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Beer and Elephants: On Some Unnoticed Fragments from a Lost *Indica*

Six passages from four authors which deal with Indian rice beer and the intoxication of elephants are all probably ultimately indebted to a common source. This source may have been Megasthenes's *Indica* (from c. 300 B.C.), or, more likely, Ctesias's *Indica* (from c. 400 B.C.).

Strabo (15.1.53) and Pliny (18.13.71) both say that rice beer rather than barley beer is found in India. Pliny (8.24.8) and Manuel Philes (*De elephante* 139-142) both say that "barley juice" (*hordei sucus / krithes chulos*), that is, barley beer (as is evident from other texts, such as Paulus Orosius, 5.7.13), calms elephants. Since the Indians purportedly did not have barley beer, this is probably a reference to a practice involving African elephants (Ethiopian beer is mentioned by Strabo [17.2.2] and references to beer are found in two Nubian inscriptions from the fourth or fifth centuries A.D. [OGIS 200 and Add(1)]). Finally, Aelian (*De natura animalium* 13.8) and Manuel Philes (*De elephante* 145-151) both say that rice beer, among other intoxicants, is used on elephants (presumably Indian elephants) in battle. None of these texts are to be found in *FGrH*, but E. A. Schwanbeck (*Megasthenes Indica* [Bonn 1846 (Amsterdam 1966)]) assumed that the passages from Strabo and Aelian came from Megasthenes (= frs. 27 and 52, respectively; see also B. C. J. Timmer, *Megasthenes en de indische Maatschappij* [Amsterdam 1930] 258-263 for the first passage) although he disregarded the other sources. Megasthenes in fact wrote about Indians eating rice (*FGrH* 715F2), and his work on India was known to Strabo (6d, 7a, 8, 9b, 10b, 11a, 18b, 19b, 27a, b, 31, 32, 33, and 34a), Pliny (7b, 13d, 26, 28, and 29), and Aelian (24), though there is no evidence for its availability in Byzantine times. A more probable source for the six passages is Ctesias's *Indica*, which is known to have dealt with alcoholic drinks (see *FGrH* 688F50 on the impossibility of the Indian King becoming drunk) as well as elephants (see H. H. Scullard, *The Elephant in the Greek and Roman World* [New York 1974] 33-36). Furthermore, Ctesias's *Indica* was known to Strabo (*FGrH* 688F49b), Pliny (45d-delta, e-beta, o, p-alpha, 47b, 51a, and 52), and Aelian (45g, i-alpha, k-beta, l, m, p-gamma, q, r, and 46a), the latter of whom even quoted this work with respect to elephants (45b, d-beta, and h) (interestingly, Aelian also knew of drunken elephants from Aristotle [*Varia historia* 2.40 from Arist., fr. 107 Rose³, also quoted in Athenaeus, 10.429d]). Ctesias's *Indica* was still known as late as the twelfth century A.D., as is evident from Johannes Tzetzes's citations (45c, p-beta, and 51b), and thus could perhaps have still been independently available to Manuel Philes a century or so later. Finally, two other authors claim that Dionysus introduced wine to India (Diodorus Siculus, 2.38.5 and 3.63.3-5 [and see 1.19.7] and Arrian, *Indica* 7.5), while Lucian (*Nigrinus* 5) said that Indians went crazy when they first tried wine; all of them may again be indebted to Ctesias.

In conclusion, a comparison of six passages in four authors indicates a common source, which is likely Ctesias's *Indica*. Further careful scrutiny of texts dealing with India is sure to uncover more fragments.