

Writing World History: Which World?

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Abstract

Far from being a recent world, the concept of “a [one] world” did slowly emerged in a post-prehistoric Antiquity. The actual knowledge of the world increased through millennia leaving aside large continents (Americas, part of Africa, Australia, etc.—most areas without written history), and writing history in Antiquity cannot be a synchronal presentation of the most ancient times of these areas. Through a few case studies dealing with texts, archaeology and history itself mostly in BCE times, the paper will try to perceive the slow building-up of a physical awareness and ‘moral’ consciousness of the known world by people of the Middle East (e.g. the Bible, Gilgamesh) and the Mediterranean (mainly Greeks).

Key words

the Earth, the origins of the world, drawing the world, international exchanges, Phoenicia and the Persian Gulf, Greek historians, Greek geographers

I. INTRODUCTION

Investigating how to write a “World History” in its most ancient periods—leaving aside Prehistory to the benefit of times when written sources are available—would require to coalesce together several disciplines, geography and historiography indeed but also linguistics—there is real problem of vocabulary—philosophy, theology, etc. The modern term “World History” presumes the earliest expressions of history, development of societies, economies and exchanges and interactions above all: such modern understandings were probably not natural in the conceptions of many ancient authors, although several of them did attempt a “history of the [known] world.” Indeed, the twentieth century scholars have already associated the concept of “globalization” with the *Mare nostrum* of the Roman Empire or with the Indian Ocean,¹ but although they are commendable analyses they remain good or sometimes (e.g. 3rd millennium Mesopotamian empires) more doubtful intellectual “reconstructions” of an antique world probably quite different if not absent in the awareness of ancient *anthropoi*.²

The present paper will focus on the period of BCE and rely on Classical sources due to a lack of familiarity with other ones; on the other hand, archaeology may improve the research in many cases although some interpretations of physical remains and artefacts might lead to brilliant but sometimes meaningless theories or overstatements. The “known world” will be circumscribed to the Eurasiatic continent up to India, although other parts of the world were already enduring their own History (South-East Asia, China, part of Africa . . .) with quite different types of sources and scientific approaches (e.g. Thierry, *forthcoming*). However, it should be emphasized that early interactions between the here “known world” and its outskirts did turn

¹ Such historical constructions are now under criticism, *i.e.* the Braudelian or K. N. Chaudhuri systems.

² *Anthropoi*, plural of the word ‘human’ and ‘man’ is generally used in ancient Greek writings to designate the humanity, the whole of living people—there is no other specific word.

up before the end of the studied period. One important point will question the degree of "consciousness/awareness" of a "World" as reflected by the ancient sources.

A way to approach a "World History" seen by the antique Western world would be a detailed chronology and history of the geographical discoveries of "new worlds" through the available sources, not necessarily from a *Mare Nostrum* point of view: for example, when Dareios invaded north-western India in the 5th century BCE, information on the country was available in his entourage even though the narration of the events only comes from Classical texts, the Achaemenid data being just a list of names of conquered countries in non-narrative inscriptions.³ However, this path of research has been profusely explored and produced a very large literature, and I would prefer to present a few "case studies" which question the methodology and uncertainties of the research: they do not intend at all to build an antique "World History."

II. THE WORLD OR THE EARTH CREATION?

A first comment will consider what might be considered as the earliest 'global' book, the *Bible*. There are three Hebrew words translated 'world' in modern languages, although their meanings sound different both in their context and their interpretation.⁴ The Hebrew word *tebel* translated "the world" is found thirty-six times in the Bible,⁵ but the most common designation of "the

³ There are other types of Achaemenid sources, such as the *Persepolis Tablets*, but they deal mainly with administrative or commercial problems, no true references to the territories.

⁴ The modern and unanimously adopted term "Biblical World" is related to the geographical territories of the reported events by the Bible, not to the religious message of the book.

⁵ The word appears in *Samuel* 1 and 2 (*Kings*) what would be the 10th-11th centuries in a reconstructed chronology of the Bible—Samuel ordered Saül and David as kings of Israël—long after the *Genesis*. The words *tebel* and *'erets* are sometimes associated in the same verse, i.e. *Ps.* 90:2, ". . . before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth [*erets*] and the world [*tebel*], from everlasting to everlasting you are God." All the Bible quotations from *The Holy: New Revised Standard Version* (New York: Collins Publishers, 1989).

world” is *erets* (several hundreds of occurrences) usually translated by “the earth.” There is another term, *HoLam*, the significance of which is more related to duration—sometimes translated “eternity”—than to the physical earth, although it was rendered by *kosmos* in the Greek Septuagint⁶ and *mundus* in the Latin Bible. The emblematic text is the *Genesis*: “In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep” (*Gen.* 1: “formless void” is a translation of Hebrew *tohû* [desert] and *bohû* [void]—*tohu-bohu* in French).⁷ And when God created man and woman on the seventh day, God told them: “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it . . . ; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (*ibid.*). It is generally accepted that the ‘creation’ story included both the Universe and the Earth with all lives on earth, whatever everyone’s belief. Clearly enough, the theology of the Bible would strongly separate God’s creation from the mass of the humans and living beings, as well expressed in the revelation of the Flood to Noah: “And God saw that the earth was corrupt; for all flesh [including humanity] had corrupted its ways upon the earth. And God said to Noah: I have determined to make an end to all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence because of them [the humanity]; now I am going to destroy them along with the earth” (*Gen.* 6, 11). Outside considering the poetic value of such texts it looks that the word ‘earth’ expresses God’s creation while the word

⁶ The first meaning of *kosmos* is ‘order,’ ‘arrangement’ in Hesiod’s *Theogony* (c. 700 BCE) the ‘beginning’ was personified as *Chaos* who fathered *Eros* and *Gaia* (the Earth), and *Gaia* gave birth to *Ouranos* (the Sky), etc., especially gods and goddesses. The concept of an ‘ordered universe’ (the most common acception of *kosmos*) is generally attributed to Pythagoras of Samos (6th century BCE).

⁷ The text of the Bible does not tell that the Creation was a beginning *ex nihilo*. Vol. 1 says “when God created [*var.* ‘began’ to create] the heavens and the earth,” and vol. 2 says “the earth was a formless void [*tohû wâbohû*] and darkness covered the face of the deep . . .” The translation of the Hebrew might be ‘chaos,’ ‘confusion,’ ‘disorder’—*tohu-bohu*. God’s creation was intended to put a strict order in the chaos, and it took him six days which detail the various phases of the ‘arrangement’ before the creation of man when everything on the earth stood ‘in order.’ On the historical chronology of the various books of the Bible, see Pierre Bordreuil Franoise and Briquel Chatonnet, *Le temps de la Bible* (Paris: Fayard, 2000), 146-156 for the creation.

“flesh” is incorporating all living creatures on the earth, humanity and animals—spared from the Flood with Noah. The vocabulary of the Genesis seems to make a difference/opposition between the creation itself and the creation of man; it sounds rather explicit in the text above (“be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it”), and more fully expressed in Psalm 104: “You set the earth on its foundations, so that it shall never be shaken” (v. 6), and after a beautiful depiction of the various landscapes, there is a short reference to humanity “When the sun rises, they [the lions] withdraw and lie down to their dens. People go out to their work and to their labor until the evening” (v. 22-23). The “earth” of the living creatures is obviously the “inhabited earth” (*erets*) where humans, animals, plants etc. are cohabiting in various intercourses, what we would call today ‘the world’; the Greek Septuagint translation is *oikos*, the house, the property, the family—*oikouménè* of the Greek authors is the whole inhabited earth.

It does not mean that the Bible⁸ did ignore the geography of the “earth.” *Gen.* 1, 2, 10 mentions four rivers flowing out from Eden naming a couple of well-based information besides two other ones unknown (?): “The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Havilah . . . The name of the second is Gihon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Cush.⁹ The name of the third river is Tigris, which

⁸ Whenever the oral tradition of its oldest versions was collated c. the 7th-6th centuries BCE.

⁹ Both rivers are not really identified. Pishon was the Ganges in the works of Flavius Josephus (First century CE), but also the ancient ‘Phasis’ (modern Georgia) for a couple of 19th century scholars. Some researchers would locate a dead river (?) somewhere in Saudi Arabia (Hijaz? Yemen?) since the ‘Havilah’ country is generally accepted as being the *Arabia Felix* of the Classical sources (southwestern Arabia/Yemen), but the proposal that the Pishon could have been a river flowing from the Hijaz to the wadi Batin in Kuwait looks totally unrealistic. The location of the Gihon river is another matter of debate. The country of Kush is generally associated with the southern Nile (modern Ethiopia), and Flavius Josephus identified the river with the Nile. Modern scholars have suggested a location in the Hindu Kush (river Amu Darya?) or in Mesopotamia. Whatever the ancientness of the Genesis tradition—pre-Moses, 2000 BCE?—some relations might have existed between the Hebrew groups and Arabia [for an extreme view see Kamal Suleiman Salibi, *The Bible Came from Arabia* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1985)] as well as with Egypt, eventually with western Mesopotamia. Such interactions with Ethiopia, Georgia or Hindu Kush sound much less conceivable.

flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphratès”—the reference to the Mesopotamian rivers stands as a real knowledge of the Middle East environment. Besides the *Table of Nations* in the same text (*Gen.*, 10) which raises countless problems of interpretation and dating, the Bible refers all through its books to several ‘nations’ of the Middle East, the Kittim (Cyprus), the Egyptians, Canaanites (the Phoenicians of the Greeks and the Palestinians), the Hittites, the Assyrians, the Medes, the Persians, etc., evidence of a good awareness of the political status of the ancient Middle East.

As a matter of fact, the translation “world” (*tebel*) remains quite secondary and rather vague in the Bible: the repeatedly used word “earth” from the creation story onwards includes the cosmos, the Earth as a planet (and parts of its geography), all living creatures among which the humanity spelled out by the descendants of the patriarchs and the nations (also their history in many cases); the unique ‘global’ vision of the Bible holds in the creation tale. Could it account for a “World History”?

III. DEATH AS A MIDDLE EAST CONCEPT?

A few echoes (?) with the Bible could be found in the old Mesopotamian *Epic of Gilgamesh*.¹⁰ The oldest and shorter version of the tradition probably datable to the third millennium BCE (Sumer period) was recorded in Akkadian language in the early 2nd millennium BCE, but the standard version was dated to the second half of the 2nd millennium. when eleven cuneiform tablets were discovered and disclosed a text about 3,000 verses. The epic refers to the “earliest king of the world”—king of Uruk (c. 2700 BCE)—and the myth make him the “lord of the world.” He was born from a “breath” [? he was early divinized] and acted as

¹⁰ A few references to the Bible were suggested by S. N. Kramer when he first published an English edition of the epic in 1956. The French assyriologist Bottero (1982) hardly follows up these interpretations. The summary below comes from cursory readings of specialized books in French or in English without entering into arguments and details (*i.e.* Benoit 2003: 415-17).

a civilized but ferocious despot, what caused his subjects to ask the gods (*Aruru*) to “create” a human image of Gilgamesh so that he could fight against him. The gods created a “barbarous” being Enkidu (“grazing the grass with the gazelles”) who was quickly—one week—humanized by a loose woman. He fought with Gilgamesh and overcame the king, both became close friends and undertook several and terrible adventures together: “pilgrims of all the routes of the country and beyond the country, heroes who received the revelation of all the secret truths, all the mysteries of the life and death, especially the death.”¹¹

The seventh tablet relates Enkidu’s descent to the underground world of the dead by order of the gods and Gilgamesh’s despair who cries the disparition of his friend despite his summons to the gods. The following tablets relate Gilgamesh’s long quest for the “flower of immortality” which he failed to find.¹² Among the companions Gilgamesh met during his wanderings a certain Ut-napishtim is to be mentioned, the unique survivor of the Flood which destroyed the humanity (a Biblical reference?); the latter convinced Gilgamesh than man cannot be immortal, and the hero came back to Uruk where he died.

A second epic’s lesson of Gilgamesh’s myth still known in the late first mill. BCE was closely associated with death and funerary customs; Enkidu told his hero and friend that his lineage will accord him the immortality as long as the livings will be able to shout/pronounce his name. This is an essential concept well attested in ancient Mesopotamia, in the numerous funerary texts published from Ugarit (Ras Shamra, coastal Syria, second mill. BCE and the supposed funerary ceremonies) and later in the funerary ceremonies in Nabataean Petra (Jordan, funerary inscriptions and monuments). It might explain also the lengthy geneal-

¹¹ One of the epic’s lessons confronts the wild nature of human beings (the ‘early’ Gilgamesh, Enkidu’s creation) and the civilized ones, friendliness being the accomplishment of both heroes. After Enkidu’s death and Gilgamesh’s quest for immortality, the hero came back to his ordinary life as a fair king.

¹² Some modern scholars suggest that Gilgamesh found the flower in ancient Dilmun (today Bahrain), but it was stolen by a snake before the hero could eat it. Archaeological excavations of the ancient capital of the island (Qala’at Bahrain, 1000-2000 BCE) uncovered several offerings with snake skeletons.

ogies found in the Bible and also common in Arab narratives up to the mediaeval period and even today (tribes genealogies). Could such a “creed” perpetuated over millennia be considered as part of a “World History”?

IV. ACROSS A WORLD OR ROAMING TRACKS?

In the earliest times archaeology might be a good provider of evidence for an early globalization. It is generally assumed—and attested in many cases for later periods—that the integration of new spaces or distant/remote areas into a common knowledge of the world was the result (*I insist on this word, result*) of a long-distance trade of rare products (*have vs have not*) before any geographical and/or political awareness. This is certainly true, but things might be much more complex as shown in the following example.

It is well attested that the precious stone *lapis-lazuli* was found in the ancient Orient in three mining areas, the Badakshan in northeastern Afghanistan, at the today borders between Tajikistan and Pakistan, in Pakistan (Chaghai Mounds) and in Pamir; physical and chemical analyses have evidenced that the most important mine was the Sar-i-Sand one in Badakshan, a site in the high mountains of Hindu Kush (3,600 meters) where the stone can be extracted only during three to five months a year (Casanova 1995). The earliest jewels made of *lapis-lazuli* were found in Pakistan (Mehrgarh) in the seventh millennium BCE rather close to the mines, but the distribution of the stone to the West (Mesopotamia) and South-West (Iran) only began in the fourth millennium BCE. It got its climax in the third mill. BCE, for example in the famous Royal Tombs at Ur, and the precious stone was also found in contemporary and second millennium BCE sites in the Near East (e.g. tombs in Byblos, Lebanon) and in Egypt. It would mean that the raw material¹³ had to travel

¹³ Archaeology showed that the local miners and specialized craftsmen did extract heavy quantities. Blocks weighing more than 20 kg were found in Ebla, in northern Syria, Casanova *id.*

more than 2,500 km to Mesopotamia (as the crow flies) and between 3,000 and 4,000 km to the Near East and Egypt. It is clear that such lengthy transports (months, years) were divided into a very large number of different groups of people of various origins and cultures, from a local trader/middleman to the next one along a large number of stages and countries, each one of them having a "perimeter of distribution." Thus, it would sound difficult and unrealistic to suggest that the jeweller customer in Ur or in Byblos really knew that the *lapis* was coming from Badakshan. Did this extreme fragmentation of the trade allow the many participants involved in such a trade expedition to have any consciousness of "one world" from Badakshan to coastal Levant, not to say of a "global trade" as ascertained by modern historians? It seems highly unlikely in the fourth/third mill. BCE, but awareness progressively improved through the ages: in the late second mill. BCE (late Kassite period) and first mill. BCE, the international trade in *lapis-lazuli* became maritime, from the Indus ports to southern Babylonia (and further West) through the Persian Gulf; the inception of a "global World"?

V. FANCIFUL TRADITION OR "WORLD HISTORY"?

If archaeology often remains a good tool¹⁴ for a better understanding of the far-away and supposed 'globalized' exchanges,¹⁵ it may happen that a recorded ancient vision of the world (textual sources and their liability?) cannot be matched by the archaeologist. The below 'case study' was disputed some decades ago (Bowersock 1986; MacAdam 1990; Salles 1993), now more or less abandoned (?).

There is a strong written Greek tradition that the origin of the Phoenicians had to be found in the now Persian Gulf where

¹⁴ The word 'proof' is definitely overstated and should be discarded.

¹⁵ The modern term implies direct and almost immediate contacts. Antique exchanges were based on a large number of middlemen and quite lengthy transfers, *supra*.

cities bearing the same Phoenician—*i.e.* Greek name—¹⁶ were known in their days (*i.e.* Tyros in Lebanon [Tyre]/Tylos in Bahrain, Arados/Arwad, *id.*, Sur in Oman, Arabic version of Tyre). The earliest report is to be found in Herodotus when he visited Heraklès' temple of Tyre in Phoenicia (4th century BCE): the priests told the Greek historian that their temple had been built 2400 years ago (Hdt., II, 44), the archaeological “Early Bronze Age” in the Near East, late 4th/3rd mill. BCE; Herodotus does not name the abovementioned cities. Strabo provides us with a similar report, quoting Tylos and Arados, and incidentally referring to a verse in Homer mentioning the Sidonians: “. . . historians are entirely at lost to know, in the first place, in regard to the Sidonians, whether we should call them a certain people who dwelt in the Persian Gulf [*Persikos kolpos*], from whom the Sidonians in our part of the world were colonists, just as they speak of Tyrians there, islanders, as well as as Aradians, from they say those in our part of the world were colonists . . .” (*Geo*, xvi, 4, 27). The tradition is also alluded by Pliny (*id.* Strabo), the late Latin historian Justin (from Pompeius Trogus) with an unknown source mentioning a “*Syrium Lake*” [or “*Assyrium Lake*”?],¹⁷ and later by Eusthatius (*id.* Strabo).

When archaeologists investigated the early history of Tyre, they discovered that the most ancient remains of the city can be dated to c. 2900 BCE, what would be close to the date suggested by Herodotus— - c. 400 BCE + - 2400 years claimed by Heraklès' priests; when they turned to the Persian Gulf as a likely origin of the Phoenicians, they noted that the period 3000-2800 BCE is not so well attested in the region just before the emergence of the Dilmun kingdom in the Gulf with its capital at Qala'at al-Bahrain c. 2700 BCE onwards. But they were not able to find any kind of relationship between the material cultures of the two areas in the early 3rd millennium BCE (pottery, architecture, fu-

¹⁶ It must be reminded that the words ‘Phoenicia,’ ‘Phoenicians’ were created by the Greeks, the local people referring to Canaan/Canaanites down to the Hellenistic period.

¹⁷ Sometimes identified with the large marshes/lake in southern Iraq (*Hawr al Hammar*) by modern scholars, although the topography of the area was quite different in the last centuries BCE.

neral monuments [although the topic should be really scrutinized, some similar (?) types of tombs were found in southern Levant]) which might accredit the 'historical' tradition. The problem remains open, enshrouding a likely awareness of a 'Near East World' in the early 3rd millennium BCE.¹⁸

However, an interesting proposal was advanced by MacAdam (1990) who suggests the idea of a 'migration' to the West in the late 2nd millennium BCE—a period when the archaeology of the northern Persian Gulf (Bahrain, Eastern Arabia, Kuwait and Southern Iraq) is poorly evidenced¹⁹—, invoking two arguments: the powerful development of Tyre city in the second half of the 2nd millennium BCE,²⁰ and the 'purple industry' which made Tyre famous.²¹ The modern historian is facing a problem of transmission: when, where and how the tradition supposed to be dated to the 3rd millennium BCE was really born, and how it was passed on through the ages (cf. the differences between Herodotus and Strabo)? Would it be ever ascertained, it would open a new window on the Near Eastern 'world' of the 3rd millennium BCE.

VI. DRAWING AN IMAGE OF THE WORLD?

The Classical authors still stand as the most important sources not only on the Mediterranean area but also on numerous parts

¹⁸ Most of the of the modern 'phoenicologists' do not want to tackle the question—one of the least passionate has suggested that the Phoenicians (= Greek time) had invented the story, and many of the 20th century hypotheses remain open to criticism.

¹⁹ Daniel T. Potts, chap. 9 and 10 in *The Arabian Gulf in Antiquity*. I. *From Prehistory to the Fall of the Achaemenid Empire* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1990). More recent publications did not change the general framework drawn by Potts.

²⁰ Mentioned several times in the Egyptian *Tell el-Amarna Letters* (14th century BCE), alliance of Tyre with King Solomon mentioned in the Bible (Jidejian1996), and Ezechiels's *Lamentation on Tyre* celebrating the powerful city (late 7th/6th centuries BCE).

²¹ A scholiast (ancien commentator) of Homer states that the Phoenicians were named so because they used to live close to a sea called the 'Sea of Phoenix'—'phoenix' in Greek is the purple colour, it also designates the 'date-fruit.' MacAdam 1990 mentions a purple workshop in Qatar dated to the 12th century BCE (?), but the topic does not seem to have been really studied in the Gulf area. I discuss the different meanings of 'phoenix' and their likely association with the Phoenicians in 1993.

of the world²² as long no such detailed sources from Eastern countries and languages provide comparable information.²³ From these texts and numerous archaeological results and studies, the crucial role of the merchants and mariners/seamen as a source of an early “global history of trade” (2nd-1st millennium BCE) and a new concept of a ‘global world’ cannot be questioned and remains to be more scrutinized; however it will not be my arguments below (declining the archaeological data),²⁴ and only literary sources will be considered here as a growing evidence of the consciousness of a “world” (sources, methodology, scientific development and criticism, etc.).

The intellectual ‘division’ between Europa²⁵ and Asia was established in the 5th century BCE by Hekataeus of Miletus,²⁶ and his “map of the world”—reconstructed by modern scholars—delineates three continents, Asia, Europe and Libya. His main work (lost, a few excerpts preserved in later authors) was entitled *periodos tès gès*, ‘the circuit of the earth’ and depended both on Anaximander’s researches (n. 26) and on the information he collected during his travels to different parts of the Mediterranean area.²⁷

²² China was mentioned in the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* (mid-1st century CE), and a few Chinese sources deal with the very last centuries BCE (Thierry *forthcoming*).

²³ The abovementioned Ezechiel’s *Lamentation on Tyre* can be read as a nice description of international trade of the Near East in the 7th century BCE, from the Mediterranean to Arabia (including Yemen), the Red Sea and the horn of Africa, probably the Persian Gulf. For the Achaemenid sources, see note 3.

²⁴ A bibliography on early exchanges between the Mediterranean basin and the East = Middle East, Egypt, Arabia, Persia, Central Asia etc., from the 2nd millennium BCE to the mid-1st century CE (date of the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, a detailed description) would account thousands modern titles in the West (Europa, America) and in the East (Middle East, Persia and India). It cannot be summed up here in a couple of paragraphs and it carries so many problems that it would need an encyclopaedia.

²⁵ The origin of the name is still a matter of debate. The Greek mythology states that Europès, daughter of Agenor king of Tyre was one of Zeus many ‘extras’ and gave birth to Minos. The word could be a interweaving (?) of Greek and Semitic languages.

²⁶ Ancient Ionia (Asia Minor) was a major center of science and philosophy in pre-Socratic times. Anaximander of Miletus was a philosopher and astronomer well-versed in geometry as a disciple of the mathematician Thalès (first half of the 6th century BCE). Anaximander stated that the earth was a sphere. He is told (e.g. by Herodotus) to have drawn the earliest ‘map of the world’. Hekataeus expanded Anaximander’s research.

²⁷ The word *gès* remained one of the two most used to designate the ‘known world’ in ‘geographical’ Greek literature up to Dionysius Periegetès (2nd century CE). See Pseudo

In Herodotus' times (5th century BCE)²⁸ the Greek presence in Asia (Minor Asia and coastal Levant) was confined to the East by the Achaemenid empire and the Greek elites were not really engaged in international trade but for the subsidies in wheat (Black Sea); the rather numerous Oriental and luxury products which could be found in Athens in the 5th/4th centuries BCE (e.g. Casevitz 1995) were delivered there by middlemen, Phoenicians and others; there was no regular Greek traders (or very few in the sense of regular exchanges) dealing with Persia and further East. However, information on the Persian empire and India came rather plentiful in Classical Greece through travellers (Persian, Greek, others) or Greeks settled in the Persian empire, e.g. Ctesias.²⁹ Actually, if both Ctesias and Herodotus might be considered the earliest historians of a 'known world', the image of the world they displayed was rather far from the reality considering their sources of information, but there was an image (Herodotus disregards Hekataeus' map!).

Alexander's expedition pushed the limits of the Greek world eastwards to the Indus valley and Penjab, and Nearchus'

Scymnus (late 2nd century BCE), *Periodos tès gès*. Dionysius' work associates the two words. *Periêgêsis* ['circuit of the earth'] *tès oikoumenès* ['of the inhabited world']: even long before the translation of the *Septuagint*, there is kind of natural equivalence between Hebrew *erets* and Greek *gès* as our 'planet' and the inhabited world (*oikouménè*). The Greek word *periplous* refers to similar explorations of the maritime world. Pseudo Scylax (mid-4th century BCE), *Periplous tès oikouménès*; anonymous (1st century CE), *Periplous tès Erythras thalassès* ['the Erythraean Sea']; Marcianus of Herakleia (5th century CE) *Periplous of the exo thalassès* [of the 'exterior Sea']. Eratosthenès wrote a *Geographika* in the 3rd century BCE which seems the earliest occurrence of the word 'geography.'

²⁸ Herodotus' *Inquiry* (incorrectly translated as *Histories*) deals with the origins and development of the conflict between the Greeks and the Persians, the Medic Wars. However, when describing most of the Greek cities and many countries outside Greece, especially Persia, he developed long 'historical' accounts from his sources/inquiry, some of them rather fanciful (e.g. the Semiramis story). This effort to understand the 'origins' and development of the people he was referring to made him (since Cicero) "the father of History," a rather overstated title.

²⁹ Ctesias of Cnidus (late 5th century BCE) was taken as prisoner in the early stages of the Medic Wars and lived seventeen years (?) as a physician at the royal court of Artaxerxes, king of Persia. Back in Greece, he wrote two books (lost, but very often quoted in the Greek literature), *Persika* and *Indika*, the latter being the earliest—and often fanciful—written piece of information on India. Indian delegates and visitors used to come often to Persia as subordinates of the king. Another known Greek prisoner (?) was Scylax of Caryanda (5th century BCE) supposed to have explored the maritime route from the Indus mouths to the Red Sea on Dareios' orders (Salles, forthcoming).

navigation introduced the Persian gulf (Erythraean Sea) in their new vision of the world: several contemporary reports of these expeditions (Nearchus, Onesicritus, Ptolemy, Chares of Mytilene, etc.) became for centuries the main sources of information on the East, especially India.³⁰ At the same time (3rd-2nd centuries BCE), the Greeks became more concerned with international trade especially the Oriental one, probably to curtail the role and the costs of the foreign intermediaries.³¹ Various maritimes explorations of the Red Sea under the Lagids and early navigations in the Indian Ocean out of the Bab al-Mandab (second half of the 2nd century BCE),³² as well as the Seleucid control over the Persian Gulf up to the late 2nd century BCE (Kosmin 2013) opened the way to new maritimes routes to the East and a substantial increase of international exchanges. At the end of the 1st century BCE, Strabo was proud to state: “I learned that as many as one hundred and twenty vessels were sailing from Myos Hormos [Red Sea] to India, whereas formerly, under the Ptolemies, only a few ventured to undertake the voyage and to carry on traffic in Indian merchandise” (*Geo*, II, 5, 12). When the author was collecting the readings and informations which made his *Geography* a major work, the Greek knowledge of the world extended from the Atlantic (modern England) to Patalibothra and Muziris in India with rather large parts of Africa (northwestern coast, Horn of Africa) and the ‘image’ of the known world turned out much more precise and genuine. It was also the beginnings of a conscious “globalized trade” (De Romanis 1996).

³⁰ See Pierre Briant, *Pierre Briant, Alexandre des Lumières: Fragments d’histoire européenne* (Gallimard, Paris, 2012), and the international colloquium about the book, ‘D’Arrien à William Vincent: Le Périples de Néarque et sa postérité’, published in the last issue of the journal *Journée d’étude Internationale*, vol. 6 (Novembre 2012), xxii.

³¹ Alexander himself did consider that the Oriental ‘sea’ (from the Red Sea to India) could become as wealthy as renowned Arabia Felix; his Seleucid successors entered the Persian Gulf and tried to control it while the Lagids ruled over the Red Sea (Salles 2014).

³² An earlier crossing of the straits is known in the late 4th century BCE, Anaxicratès’ exploratory expedition as part of Alexander’s project of a circumnavigation of Arabia (Amigues 2002).

VII. TRADITION VS. INNOVATION IN WRITING THE IMAGE OF THE WORLD

However, tutored in the long literary tradition of ancient geographers and historians, the same Strabo did reject the reports or witnesses of the merchants: "As for the merchants who now sail from Aegypt by the Nile and the Arabian Gulf as far as India, only a small number have sailed as far as the Ganges; and even these are merely private citizens (*the Greek word is idiotai, i.e. without culture, not learned*) and of no use as regards the history of the places they have seen" (*Geo*, XV, 1, 4): they cannot be reliable informants. The prevailing Classical literary tradition required to rely on the 'Ancients,' the authors who wrote earlier on similar topics and using them extensively,³³ keeping the possibility to criticize or contradict them and to add new pieces of knowledge—see the ancient debates about Homer's *Odyssey*: a geographical description of the Mediterranean area or a fiction? (Strabo vs. Eratosthenes). Nevertheless and before Strabo's times, when a popular (at least literary) awareness of the known world was increasing especially about the Eastern world,³⁴ a couple of authors broke away with the tradition and stated to have used outsider informants.

In the 2nd century BCE Agatharchidès of Cnidus wrote a 'History of Asia' (*Ta kata ten Asian*) in ten books unfortunately lost; the author quotes his 'model' Demetrios of Callatis who wrote a universal history *Peri Asias kai Eurôpès* around 200 BCE also lost. Large parts of Agatharchidès' treatise *On the Erythraean Sea* remain available through Diodorus of Sicily and Strabo quotations (1st century BCE) and Photius, a Byzantine compiler (9th century CE). In these extracts, the author mentioned in different places that he was using information from merchants or travellers, and his book stands as one of the most

³³ This tradition lets us know large extracts/quotations of works which have definitely disappeared—no manuscript preserved.

³⁴ For example, the earliest Greek novels—*romans*—dated to the 1st century CE located most of their narratives in the East, often in the Indian Ocean: wrecks, captures of women, fabulous stories, etc.

precise ancient description of both coasts the Red Sea, Egyptian and a detailed and unique description of the Arabian coast together with some notices on the early Persian Gulf. Similarly, at the very end of the 1st century BCE, the learned and Rome's vassal Juba II, king of Mauretania, wrote several historical and geographical treatises on Africa, a *Libyca*, a *Babylonica* and an *Arabica*—probably on request from Augustus who was planning his grand-son Caius' expedition to Arabia (all manuscripts lost); from the few excerpts preserved (quoted by Pliny several times), it is clear that Juba was using different sources of information outside the tradition. Finally, Pliny's Latin *Natural History*—an encyclopedical work including geography and history although the author assumes he is not a historian—claims on several occasions that the author is using information from 'nostri negotiatores,' ('our two blanks merchants') what brings him to assert: "all these names of tribes and ports or towns are to be found in none of the previous writers,³⁵ which seems to show that the local conditions of the places are changing" (*NH*, VI, xxvi, 105).³⁶ He also mentions that he is using the most recent information, e.g. when he describes the maritime route to India, he refers to the one used today vs. the one described by Onesicritus in Alexander's time, *i.e.* the learned tradition repeated by Eratosthenès among other historians/geographers and even Arrian two centuries later.

A New Image of the World?

In a stimulating paper, D. Marcotte (2011-2012) stresses the role of the Egyptian city Alexandria c. 100 CE as seen by the Greek rhetor Dio Pruseus (Chrysostom). Alexandria stands at the crossroads of the whole world where use to come the most re-

³⁵ It sounds most likely that Pliny was able to read the anonymous *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* dated c. 50-60 CE (cf. Schoff edition, 1912).

³⁶ E.g. Pliny's description of the Arabian coast of the Persian Gulf (*NH*, VI, xxxii, 149-52). Potts has tried to disentangle Pliny's description of the area (302-17), leaving most names and comments unknown or unintelligible but a couple of worthy pieces in 1990.

mote people of the world (Bactrians, Persians, Indians, etc.), the market of a 'unique world' which brings all the international commerce in its shops as the heir of the largest maritime power both in the Mediterranean and over outside seas, the Erythraean and Indian ones which were not so well apprehended so far. Such a 'globalized' vision was probably intended to overemphasize emperor Trajan's life who was celebrated in Dio's work *On the Kingship*. However, besides Dio's political project Marcotte describes a 'globalized' Indian Ocean based on the knowledge of new geographers (Marinus of Tyre, Ptolemy): arguing on the quite numerous data (textual and archaeological) referring to exchanges between the West and the East and the ever expanding knowledge on the East,³⁷ Marcotte assumes that the Indian Ocean was becoming the new "center" of the known world, especially the Indian continent itself—the Western authors leaving aside the Eastern Mediterranean, the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, Arabia.³⁸ It should be stressed at this stage that, at the same time when one could brilliantly depict an Euroasiatic "globalized" world well accepted by a learned and more popular knowledge, several of the late Roman historians were discarding the Greek concept of a "World History."

VIII. FROM AN ABSTRACT 'WORLD HISTORY' TO NATIONAL HISTORIES

History being the narration of a past, one would probably find some 'historical' pieces in Homer's poems when he refers to genealogies of his personages or when he makes a distinction be-

³⁷ Quoting E. H. Seland, Ph.D Beaujard and a couple of other modern "World Historians."

³⁸ Linguistic arguments collected in contemporary Classical works include changes of the name of the Eastern Sea/Erythraean Sea—Salles 1994, *op. cit.* See also Pierre Schneider, "Hè megalè thalassa: un autre nom de la mer Erythrée?" *Revue des Études Grecques* 114 (2001): 626-636. 'hè megalè thalassa,' 'the great sea,'—of some rivers (Indus) and countries (Thina/China); Didier Marcotte, "Géopolitique de l'océan Indien au début de l'Empire," *Geographia Antiqua* 20-21 (2011-2012): 13-24. *op. cit.*

tween the “men who exist nowadays” and the earlier heroes he is telling the adventures: some scholars ventured in this way.³⁹ The same concept of ‘genealogies’ was the core of Hekataeus of Miletus historical work *Genealogies (Heroologia)*; ⁴⁰ sometimes acknowledged as the first Greek historian his project was aimed to weave a relationship between the heroic myths and his time, arguing that behind fabulous elaborations of the tradition lay some kind of historical facts distorted by exaggeration and/or literary interpretation: Hekataeus assumes “I write what seems to me to be true; for the Greeks have many tales which, as it appears to me, are absurd.”⁴¹ Ctesias (*above*) is not considered as an historian by Greek and Roman authors nor by modern commentators: his *Indika* are based on hearsay and reports of romantic or fanciful stories from oral tradition, visitors, court gossip etc. and cannot be seriously relied upon, but a few data. However, his *Persika* should not be rejected without a close examination: he was the first one to write a history of Persia, and behind various fabulous stories several reports and considerations provides us with a nice and solid insight on Persia and its history of his time.⁴²

Hekataeus’ and Ctesias’ works were severely criticized by Herodotus in the 5th century BCE. The Ionian historian did not assume he was planning to write a ‘World History’ but an history of the ‘humans’, what lead him to investigate the history of the

³⁹ The problem of a Homeric geography (Mediterranean area) remains open to questions, e.g. Christian Jacob, *Géographie et ethnographie en Grèce ancienne* (Armand Colin, 1991), 16-30.

⁴⁰ Late 6th-early 5th century BCE; very few fragments of the book are preserved by various Greek authors. For his geographical works, *above* page 127. A second major step in a ‘world geography’ is attributed to Cratès of Mallus (head of the Pergamon Library, late 2nd century BCE) who ‘shaped’ the earth as a sphere ; actually, Anaximander in the 6th century BCE—*above* page 124 and footnote. 26—had shaped the universe as a sphere, the earth being equidistant of any of its components the reason why it was ‘stable.’ Any ‘World History’ cannot be disconnected from a ‘World’ geographical conception.

⁴¹ Hekataeus’ purpose was also to satisfy the Greek noble families who were claiming a divine origin, far away from a world history.

⁴² The *Persika* still remain a valuable source of information for modern historians. *Ctésias. Histoires de l’Orient*, ed. Jannick Auberger (Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1991), *Ctésias de Cnide: La Perse, l’Inde. Autres fragments*, ed. Dominique Lenfant (Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 2004), Jean-François Salles, “Some Notes on Ancient Greek Descriptions of India,” in *Beyond National Frontiers*, ed. Rila Mukherjee (Delhi: Primus Books, forthcoming).

people in contact with the Greeks and in contact with the Persians, *i.e.* the Scythians, the Indians, the Arabs, etc. (*Book III*). The title *Inquiry* of Herodotus' work means in Greek language "what I have seen," "what I know by witnesses who had seen," and he travelled in Egypt and the Near East to get 'true' information. Thus, Herodotus' method should have imposed him to discard everything coming from the 'tradition,' 'hearsay,' 'romantic,' 'fantasy' etc., but one can find a very large number of digressions of this type in his work : genealogies, fanciful history of a people or a city, anecdotes, curiosities and *mirabilia*, ethnographical descriptions, local rules and customs. One should recall that Herodotus' *opus* was not supposed to be 'published,' only written down, and it was often exposed orally in public to people whom he had to 'attract,' the best way being to tell them marvelous stories which had nothing to do with History.⁴³ However, considering the synergy between Herodotus' 'reportage'—what he has seen himself, what he has been told by reliable informants, what he has been able to verify [?], etc.—and his descriptions-history of the people he learned about in the known world of his time—a large geographical space—one could suggest that Herodotus really was the earliest author of a 'World History.'⁴⁴

At the contact point between history and philosophy in the Greek 4th century BCE (Isocrates the rhetor and Aristotle and their schools), two less known historians should be mentioned: Ephorus of Cymè (Asia Minor and Athens, c. 400-340? BCE), and Dicaearchus of Messena (Sicily and Athens, c. 350-285 BCE). Ephorus was an Isocrates' disciple and wrote a (lost) *History* quoted (large excerpts) and appreciated by the historians Polybius and Diodorus of Sicily and also by Strabo, his influence seems to have been quite important up to the late 1st century

⁴³ Two such 'lectures' are recorded in the Greek literature. The tradition says that adolescent Thucydides attended a lecture by Herodotus in Athens.

⁴⁴ In Herodotus' tradition we know of different regional histories written in the 4th-3rd centuries BCE: Hekataeus of Abdera's *Aegyptika*, Megasthenes' *Indika*, Berosos' *Babyloniaka*, etc.

BCE (Pownall 2014).⁴⁵ Ephorus did reject any reference to the mythology (vs. Heckataeus, *above*), and his project was to narrate a universal history including the actions of the Greeks together with the actions of the Barbarians (= non Greeks); his concept of a *Universal History* would rely on a ‘moral’—a central topic of the work [Isocrates]—appreciation of foreign people as compared to the Greeks.

More stimulating seems to have been Dicearchus’ of Messena work *Bios Ellados* (‘Life of Greece’), lost but later quoted: he was a close pupil of Aristotle and member of the Peripatetical school (Alonso-Núñez, 1977).⁴⁶ Dicearchus’ project was not to write a world history as explicated in the title, “rather a sketch of the evolution of Greek civilization seeing it against the background of Oriental and Egyptian history”; his analyses were based on standards of classification and norms of cause and explanation, and the result an appreciation of the evolution of humanity. Quote Alonso-Núñez: “At the earlier stage men lived from the collection of fruits, at the second stage they lived from cattle-raising and at the third from agriculture”;⁴⁷ “. . . the stages of civilization are described as ways of life : leisure, a wandering pastoral life, and an agricultural way of life. Behind this development lies greed which is cause of war”; “There is a degeneration from a golden age denominated the Age of Cronos [*ref. to Plato*] . . . This idea of degeneration comes Hesiod’s *Works and Days* and implies the decline of mankind expressed in the Five Ages . . .” Alonso-Núñez concludes: “The idea of degeneration of mankind is similar to that of Hesiod . . . but with Dicearchus the Golden Age is incorporated into a historical account. Dicearchus does not believe in the progress of mankind, but rather in the

⁴⁵ Another but uncertain Ephorus’ title was a *Universal History of the Greeks and other peoples from the Heraklidès* (reference to mythology, i.e. *c.* the date of the Trojan War). It stands as one of the few narrations of the early centuries of the history of Greece and its neighbours, but there is no reference to Asiatic people.

⁴⁶ The quotations are extracts of detailed and learned comments by Alonso-Núñez, eventually remodelling the exact meanings of the Greek historian. Eventhough, the proposed interpretation is quite inspiring for a modern historian.

⁴⁷ Such remarks stand as the main trend of modern Prehistory. The second one referring to ‘greed’ as the cause of wars remains the 21st century historical explanation.

idea that progress means decline."⁴⁸ ". . . On the other hand, his work is not only a cultural history, but also a social history as well as a history of political institutions. He sees the evolution of history from the standpoint of economics but, at the same time, he emphasizes the ethical aspects of human development. In what concerns his information on the Orient and Egypt, it must be born in mind that the work was written after the conquests of Alexander had expanded the geographical horizon of the Greeks. Therefore it can be stated that the theme of Dicaearchus approaches universal history since he includes the primitive man, Oriental and Egyptian history and the development of Greek civilization." Alonso-Núñez' interpretation of Dicaearchus' work might turn out questionable, but transcribed in a modern vocabulary Dicaearchus' analyses appear rather fascinating as a late 4th century BCE vision of the "World History."⁴⁹

The two prominent historians of the Greek period in the modern sense of the word are Thucydides (second half of the 5th century BCE) with his detailed history of the *Peloponnesian Wars* (431-411 BCE when his Athens city was devastated and himself a temporary actor); and Polybius (2nd century BCE) who was a Greek participant of the conflicts between Roma and the Greeks (battle of Pydna, 168 BCE), then 'displaced' to Roma where he stayed about twenty years and became a strong partisan of Roma's policies. When back to Greece, his *Istoriai* tried to understand how and when Roma became the major power of the Mediterranean.⁵⁰ Both authors did rationalize the methodology of writing history, discarding *mirabilia* and hearsay information and promoting detailed and well informed narrations of the

⁴⁸ An idea still alive among several of the 21st century ecologists.

⁴⁹ When according to the commentator Dicaearchus idealizes the primitive man and rebels against private property becoming then a defender of 'communism,' one has to leave the author of the article the responsibility of the statement. Alonso-Núñez emphasizes that Dicaearchus' work is at the crossroad of philosophy—Aristotle vs. Plato and vs. the Sophists—including some influence of Democritus [the physician of atoms. Thus, History becomes a 'global concept' as is philosophy and cannot be else than a 'World History.'

⁵⁰ Polybius stands as the main source on the *Punic Wars* (Carthago-Roma) and on the Seleucid politics (he died c. 126 BCE when the Seleucid empire was declining). He visited Gaul, Spain and northern Africa, what makes reliable his comments of these regions. A couple of 'books' of his work are lost.

events they are recording. Both authors were much concerned with the authenticity of their sources (ancient writings or contemporary reports) and the focus of their investigations was to understand and explain why and how the events did take place, a new vision of history with many references to ‘morals.’ As a result of the method, both authors had to minimize digressions on outside topics such as descriptions of foreign people and their history, life and portrait of kings and great men, accounts on far away countries and their ethnography etc.—although this type of rather reliable information remains present in their books. Yet, they cannot be characterized as ‘World’ historians⁵¹ since they did line up with their historical subjects (Greece, Rome and the Near East) without too much looking out at the rest of the world.

At the same period (3rd-1st centuries BCE), the geographical knowledge of the world prodigiously expanded either by intellectual reasoning (see Eratosthenès, *above*, and Salles forthcoming) or as results of royal-appointed explorations (e.g. the Red Sea) and individual travels and the ensuing reports. Among a few renown authors whose works are partly lost but referred to by others (Artemidorus Ephesius, mid-2nd-early 1st century BCE; Posidonius of Apamea, same period; Juba of Mauretania, late 1st century BCE and his lost book on Arabia), two names call more attention: Agatharchidès of Cnidus (2nd century BCE, attached to the court of the Lagid king Ptolemy VI) and Strabo (mid-1st century BCE-early 1st CE, a member of emperor Augustus’s entourage).⁵²

⁵¹ Diodorus of Sicily (1st century BCE) might be considered as a Greek ‘World Historian’ as his writings deal with almost all the known world of his time, but the title of his work gives us the clue of his project: *Historical Library*, that is a rationalized, sometimes updated and commented compilation of previous works—his *Library* nevertheless standing as a major source.

⁵² Due to their high positions, the two authors were able to have an eye on ‘unpublished’ reports delivered to the king or emperor or to travel with official missions. Agatharchidès quotes reports by Simmias and Ariston who were sent to explore the Red Sea by the Ptolemies kings, and the author also mentions travelers’ and merchants’ narratives he met. Strabo was a friend of the Roman prefect of Egypt Aelius Gallus who launched a military expedition in Arabia (up to now Yemen) in the late 1st century BCE. Part of Strabo’s information on Arabia comes from this friendship despite the failure of the expedition.

Although often referred to as a historian—he actually was—Agatharchidès was also much concerned with geography (see his numerous notes on botany, zoology, mineralogy) and above all with ethnography, *i.e.* the way of life on non-Greek people. He wrote a *History of Europa* (*Ta Kata ten Europa*, 49 ‘books’) and a *History of Asia* (*Ta Kata ten Asia*, 10 ‘books’), almost entirely lost; the best preserved but incomplete book is *On the Erythraean Sea* through very large excerpts collected by Diodorus of Sicily, Strabo and Photius.⁵³ The book discloses a very detailed and well documented description of the the two coasts of the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa, with a short excursus on the Persian Gulf; it is considered today the best information ever published of the antiquity and people of this region. Despite his methodological introduction often critical of his predecessors (*Book I*), Strabo produced a kind of ‘encyclopedic’ work beyond its title *Geography*. Relying most often on earlier sources and including also updated information of his time, the author associates geographical data with historical digressions and also with ethnological accounts and sometimes fanciful myths and *mirabilia*. To the credit of Strabo, he quotes several of his sources in short or long excerpts thus saving large parts of now lost works of his predecessors, and despite rightful criticisms his work remains essential for any research on the “world antiquity”: his descriptions of India up the Ganges mouths (based on Alexander’s companions reports and on Megasthenes’ work) endure as a major source to our modern knowledge when reasonably evaluated.

Beyond Pliny’s (the Elder) monumental and encyclopedic *Natural History* which would deserve a special paper but cannot be considered as a “World History”—it was not Pliny’s project—most of the historian authors of the Roman empire in Greek or in Latin languages were not really concerned with a vision of the world eventhough the geographical background of the narratives might be far away from Roma (*see n. 34*). For example Quintus Curtius wrote in Latin (*Historiae*) a book on Alexander’s expedi-

⁵³ Some modern scholars consider that this book might have been part of his *History of Asia*. Other ones suggest that a lost book of the Erythraean Sea (book IV ?) might have been a treaty on the Indian Ocean.

tion to the East and his campaigns (1st century CE): most of Curtius' information reproduces the 3rd century BCE Hellenistic sources even though the author offers a new moral appraisal of the personage. In the 2nd century CE, Arrian wrote in Greek another history of Alexander (*Anabasis of Alexander* and *Indika*) and the author was able to consult all the reports written after Alexander's death: his work remains today the most informative on Alexander's crucial history, but it only relies on the 3rd century BCE Hellenistic sources. In both cases (Q. Curtius, Arrian) the "tradition"/the Ancients (*see above*) sounds prevalent and no any updated information is provided: the authors are historians indeed, but without any "world" apprehension. The same could be said about Ammianus Marcellinus, a military high officer of the emperor Julian in his campaigns against the Persians up to the Euphrates (4th century CE), where the few descriptions of Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf in his *Res Gestae* are just replications of the early Hellenistic sources. The Roman author Dio Cassius (mid-2nd-early 3rd centuries CE) wrote in Greek a *History of Roma* from its earliest times (8th century BCE) to emperor Severus Alexander (death in 235 CE): centered on his Roman subject, the author seems more open-minded to the people, kingdoms and countries which were in contact with Roma in the East despite his inclination for wonders and marvels. Less renowned but also influential Roman historians, Florus, Justinus, Valleius Paterculus, Aurelius Victor, Eutropus, etc. are only considering a 'one-sided' narrative of the Roman history within the limits of the empire,⁵⁴ when the vision of a "globalized world" was already common among various intellectuals of the period (Ptolemy, etc.) and popular for the merchants/navigators and even for a more and more 'mixed' population of the empire.

⁵⁴ I do not take in consideration here the 'Christian Literature,' e.g. Eusebius of Caesarea (4th century CE) or Cosmas Indicopleustès (6th century CE, important for Ceylon).

IX. CONCLUSION

A short conclusion can be summed up in one question, a somehow contradiction which should be emphasized. At a time when the 'world' (Eurasian) remained almost physically unknown beyond the Mediterranean (6th-4th centuries BCE and even after Alexander's campaigns), Greek historians and geographers were already considering an imagined and desirable "world vision" as exemplified by Herodotus or Dicaearchus: their works were based on a philosophical approach—a "humanistic" view for both—more than on an analysis of not available reliable sources in their time and without the intrusion of the merchants, their works remain today heuristic. When the "world" was later discovered, most Greek and Latin historians came back to a more limited view of history, centered on their immediate political horizon (except Strabo the geographer) or historical project (Arian and Alexander's companions, Dio Cassius and the history of Rome). The question is why? There is no answer at hand. But a query should be claimed: does our modern concept of "globalization" and "world history" refers to the heuristic and philosophical ideas of our ancient precursors on the "humanity as a world," or to a much less humanistic vision, *i.e.* strategic (post-colonial), political, economical, etc., of our modern world?