

Prologue

The classical world linked with India the imagination of a fairyland entwined with singular fertility, fabulous wealth and legendary marvels (Ctesias [Phot. *Bibl.*] 46b 35), forming the remote outskirts of the known cosmos bordered by the world's girdle, the $\omega\kappa\epsilon\alpha\nu\acute{o}\varsigma$. The geographical conception of Herodotus's universal history from 560 to 479 BC by determining the view of life in antiquity described India as the easternmost part of the oikumene (Hdt. III, 98–104; IV, 40). The Karian historian Herodotus was a citizen of Halikarnassos, which was then a part of the Persian Empire. There he was able to meet merchants and sailors from the vast empire to learn from their adventures and travel experiences. He refers to the narratives of Skylax of Caryanda, who by order of the Great King Dareios I travelled from Kaspatyros in Paktyia downstream the Indus and from a harbour around its delta westward to South Arabia as far as the Red Sea to Egypt (Hdt. IV, 44). His expedition may have been connected with Dareios' conquest of this part of India around 520–518 BC. Even in later literary descriptions of the known world such as by Pliny the Elder, who lived between 23 to 79 AD, India encompassed the shape of a rectangle bordered by the Indus in the west, by the Imaus, the Himalayas, in the north, and by the ocean in the east and south (Plin. *HN* VI, 56). Herodotus still followed in his conception of its geographical setting the early Hellenistic ideas about the subcontinent as created by Eratosthenes and Megasthenes in the 3rd century BC. He thus ignored the observations of later Greek merchants and sailors as described in the famous *Periplus Maris Erythraei* written by an anonymous author around the middle of the 1st century AD¹ The account reports on the maritime trade routes from the Red Sea to India.²

The view of the fabled land and the world beyond was fundamentally changed by a world-shaking event, the campaign of the Macedonian king Alexander against the Persian Empire. The march across the Hellespont in 334 BC was propagated as a “Pan-Hellenic or national crusade” to atone the heinous deeds of the Persian invaders against Greek sanctuaries during the war of conquest under the great kings Dareios I and Xerxes I (between 490–479 BC).³ This act of revenge to break the predominance of the declining Persian power in Asia should lead him “in his dreams of Homeric glory” even beyond the borders of the subjugated empire of Dareios III Kodomannos, the last Achaemenid king. For Alexander the Great his daring advance from Bactria across the Hindukush to the Indus between 327 and 325 BC implied not only the realization of his destination India, but with reaching the end of the known eastern world he also strived after the world's supremacy in a first step. Alexander's endeavours aimed at the

1 Casson 1989.

2 + On the Periplus, see De Romanis 2020 and Seland 2010. On the eastern Persian satrapies (discussed below), the most authoritative contribution to date is that of Callieri 2023.

3 Droysen 1877, 24, 33. The propagated reasons for the revenge campaign is discussed by Seibert 1988.

supremacy in the most eastern satrapies Ga(n)dara, Gandhara and Hinduš (i.e. Sindh), which had been included in the Achaemenid Empire by the great kings Kyros II and Dareios I since the 6th century BC. During his campaigns in Sogdiana Alexander must have crossed caravan routes that led to China, the later trans-Asian Silk Route. Here in 328 BC he came also for the first time in contact with the legendary land India, when Taxiles, rājā of Taxila, paid homage to the Macedonian by sending a legation to Sogdiana challenging him to a campaign across the Indus against the rich princedoms, particularly that of the mighty Indian king Poros (Diod. Sic. XVII 86,4). On his march from Baktra (Balkh) in Bactriana, the former seat of the Achaemenid satrap, through the Khawar Pass in the Hindukush (Paropamisos) to Gadara, Alexander crossed the Kunar River (Choes or Choaspes), and entered the valleys of the Aspasians and the Assakenians into the two provinces of the Gandhara kingdom, Souastene and Goruaia or Goryene, modern Swat and Bajaur, and at least reached the territory called *Daedala* (Curt. XIII 10.19). This region – its name recalling that of the Dadikai – is said to have been inhabited by Dards. The kosmokrator must have had knowledge about this tribe, the Dadikai, who closely associated with Gandharans provided a contingent in Xerxes' I army during his last unsuccessful campaign against Greece in 480/479 BC, which ended in his defeat at Plataiai and Mykale (Hdt. VII 66). But, contrary to the other foreign combatants serving in the same regiment, such as Parthians, Chorasmians, Sogdians and Gandharans, the Dadikai are neither mentioned in Achaemenid inscriptions nor represented on the bas-reliefs of Persepolis or on the royal tombs at Naqš-i Rostam. Their absence in Persian records is noticeable, because next to the other tributary Sattagydians, Gandharans and Aparytae the Dadikai are connected to the seventh *dahyu*-satrapy in the empire of Dareios I (Hdt. III 91), which had to raise alone 170 talents as tribute. The name of the Daradas is listed along with the Gandharans (and Kashmirians?). The homeland of the “mountaineer Indians” comprised the mountain region flown through by the upper course of the Indus River in the north and east of Gandhara.

The geographical “Gandarai” after the classic sources, the Philostratean description of Apollonius of Thiana's travel to Taxila, circumscribes an area from the lower valley of the Kabul River, the Cophene, in the west to the Indus River in the east, from the northern fringes of the Swat in the north to the Kohat Mountains in the south.

There are two royal centres in Gandhara. One is the capital Gandhavati (Puṣkalāvati or Puṣkarāvati in Sanskrit), Peukelas and Poklais (after Ptol. *Geog.* VII, 1, 44) of the Greek sources near present-day Charsadda, in the province along and north of the Kabul River, named Peukelaotis, Peukolaītis. The other is Takṣaśilā in Sanskrit form, Taxila in Greek sources. Later the centre of the historical region became Puruṣapura (modern Shah-ji-ki Dheri near Peshawar).⁴

4 McCrindle 1901, 115–121; Tarn 1951, 237–238. [+ For an update view on the ancient geography of these regions see Rapin 2017, Rapin – Grenet 2018, Coloru – Olivieri 2019. For an update on the information from the Achaemenid administrative documents, see Henkelmann 2017].