= F32) is seen as the parallel, but, while Strabo praises the Indians for honesty and truthfulness (citing Megasthenes in the process), he includes nothing about judges and there is no reason for assuming Diodorus got this information from Megasthenes.

Where, then, does this examination leave us on the question of Diodorus and his sources? First, it is clear that the account of India, far from being drawn on a single source with a few interpolations, is in fact a mosaic of sources. Eratosthenes appears to be the major source for much of the geographical description of India, with some evidence for the usage of Daimachus, Onesicritus, Nearchus, Hieronymus, and Megasthenes at various points. For the account of the earliest Indians, Diodorus has closely followed the description he laid out in Book 1, suggesting that, whatever his source, Diodorus has interpreted it in accordance with his own beliefs. For Dionysus and Heracles, Eratosthenes was unsuitable for Diodorus, as he expressed skepticism about accounts of the gods in India. There are some parallels with fragments of Megasthenes, but they are not strong, and I think it is highly probable that Diodorus has either substantially reworked Megasthenes to better reflect his views on culture heroes, or is drawing on another source. Conceivably, he could be doing both. Yet, despite using different sources, Diodorus has written a unified account of India, without internal contradictions or transitions

42. Actually, the Indians did have slaves—see Karttunen 1997, 77–78.

between sources showing. This suggests a great deal of advance planning and research for this section of Book 2.

The use of multiple sources in a single account actually fits in well with Diodorus' practice in the rest of Book 2. The first part of the book (chapters 1–34) derives mainly from Ctesias, whom Diodorus cites (while he does not cite Megasthenes). However, while he follows Ctesias quite closely, to the point of replicating bad mistakes, such as the location of the city of Nineveh, Diodorus also supplements Ctesias with information from other sources, especially Cleitarchus, showing again that he must have done considerable planning beforehand.⁴³ In the rest of Book 2 the sources are less clear. For accounts of the Scythians (2.43–44) and the Amazons (2.45–46), Diodorus' sources are unknown. Hecataeus is named as the source for the Hyperboreans (47). The beginning of the account of Arabia (48) appears to derive from Hieronymus, while the source of the remainder (49–54) is unknown.⁴⁴ The final section (55–60) is attributed by Diodorus to Iambulus.

Contrary to the traditional interpretation, we have found that Diodorus' account of India is not an epitome of Megasthenes. Megasthenes was clearly an important source for elements of Indian society, but Eratosthenes was also a major source, and probably a number of other authors as well. We have also seen signs of Diodorus' own role in organizing his work and in his choice of sources, suggesting the need for new research into this difficult, yet extremely important historian.⁴⁵

University of Arkansas

43. On Diodorus and Ctesias, see esp. Bigwood 1980; Lenfant 2004, clxxxiii–clxxxiv; Llewellyn-Jones and Robson 2010, 38–40; Stronk 2010, 60–70.

44. See Eck 2003, xxxvi–xli, for an overview. Some would attribute this to Posidonius, but the evidence is nonexistent. On the attribution of parts of Diodorus to Posidonius in general, see Kidd 1997, 234.

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