

Meetings with the ‘Naked Philosophers’ as a Case Study for the Greco-Indian Relations in the Time of Alexander

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ABSTRACT

The meetings with Indian gymnosophists (γυμνοσοφισταί) or ‘naked philosophers’ are one of the most popular motifs from the stories of Alexander the Great. The accounts of these meetings are preserved in Strabo, Plutarch, Arrian, Diogenes Laertius, and some later sources. These descriptions have been repeatedly analysed by previous scholars. However, most researchers focused on the problems of cultural differences and overlooked the issue of intercultural relations. They have often considered these descriptions in a dichotomous perspective. Therefore, the aim of this study is reconsideration of these accounts in the broader context of relations between the Greeks and the Indians with particular emphasis on the following issues: the communication problems, which occurred between the Greeks and the Indians, the relation between the asceticism in India and the Cynic philosophy in Greece, the relation between the Buddhist and early Indian sceptical thought and Greek philosophy. Because the study of these problems can lead to a biased search for influences, way of looking at them proposed in this paper is the so-called middle ground.

KEYWORDS

Gymnosophists; naked philosophers; Alexander; Greco-Indian relations; Hellenistic period.

INTRODUCTION

The motif of the meetings with the ‘naked philosophers’ or gymnosophists (γυμνοσοφισταί) is one of the τόποι of Greek literature about India, and for good reason, because these events may shed light on the Greco-Indian relations in the time of Alexander, especially on the level of the exchange of philosophical thought. The researchers dealing with the accounts of the meetings very often perceived them in dichotomous terms leading to false dilemmas, which can be seen in such headings of the articles as: ‘Indian or Cynic doctrine?’ (STONEMAN 1995, 103); ‘The dialogue: Indian or Cynic?’ (STONEMAN 1995, 110); ‘Indian doctrine?’ (SZALC 2011, 23); ‘Greek riddles’ (SZALC 2011, 16) vs. Indian riddles (SZALC 2011, 17ff.). Such false dilemmas result from an either-or position and at the basis of this phenomenon lies the perception of the cultures as monoliths (PARKER 2007). If we look closely at these dilemmas, they are virtually undecidable. For example, from the time when the similarities between Indian gymnosophists and Cynic philosophers were noticed for the first time (WILCKEN 1923), the researchers’ milieu has been divided into two views: the first group is of the opinion that in the accounts of the meeting purely Cynic philosophy is presented in the disguised form (PÉDECH 1948; BROWN 1949; BERG 1970); the second group favours the view that the Indian sages represent original Indian doctrine (SAYRE 1938; DUMÉZIL 1976; STONEMAN 1995; 2008; 2019; MAGNONE 2001; WINIARCZYK 2007; 2008; 2009; BOSMAN 2010; SZALC 2011). No less discussion is aroused by the second dilemma. Researchers are competing in enumerating potential literary parallels for

the form of the dialogue, such as *Milindapañha*,¹ *Fables of Pilpay*, *The Upaniṣads*, or *Yakṣapraśna* as the examples of Indian dialogues, and Plato, Pythagorean dialogues, Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* or Plutarch's *Banquet of the Seven Sages* as the examples of Greek dialogues, to name only a few.² In this way, the imaginary fence between East and West grows, not bringing any unambiguous answers. Therefore, to avoid a biased search for influences, a way of looking at the accounts from the meeting proposed in this paper is the so-called middle ground.

Richard White in his book *The Middle Ground* (WHITE 1991) examined the process of accommodation, which is taking place on what he called the middle ground. The basic foundation of White's theory is the statement that people belonging to different cultures are utilising cultural characteristics of the second group in order to achieve certain goals of their own, such as an agreement with the other group. In other words, they try to use the cultural code of the second group to achieve their own objectives, but often do not fully understand the characters of the code, and so they distort it. However, they may give the impression that they adopted the culture of the other group or at least some of its components.

As White argued, 'On the middle ground diverse peoples adjust their differences through what amounts to a process of creative, and often expedient, misunderstandings. People try to persuade others who are different from themselves by appealing to what they perceive to be the values and practices of those others. They often misinterpret and distort both the values and the practices of those they deal with, but from these misunderstandings arise new meanings and through them new practices – the shared meanings and practices of the middle ground' (WHITE 1991, X).

ANCIENT ACCOUNTS FROM THE MEETINGS

A number of descriptions of the meetings with the 'naked philosophers' have been preserved, which differ significantly from each other. Therefore, for the convenience of the reader, a table with a short overview of these fragments has been attached (**Tab. 1**).

In the accounts of Alexander's historians there seem to be at least two separate events, which can be described as meetings with 'naked philosophers'. One of them is asking riddles by Alexander to a group of sages, the so-called riddle contest, the second is meeting with Calanus and Dandamis, two most respected among the gymnosophists. These events took place at different times. It is clear from the extant sources that the riddle contest episode concerns later stage of Alexander's campaign than the meeting with Calanus and Dandamis. Due to the fact that the preserved accounts from the meeting contain descriptions of at least two different events, as already mentioned, they differ in many respects. In addition, it should be kept in mind that the image of the original meetings may be obscured by the authors' literary concepts.

The first author to have fragments describing this encounter is Strabo (XV, 1.61–66), who in his account quoted Aristobulus, Onesicritus, and Nearchus as his sources. It is important to remember that these are not fragments *sensu stricto*, but testimonies (WINIARCZYK 2008, 89). They do not reflect the style or vocabulary of original works of the historians. Aristobulus in his account described two sophists at Taxila, who are respected royal advisors: the older with shaven head, the younger with long hair. They showed off their ascetic practices

1 Cf. Tarn's theory that this Pāli text was based on Greek original, which referred to the tradition of the Alexander-questions (TARN 1951). This theory is refuted by the author of the present article (KUBICA 2014).

2 For further details cf. STONEMAN 1995; SZALC 2011; STONEMAN 2019, 332–346.

Account	Dating	Short characteristic
Strabo, XV, 1.61-66	64/63 BC-24 AD	Citing: Aristobulus (Strabo, XV, 1.61-62), two sophists at Taxila; Onesicritus (Strabo, XV, 1.63-65), basis for all later accounts; Nearchus (Strabo, XV, 1.66), the customs of ascetics; Not fragments, but testimonies (WINIARCZYK 2008, 89).
Plutarch, <i>Alex.</i> 64-65	46-120 AD	Riddle contest (cf. BOSMAN 2010, SZALC 2011); Other accounts: <i>Alexander Romance</i> (cf. MERKELBACH 1977); P. Berol. 13044; Clement VI, 4:38; <i>ME</i> , 78-84; <i>Anecd.</i> I, 145-146; Julius Val. III, 11.
Arrian, <i>Anab.</i> VII, 1.5-6, 2	86-160 AD	Anecdote about the sophists, who asked by Alexander, why they stump their feet, gave him a lecture about possession. Anecdote about Diogenes of Sinope.
Diogenes Laertius IX, 61-62	3 rd century AD	About Pyrrho of Elis; Buddhist influence on Greek philosophy?
Later accounts (cf. STONEMAN 1995)		P. Genev. Inv. 271; Palladius (ca. 400 AD); <i>Collatio Alexandri et Dindimi</i> (5 th century AD).

Tab. 1: Ancient accounts from the meetings with the 'naked philosophers'.

in front of Alexander: the older lying on the ground for whole day, the younger standing on one leg and holding a log three cubits long. Later the older went with Alexander, because his 40-years asceticism was finished, and the younger returned and stayed in India. Initially, they were identified with Calanus and Dandamis (JACOBY 1929). However, later it has been convincingly proven that this identification is wrong and that there were two separate events (BOSWORTH 1998; cf. WINIARCZYK 2008, 103-104). Onesicritus in his account recounted his conversation with Calanus and Mandanis (Μάνδανις), which seems to be a distorted version of the name Dandamis (Δάνδαμις). This version appears only once in Strabo's account, while the version Dandamis is attested in Plutarch and Arrian. Moreover, it seems more meaningful, as it may be related to the Sanskrit *dānda*, 'rod'. The account of Onesicritus will be analysed separately in the next section. Nearchus in turn described the customs of the ascetics. As one can see, Strabo's account is characterized by ethnographic interest and diversity of sources.

According to the story preserved by Plutarch (*Alex.* 64-65) Alexander first personally met with ten gymnosophists, who induced Sabbas (i.e. Sambus, cf. Arrian, VI, 16) to revolt. He asked each of them a question or rather a riddle and announced that he would kill the person, who first gave incorrect response. However, their answers were to Alexander's liking to the extent that he dismissed them with gifts, and ordered the killing of the judge, who judged them wrong. This is the so-called riddle contest, neck-riddle, or '*Halsrätsel*' in the language of folklorists. As already noted, this motif focused the attention of researchers trying to assess whether it is more Indian or more Greek; it was compared to Indian riddles, such as '*Yakṣaprasna*', being a conversation of Yudhiṣṭhira and Yakṣa in the *Mahābhārata* (SZALC 2011, 20-23), or to the so-called Liar paradox of the Megarian philosophers (STONEMAN 1995). Subsequently in Plutarch's account, Alexander sent Onesicritus to converse with those who were in the highest repute among them, Calanus and Dandamis. However, as already noted, the meeting with Calanus and Dandamis was earlier than the riddle contest. This lack of chronology of events is not surprising in the case of Plutarch (cf. e.g. PELLING 2002, 143), who himself admitted in his *Life of Solon* (Plutarch, *Sol.* 27.1) that he is not willing to reject a story, which is famous (ἔνδοξον), well-attested (τοσοῦτους μάρτυρας ἔχοντα), and corresponding to the character of the described person (in that case - Solon; πρέποντα τῷ Σόλωνος ἥθει), because of the rules of chronology (χρονικοῖς τισι λεγομένοις κανόσιν).

Onesicritus is called here a philosopher, one of fellow-students of Diogenes the Cynic (ὁ δὲ Ὀνησίκριτος ἦν φιλόσοφος τῶν Διογένοι τῷ κυνικῷ συνεσχολακόντων). This sentence caused the above-mentioned search for Cynic influence on the dialogue. However, as has been proven, Onesicritus was not a Cynic himself (WINIARCZYK 2007; 2008; 2009). It is worth noting that Plutarch's account is characterized by an emphasis on issues of moral philosophy. The didactic aim organizes the presented events, and often even overshadows them.

Other accounts of the riddle contest include *Papyrus Berolinensis* 13044, some versions of the *Alexander Romance* (see MERKELBACH 1977), Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* (Clement, VI, 4.38), *Epitome Mettensis* (ME, 78–84), *Anecdota Graeca* (*Anecd.*, I, 145), and Julius Valerius (Julius Val., III, 1.1). The Berlin Papyrus is the first extant account of the questions and it is much earlier than Plutarch. Actually, it may be as old as ca. 2nd/1st century BC. The *Alexander Romance* contains information about a letter, which Alexander received from the philosophers, report on Alexander's visit to them and his ten questions or riddles, and finally his meeting with the philosophers' leader Dandamis. Closer analysis and the relationship between these texts are omitted in this article, because they are the subject of excellent studies by other researchers (e.g. BOSMAN 2010; SZALC 2011).

Another account of Alexander's meeting with the sages of India is preserved by Arrian (*Anab.* VII, 1.5–6, 2), who recounted how the sophists asked by Alexander, why they stomp their feet, gave him a lecture about possession. In their opinion a man owns only that much land, as much is under his feet, and although Alexander came so far from his own land, soon he would die and his only possession would be the plot of land, in which he would be buried. Further Arrian also told the well-known anecdote about Diogenes of Sinope and again returned to the gymnosophists. This time he recounted how Alexander wished one of these naked sages to live with him. However, Dandamis refused to come and also forbade the others. But, as Arrian concluded, Megasthenes reported that Calanus was induced to do so.

Another interesting, yet quite different, reference to the 'naked philosophers' is preserved by Diogenes Laertius (IX, 61–62), who in his work *Βίοι καὶ γνῶμαι τῶν ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ εὐδοκμησάντων* reported that Pyrrho of Elis (ca. 360–ca. 270 BC) while travelling to India with Alexander joined Anaxarchus and met for a conversation with the gymnosophists and the Magi (τοῖς Γυμνοσοφισταῖς ἐν Ἰνδίᾳ συμμίξαι καὶ τοῖς Μάγοις). Hence he adopted philosophy of agnosticism (ἀκαταληψία) and suspension of judgement (ἐποχή).³ This mention and other similarities have caused many scholars to trace the influence of Buddhism on Pyrrho's philosophy (FRENKIAN 1957; SEDLAR 1980; FLINTOFF 1980; BETT 2000; KUZMINSKI 2008; HALKIAS 2014, 73–78; BECKWITH 2015; STONEMAN 2019, 346–357). If we assume that people, who inspired Pyrrho, were Buddhists, then this reference would be the trace of an earliest and perhaps the only Buddhist influence on Greek philosophy, or, to say it in the terminology of the middle ground, Greek Pyrrhonism can be considered an example of accommodation of Buddhism to Greek conditions. However, neither the gymnosophists nor the Magi can be identified with the Buddhists. As for the Magi, the matter does not require much explanation, because they were associated with Zoroastrianism. As for the gymnosophists, it seems that they cannot be identified with Buddhists because the Buddha referred to nudity as being improper, crooked, unsuitable, unworthy of a Samāna, unbecoming and because it is adopted by Titthiyas (heretics from Buddhist perspective), the Bhikkhus should not do it (*Mahāvagga* VIII, 28.1). However, it is likely that Diogenes Laertius used the term γυμνοσοφισταί not distinguishing the groups of Indian ascetics. A similar situation occurred in the case of the above mentioned

3 Cf. Sextus Empiricus' (ca. 160–ca. 210 AD) Πυρρῶνιοι ὑποτυπώσεις and his radical suspension of judgement.

Berlin papyrus, which tells the story of Brāhmaṇas from Brahmanabad. Plutarch integrated this story into his account, in which, however, the 'Brāhmaṇas' become 'gymnosophists' (cf. STONEMAN 2019, 297). Therefore, it does not seem reasonable to reject this interesting theory about the influence of Buddhism on Pyrrho's philosophy only because of a term, which could be used incorrectly, as shown in the example of Plutarch.

There are indeed many points in common between the Buddhist philosophy and philosophy of Pyrrho, which is known to us from a short passage handed over by Eusebius (XIV, 18.1-5), quoting Aristocles of Messene (fr. 6), quoting Pyrrho's disciple – Timon of Phlius (the lost dialogue *Πύθων*). According to Pyrrho, we should not rely on (πιστεύειν) our sense-perceptions (αἰσθήσεις) and opinions or judgements (δόξας), because they neither tell us truth nor lie. We should remain free from opinions (ἀδοξάστους), lending to neither side (ἀκλινεῖς), and unshaken (ἀκραδάντους). Also in Buddhism beliefs and dogmas concerning the 'self' (Skt. 'ātman') as a 'source of true knowledge' are treated with suspicion (HALKIAS 2014, 75). Moreover, both Pyrrho and Buddhists employed the fourfold negation (tetralemma; Skt. 'catuṣkoṭi'), according to which one cannot say of any one thing that 'it is', or 'it is not', or 'it both is and is not', or 'it neither is nor is not'.⁴ It is worth noting that the genesis of tetralemma, similarly expressed both by Pyrrho and in early Buddhist philosophy, may be sought in the early Indian sceptical thought, which gives another interesting perspective. Also the goal of the philosophy of Pyrrhonism, expressed in the term ἀταραξία, may be compared to Buddhist 'nibbāna' (Skt. 'nirvāṇa'). Moreover, Pyrrho's πράγματα may be seen as translation of the term 'dhammas' (Skt. 'dharma'), which were understood in Buddhist texts also as 'objects of consciousness' (HALKIAS 2014, 77). Buddha characterized all 'dhammas' by reference to the so-called 'tilakhaṇa' (Skt. 'trilakṣaṇa'), the 'three marks of existence': 'anicca, dukkha, anattā' (Skt. 'anitya, duḥkha, anātman'), which correspond to the three characteristics of Pyrrho's πράγματα: ἀδιάφορα, ἀστάθμητα, ἀνεπίκριτα (BECKWITH 2015, 28-33). Moreover, even Pyrrho's way of life is reminiscent of Buddhist practice, as demonstrated by Stoneman (2019, 354). With so many points in common, it seems highly probable that Pyrrho actually adopted Buddhist philosophy and adapted it to Greek conditions.

Other accounts of the meeting include *Papyrus Genevensis* 271, being a cynic diatribe; Paladius' *De gentibus Indiae et de Bragmanibus* (from the 4th century AD); and *Collatio Alexandri et Dindimi* (from the 5th century AD). They have already been discussed (STONEMAN 1995) and will be omitted in the present deliberations, some of them being quite late sources.

From this overview, it can be seen that various writers reported the meetings differently at different times and with different motives. It can be said that they have adapted or accommodated this episode for their own purposes. It is even more visible in the miniatures from the medieval manuscripts, where gymnosophists even ceased to be naked and the Brahmins resemble bishops.⁵ Therefore, accommodation may be seen at various levels. Firstly, at the level of adapting the report from the meeting to the literary assumptions of the author; and secondly, at the level of misunderstandings between the direct participants of the meeting, which may arise from cultural differences and language barriers (as will be demonstrated in the next section).

4 Cf. Nāgārjuna, *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* XVIII, 8: 'sarvaṃ tathyam na vā tathyam tathyam cātathyam eva ca naivātathyam naiva tathyam etad buddhānuśāsanam.'

5 Cf. miniature of Alexander encountering the gymnosophists, Maître François, Paris, 1475-1480. The Hague, Museum Meermanno, MS 10 A 11, fol. 93v.

GRECO-INDIAN RELATIONS. CAN PURE WATER FLOW THROUGH MUD?

Now returning to the main topic, namely to the meetings with the ‘naked philosophers’ as a case study for the Greco-Indian relations, we should look more closely at the account of Onesicritus (Strabo XV, 63–65). Onesicritus, who wrote a work about Alexander’s education, entitled *Πῶς Ἀλέξανδρος Ἦχθη* (cf. Diogenes Laertius VI, 84), was sent by Alexander to talk to the naked sages and reported his conversation with Calanus and Dandamis (Μάνδανις). This meeting took place at the outskirts of Taxila. Onesicritus found there fifteen men in different postures, standing or sitting or lying naked and motionless in unbearable heat. It is interesting that Onesicritus sat among the naked sages. Thus, he had no sense of superiority (PARKER 2008). Onesicritus first met with Calanus, who later accompanied the king as far as Persis, and died burned on a pyre. Calanus told the story of the Golden Age and how Zeus punished people for their pride (ὑβρις) and asked Onesicritus to undress and lie down on hot stones to hear his teachings. However, when Onesicritus hesitated, Dandamis, who was the oldest and wisest of them, joined the conversation, rebuked Calanus for audacity (ὑβριστής) and praised Alexander for his love of wisdom (φιλοσοφία). According to Dandamis the best philosophy is liberating the mind from pleasure (ἡδονή) and grief (λύπη). But he distinguished between grief and labour (πόνος). He also asked, if similar doctrines are taught among the Greeks. When Onesicritus adduced in response Pythagoras, Socrates, and Diogenes, Dandamis answered that he would have regarded them as sound-minded, if they did not prefer custom (νόμος) to nature (φύσις); and following the nature, as he explained, manifests itself in walking naked (γυμνός) and living ἀπὸ λιτῶν, where λιτῶν may be derived from λιτή (LSJ ‘prayer, entreaty’) or λιτός (LSJ ‘simple, inexpensive, frugal’). Rather, the second version seems right in the light of the gnomic explanation, which follows in the next sentence, namely, that the best house is the one, which requires least repairs (καὶ γὰρ οἰκίαν ἀρίστην εἶναι ἥτις ἂν ἐπισκευῆς ἐλαχίστης δέηται). This sentence indicates the simplicity of the life of these ascetics. The discussions of researchers who wonder why Dandamis stated that the three mentioned philosophers prefer custom to nature, since their attitude to custom and nature was different, are unnecessary. It should be kept in mind what exactly Dandamis meant by following the nature. On the other hand, it is surprising, why Onesicritus said that Pythagoras taught the same thing (τοιαῦτα λέγοι), because his philosophy did not assume liberating the mind from pleasure and grief. It is interesting that Onesicritus adds here that Pythagoras ordered abstaining from animal food (κελεύοι τε ἐμψύχων ἀπέχεσθαι). However, there is no direct mention of vegetarianism in the preserved account from the meeting. So how did Onesicritus know that Dandamis was a vegetarian? Admittedly, Dandamis explains later in the dialogue that they consume figs or bunches of grapes (σῦκα ἢ βότρυς), which they get as a gift (λαμβάνειν δωρεάν) from the people they meet. But it is not explicitly said that they are fruitarians. Therefore, the explanation that ‘Strabo is reporting Onesicritus’ account in a jumbled form’ (STONEMAN 2019, 294) does not seem sufficiently substantiated. Also the idea that ‘Onesicritus, as a pupil of Diogenes, eagerly attributed Cynic ideas to the man he encountered under the trees of Taxila’ (STONEMAN 2019, 294) was immediately rejected by Stoneman, who found significant amount of ‘genuine Indian material’ in Onesicritus’ account and I am inclined to support his opinion. Another explanation might be that a part of the conversation on the issue of the vegetarianism has not been preserved. However, this is unlikely. First, the dialogue seems fairly consistent. Secondly, the topic itself was so appealing that it is hard to believe that it should be omitted. As rightly noticed by Stoneman, ‘The vegetarianism of the naked philosophers is a fundamental feature of all later Greek descriptions of them, and is adduced in several discussions of the ethics of meat-eating and sacrifice, including those of Plutarch and Porphyry’ (STONEMAN

2019, 292). Therefore, it seems most likely that the mention of Pythagoras' vegetarianism is Strabo's later addition.

It should be noted that Indian philosophical terms in both Calanus' and Dandamis' words are rendered by Greek philosophical terms, e.g. ὕβρις, ἡδονή, λύπη, πόνος, νόμος, or φύσις. There is even a reference to Greek God, Zeus. We do not know what terms were originally used by the Indian ascetics in their conversation with Onesicritus, even Onesicritus himself did not know them. A hint as to the reading of the account from the meeting may be found in the text itself, delivered through the mouth of Dandamis, who says: 'Let the forgiveness be to him, who talking through three interpreters, who except speech do not understand anything more than the many, will not be able to demonstrate what is profitable: similarly one could expect pure water to flow through mud' (αὐτῷ δὲ συγγνώμη εἶη, εἰ δι' ἑρμηνέων τριῶν διαλεγόμενος πλήν φωνῆς μηδὲν συνιέντων πλέον ἢ οἱ πολλοί, μηδὲν ἰσχύσει τῆς ὠφελείας ἐπίδειξιν ποιήσασθαι: ὅμοιον γὰρ ὡς ἂν εἰ διὰ βορβόρου καθαρὸν ἀξιοῖ τις ὕδωρ ρεῖν. English translation by the author). So we are dealing with a three-step translation process. It has been suggested that the first stage of the translation was from Prākṛit to Sanskrit, the second from Sanskrit to Persian, and the third from Persian to Greek (TARN 1951, 429, note 1). Later researchers speculated that the first stage was the translation from local Indian dialect to Bactrian or Sogdian (BROWN 1949, 44), then to Persian or more probably to Aramaic (PÉDECH 1948, 105, note 4), and finally to Greek. Such a conversation could therefore take place only thanks to a qualified staff of translators. It is possible that Alexander used the services of local translators, at least for the purpose of translation from a local dialect. And in Taxila (Takṣaśilā), which was an important academic centre, certainly there were many educated interpreters. As noted by Marshall, 'pre-eminence of the city as a seat of academic and practical teaching was a natural outcome of her geographical position at the Northwest gateway of India and of the peculiarly cosmopolitan character of her population' (MARSHALL 1951, 43). Taxila was a part of the Grand Trunk Road (Uttarāpatha), connecting Gangetic plain (Pāṭaliputra) through Punjab with Bactria. Because Taxila was one of the main cities in the region of Gandhāra, it seems probable that the original language of the naked ascetics was Gāndhārī, one of the Middle Indo-Āryan (MIA) languages. Contrary to other Indo-Āryan languages, which were written in Brāhmī script and its local derivatives, Gāndhārī was written in Kharoṣṭhī script, which developed as an adaptation of the Aramaic script, used in the region of Gandhāra in the times of the Achaemenid Empire. This feature indicates a certain isolation of the region, its otherness and its ties to the Iranian administration. And therefore, in Gāndhārī some Iranian loanwords occur, especially administrative and calendrical terms, for example 'kṣatrapa' for satrap, 'erzuna' for prince, and 'kṣuṇa' for date. However, there are also Greek administrative loans, such as 'stratega' for leader (from Greek στρατηγός), 'meridarkha' for governor of a district (from Greek μεριδάρχης), 'sa(dera)' for standard coin (from Greek στατήρ), and calendrical terms, which include Macedonian month names, for example 'avadunaka' from Macedonian Αὐδυναῖος (SALOMON 2008; cf. SALOMON 1999; KONOW 1929). All these loanwords appear in Gāndhārī due to the fact that Gandhāra was successively conquered by the Persians (6th century BC), the Macedonians (327–326 BC), and the Greco-Bactrian (and later Indo-Greek) Kingdom (ca. 185 BC).

It is worth mentioning the article 'Pāli and the languages of early Buddhism' (NORMAN 2002), in which the author investigated the development of MIA dialects. He noticed that these dialects were a threat to the predominance of Sanskrit and stood in opposition to it. He drew attention to the fact that, whereas according to the Brahman theories Sanskrit was the exclusive property of the Brāhmaṇas, unintelligible to the lower castes, both Buddhist and Jain texts emphasized that the languages of the Buddha and the Jina respectively were the

root languages, intelligible to all beings. Therefore, these languages were not so hermetic and more susceptible to various kinds of influence, also foreign influence.

In the context of translation problems between the Greeks and the Indians it is worth mentioning the previously discussed passage of Plutarch, who described how Onesicritus during the meeting learned that Calanus' real name is Σφίνης, while Καλανός is a name given to him by the Greeks, who misunderstood his greeting καλῆ, which may be a Greek imitation of 'kalyanam' – the Sanskrit form of चाँपे (FILLIOZAT 1981, 109; DE JONG 1973, 120).⁶ This anecdote is significant for our understanding of the Greco-Indian relations, and this situation can be described as creative misunderstanding. As noted by White, 'Any congruence, no matter how tenuous, can be put to work and can take on a life of its own if it is accepted by both sides.' (WHITE 1991, 52–53)

CONCLUSION

Returning to the problem of the doctrine presented in the account, although the Cynic origin of some aspects of this episode cannot be excluded, it has been convincingly denied that Onesicritus was himself a Cynic philosopher, one of fellow-students of Diogenes (WINIARCZYK 2007; 2008; 2009). One also cannot deny the veracity of the story about the naked sages of India, because the characteristics of the ascetics depicted in the episode are surprisingly coincident with the realities presented in the Indian literature, e.g. in 'Manusmṛti'. Therefore, it is likely that such a meeting really took place, but it is possible that the real debate has been altered by Onesicritus. He probably recorded the Indian views, which he expressed in the concepts of the Cynic philosophy familiar to him (WINIARCZYK 2008, 99). Thus, it seems likely that already in the times of Alexander Onesicritus saw similarities between the philosophy of the Indian ascetics and the views of Diogenes of Sinope and other Cynics. Perhaps Onesicritus used the real event of the meeting with the 'naked philosophers' to present considerations on favourite Cynic topics. Therefore, we can say that we are dealing with the accommodation, which is taking place in the middle ground. Perhaps the Greeks did not understand well a word of what the Indian sages said, but it did not stop them from making this meeting comprehensible to the public through the conclusion in it of typical Cynic riddles. And thus it became one of the τόποι of Greek literature about India. On the other hand, it is possible that the Greeks understood the Indian sages much better than it seems, because Greek sceptical thought could draw inspirations from Indian Buddhist philosophy, as can be seen from the example of Pyrrho. Therefore, the relations between East and West should not be seen in terms of dichotomy, but one should bear in mind that 'all cultures are inherently mixed' (KRAIDY 2005, 14).

SOURCES

LSJ = *The Online Liddell-Scott-Jones Greek-English Lexicon* (www.tlg.uci.edu/lsgj).

Anecd. = *Anecdota Graeca e codicibus regiis descriptis annotatione illustravit J. Fr. Boissonade*. Editor: J.F. Boissonade. Volume I. Paris 1829.

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6 Cf. STONEMAN 2019, 319: '[Calanus] must certainly have been useful to Alexander as an interpreter.' It is possible that Calanus translated from Gāndhāri to Sanskrit.

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