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THE BRAHMANS' UTOPIA FROM THE GREEK SOURCES TO JOHN OF SALISBURY'S *POLICRATICUS*

The tradition of the *Alexander Romance* popularized the episode of the meeting between Alexander and the gymnosophists/Brahmans¹, which is also mentioned by several Greek sources, from the Hellenistic age to the late antiquity, and beyond². The image of the Brahmans is also widely spread among Christian authors³. As to the documents that re-elaborate the same episode, two are worth mentioning: the *Collatio Alexandri et Dindimi*⁴, the apocryphal correspondence between Alexander and Dindimus, head of the Brahmans, dating from the early 5th century⁵, and Palladius' treatise *De gentibus Indiae et Bragmanibus*⁶, also from the 5th century⁷. They gained

¹ Ps. Callisth. III 5-6. Still useful is the edition by C. Müller, *Arriani Anabasis et Indica [...] Reliqua Arriani, et scriptorum de rebus Alexandri M. fragmenta collegit, Pseudo Callisthenis historiam fabulosam ex tribus codicibus nunc primum edidit, Itinerarium Alexandri et indices adiecit C. Müller*, Parisiis 1846. It presents an extended version of the text by Pseudo-Callisthenes: it also includes the work attributed to Palladius *De Gentibus Indiae et Bragmanibus*. On this issue see: *Il Romanzo di Alessandro*, vol. II, eds. R. Stoneman, T. Gargiulo, Milano 2012, pp. 431-432. The more extensive version of Alexander's encounter with the gymnosophists can be found in the β -recension: L. Bergson, *Der griechische Alexanderroman. Rezension β* , Stockholm-Göteborg-Uppsala 1965. See also the edition of the manuscript L [in:] H. Van Thiel, *Leben und Taten Alexanders von Makedonien. Dergriechische Alexanderroman nach der Handschrift L*, Darmstadt 1974. In addition, see the Latin versions of the same episode [in:] Iulius Valerius «Alexander Polemius», *Res gestae Alexandri Macedonis*, ed. M. Rosellini, Monachii et Lipsiae 2004, and in the *Historia de preliis* by Leo the Archpriest, *Der Alexanderroman des Achipresbyters Leo*, ed. F. Pfister, Heidelberg 1913.

² Alexander's encounter with the Indian sages is mentioned by Strabo who quotes Aristobulus (XV 1, 61-62 = *FGrHist* 139 F 41) and then Onesicritus (XV 1, 63-65 = *FGrHist* 134 F 17a). In Plu. *Alex.* 64 and Clem. Al. *Strom.* VI 4, 38 we find narratives resembling that of *Alexander Romance*. Cf. Arr. *An.* VII 1, 5-6; Philostr. *VA* II 33. See also: Aen. Gaz. *Thphr.* 173-178, [in:] Aeneas Gazaeus et Zacarias Mitilenaeus, *De immortalitate animi et mundi*, ed. J.F. Boissonade, Parisiis 1836.

³ See almost Clem. Al. *Strom.* I 15, 71; III 7, 60; IV 4, 17; Hipp. *Haer.* I 24; Eus. *P. e.* VI 10, 14; Chrys. *Hom. in 2 Cor.* XV 3 (PG 61, 506); Cyr. Al. *Iuln.* IV 133 (PG 76, 705); Theodor. *Affect.* XII 44; Aug. *Civ.* XIV 17; XV 20; Isid. *Orig.* VIII 6, 17.

⁴ M. Steinmann, *Alexander der Grosse und die „nackten Weisen“ Indiens*, Berlin 2012.

⁵ On the datation of the *Collatio*, see: M. Steinmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-79.

⁶ W. Berghoff ed., *De gentibus Indiae et Bragmanibus*, Meisenheim am Glan 1967. There is also a Latin version of this text, attributed to Ambrose; see: T. Pritchard, *The "Ambrose" Text of Alexander and the Brahmans*, "Classica et Mediaevalia" 1993, 44, pp. 109-139.

⁷ On the datation of Palladius' *De gentibus Indiae*, see: B. Berg, *The Letter of Palladius on India, "Byzantion"* 1974, 44, pp. 5-16.

considerable fortune in the following centuries, thanks to their numerous rewritings⁸. In the texts written by the Greek authors the Brahmans are already characterized as an “alien” community, who possess a peculiar lifestyle and live at the margins of India, a region that was traditionally represented as a fabulous, distant country in the Far East, both fascinating and frightening⁹. The singularity of their conduct is a constant feature of any literary text that mentions them and describes their extraordinary image. The aim of this research is to illustrate: a) how the descriptions of the Greek authors reveal the *topos* of the spatial remoteness of the Brahmans from what the Greeks regarded as “civilization”; b) how later the same motif becomes even more evident in late antique sources and up to medieval texts¹⁰, among which a passage from John of Salisbury’s *Policraticus* is worthy of investigation.

The feature of the remoteness and separateness of the world of the Brahmans is already present in the indications provided by the Greek and late antique sources. The typical ideological-cultural pattern of the Greek thought assigns a symbolical condition of marginality to the Indian sages – as well as to other foreign peoples – from which the Greeks want to distance themselves¹¹.

According to the literary documents we possess on the Brahmans, it is not possible to identify a single tradition on their exact geographical location. On the contrary, we have several indications as to the place they were supposed to inhabit. Although some authors refer that the Brahmans lived by the Ganges¹², the *Refutatio omnium haeresium* (3rd century) reports that the river flowing along their territory is

⁸ On the medieval fortune of the *Collatio*, see: *A note on the Mediaeval History of the Collatio Alexandri cum Dindimo*, “Classica et Mediaevalia” 1954, 15, pp. 124-129.

⁹ In general about India as a land of “wonders” see: R. Wittkover, *Marvels of the East. A Study in the History of Monsters*, “Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes”, 1942, 5, pp. 159-197; J.S. Romm, *The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought. Geography, Exploration, and Fiction*, Princeton 1992, pp. 82-120; K. Karttunen, *India and the Hellenistic World*, Helsinki 1997, pp. 129-252. Moreover, P. Zumthor, *La mesure du monde*, Paris 1993, pp. 269-275 addresses the theme of India as a marvellous land, referring to medieval sources.

¹⁰ On the medieval sources dealing with the Brahmans, see the extensive article by: T. Hahn, *The Indian Tradition in Western Medieval Intellectual History*, “Viator” 1978, 9, pp. 213-234. See also: G. Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*, Cambridge 1956.

¹¹ This theme was developed by G. Piccaluga, *La mitizzazione del Vicino Oriente nelle religioni del mondo classico*, [in:] *Mesopotamien und seine Nachbarn*, eds. H. Nissen, J. Renger, Berlin 1982, pp. 573-612. On the motif of the island as a marginal space, see: G. Traina, *Fra antico e medioevo: il posto delle isole*, “Quaderni catanesi” 1986, 15, pp. 113-125.

¹² Str. XV 1, 69 and Arr. *Ind.* X 5 indicate that the Ganges is on Indian territory. Cf. Apul. *Flor.* VI. More explicitly the proximity of the Brahmans to the Ganges occurs in Porph. *Abst.* IV 17, 4 and Pall. *Gent. Ind.* I 1 (ed. Berghoff). It should be noted that in Pall. *Gent. Ind.* I 11 (ed. Berghoff) the Brahmans are indicated as “people” (ἔθνος), while in Porph. *Abst.* IV 17, 1 and in the previous Greek sources they are indicated with γένος (Str. XV 1, 59 = *FGrHist* 715 F 33; Arr. *Ind.* XI 1; Luc. *Fug.* 6), a term that shows how the Greeks considered them as a social “class”.

the Tagabena¹³ and the recension β of the *Alexander Romance* (5th century)¹⁴ the Euphrates¹⁵. As to the different information about their country, we should remember that Palladius' *De gentibus Indiae et Bragmanibus* refers that they lived in India and in Serica¹⁶. But we also read the information from Latin authors on their being naked and resisting cold winters and the snows of the Caucasus¹⁷. Finally, a further tradition places them in Ethiopia¹⁸. To this uncertain transmission of geographical information belong also the testimonies that place them in a solitary and wooded area in Northern India¹⁹, or that attest their wanderings in unspecified Indian deserts²⁰. The presence of woods on the land of the Brahmans is a widely documented *topos*, that starts from the account of the Hellenistic historian Megasthenes²¹. According to the descriptions we have of their lifestyle, they live close to nature and vegetation has an important role²². In the *Alexander Romance*, when the king reaches their region, he sees woods and a lot of fruit-laden trees²³. According to what is told in the *De gentibus Indiae et Bragmanibus* by Palladius, they rest while observing the forests and the sky, they listen to the birdsongs and the eagles' cry, they are covered in leaves and live outdoors²⁴; besides, this condition of isolation makes them happy²⁵. Along with the presence of woods in their territory, some sources underline that the Brahmans live

¹³ Hipp. *Haer.* I 24, 1. In *Gent. Ind.* II 4 (ed. Berghoff) the river *Tiberoboam* is mentioned. On the interpretation of ch. I 24 of the *Refutatio*, see C. Di Serio, *The Lifestyle of the Brahmans in the Refutatio omnium haeresium*, "Humanitas" 2020, 76, pp. 57-82.

¹⁴ This date was established by C. Jouanno, *Naissance et métamorphoses du Roman d'Alexandre. Domaine grec*, Paris 2002, pp. 247-248.

¹⁵ Ps.-Callisth. III 6 (ed. Bergson).

¹⁶ Pall. *Gent. Ind.* I 1 (ed. Berghoff).

¹⁷ Cic. *Tusc.* V 77; *Val. Max.* III 3, 6 ext.

¹⁸ Hld. *Aeth.* 10, 9-10. See the passage of Hier. *Ep.* 53, 1 quoted below. Several times in Jerome's texts the Brahmans are placed among the Indians and the gymnosophists among the Ethiopians: *In Ezech.* IV 130 (PL 25 col. 115); *Ep.* 107, 8, 3. On the confusion between India and Ethiopia in the ancient world see K. Karttunen, *India in Early Greek Literature*, Helsinki, 1989, pp. 134-138. All documents from ancient sources on the confusion between India and Ethiopia can be found [in:] P. Schneider, *L'Ethiopie et l'Inde. Interférences et confusions aux extrémités du monde antique (VIIIe siècle avant J.-C.-VIe siècle après J.-C.)*, Rome 2004.

¹⁹ *Amm.* XXIII 6, 33.

²⁰ *Aug. Civ.* XIV 17; XV 20; *Isid. Orig.* VIII 6, 17.

²¹ *Str.* XV 1, 59 = *FGrHist* 715 F 33. Cf. Theodor. *Affect.* 12, 44; Pall. *Gent. Ind.* II 7; 11; 13; 24; 37; 42; 57 (ed. Berghoff); *Tert. Apol.* 42, 1; Ps. *Ambr. Mor. Brachm.* II 11; 19 (ed. Pritchard).

²² See for instance, *Arr. An.* VII 1, 5; *Ind.* XI 7.

²³ Ps.-Callisth. 3, 5 (ed. Bergson).

²⁴ Pall. *Gent. Ind.* II 7 (ed. Berghoff): ἀναπαύονται βλέποντες ὕλας καὶ οὐρανόν. καὶ ἀκούομεν ὄρνεων ἦχον εὐμελῆ καὶ ἀετῶν κλαγγήν, φύλλα τε περιβεβλήμεθα καὶ ἀέρι ἐνδαισιώμεθα. "Now we take our ease, contemplating matter and the heaven. We listen to the sweet song of the birds and the clangour of eagles. We are clothed in leaves and live in the open air" (transl. by R. Stoneman, *Legends of Alexander the Great*, London-New York 2012).

²⁵ See Pall. *Gent. Ind.* II 42 (ed. Berghoff): διὰ τοῦτο χαίρομεν ἡμεῖς ἐν ἐρημίαις καὶ μέσαις ὕλαις καθεζόμενοι. "That is why were joyce to sit in the wilderness and the forests" (transl. by R. Stoneman).

far from any urban settlement²⁶. Porphyry's *De abstinentia* – dated to the 3rd century²⁷ – even describes them as reluctant to live a communal life, and therefore each of them has his own hut and lives apart from the others so as not to be obliged to talk²⁸. On the whole, the descriptions of the Greek authors show that the habitat of the Brahmans is characterized as a remote space, distant both geographically and culturally from the Greek world²⁹, and especially far from any urban standard of living.

If we then proceed to the cultural context of the Christian authors of the late antiquity, we clearly notice that the image of the Brahmans is symbolically transposed onto an uncommon, out-of-history and out-of-reality spatial dimension. In a letter by Jerome – who lived between the 4th and the 5th century – we read (*Ep.* 53, 1):

Apollonius – sive ille magus, ut vulgus loquitur, sive philosophus, ut Phytagorici tradunt – intravit Persas, transivit Caucasum, Albanos, Scythas, Massagetas, opulentissima Indiae regna penetravit et ad extremum latissimo Phison amne transmisso pervenit ad Bragmanas, ut Hiarcam in trono sedentem aureo et de Tantalii fonte potantem inter paucos discipulos de natura, de moribus et de siderum cursu audiret docentem; inde per Elamitas, Babylonios, Chaldaeos, Medos, Assyrios, Partos, Syros, Phoenices, Arabas Palestinam reversus Alexandriam perrexit, Aethiopiam adivit, ut gymnosophistas et famosissimam Solis mensam videret in sabulo.

Apollonius – or the magician, as common people say, or the philosopher, as the Pythagoreans say – went to the Persians, crossed the Caucasus, the Alban mountains, the Scythians, the Massageteans, and made it all the way to the rich kingdoms of India, and eventually came to the Brahmans, after crossing the wide river Phison so that he could hear Iarcas, sitting on a golden throne and drinking from the fountain of Tantalus, teaching amongst few disciples, about nature, customs, and the motion of the stars. From there via the Elamites, the Babylonians, the Chaldeans, the Medes, the Assyrians, the Parthians, the Syrians, the Phoenicians, and the Arabs, after having returned to Palestine, he arrived at Alexandria, and went to Ethiopia to see the Gymnosophists and the famous table of the sun in the sand³⁰.

²⁶ Str. XV 1, 59 = *FGrHist* 715 F 33. Palladius' text (*Gent. Ind.* II 43, ed. Berghoff) specifies that the Brahmans do not look for cities because they are full of dangers and ill-will, while according to Pseudo-Ambrose (*Mor. Brachm.* II 43, ed. Prichard) the reason is that in the cities there is a multitude of thieves.

²⁷ On the description of the gymnosophists/Brahmans in Porphyry's *De abstinentia*, see C. Di Serio, *Utopian Elements in Porphyry's De abstinentia*, "Studia Ceranea" 2020, 10, pp. 47-61.

²⁸ *Abst.* IV 17, 6.

²⁹ On the dichotomy between the norm of the Greeks and the diversity of the barbarians see: F. Hartog, *Le miroir d'Hérodote. Essai sur la représentation de l'autre*, Paris 1988, pp. 212-213; idem, *Mémoire d'Ulysse. Récits sur la frontière en Grèce ancienne*, Paris 1996, pp. 87-115. On the idea of the superiority of the Greeks over other peoples, see also the studies of: C. Tuplin, *Greek Racism? Observations on the Characters and Limits of Greek Ethnic Prejudice*, [in:] *Ancient Greeks West and East*, ed. G.R. Tsetschkladze, Leiden-Boston-Köln 1999, pp. 47-75; B. Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, Princeton-Oxford 2004.

³⁰ Translation by the author.

In this passage, reference is made to Apollonius of Tyana and his long journey to the East³¹. Beside the fact that this character is described in the sources as a super-human being³², what is more important for us is that the land of the Brahmins is here placed at the easternmost extremity, beyond the river Phison. According to a widely established tradition³³, reported by Jerome himself, this river could be identified with the Ganges, having its origin in Paradise and flowing through India³⁴.

In accordance with these connotative elements on the Eastern territories and on the land of the Brahmins, an Edenic image of their lifestyle emerges, which becomes an ideal model especially in late antique sources. Among them, a passage of the *Expositio totius mundi et gentium* – a text of the 4th century – is worth mentioning³⁵:

Post ipsam gentem quid aliudest? Venientibus ad occidentem Braxmani degunt; et ipsi sine imperio transigunt bene et detinent vicinorum bonitatem. Et est habitatio eorum mansionum quinque.

Beyond this people what else is there? The Brahmins encounter those who come to the Western lands. They conduct their daily lives well without government and they receive the same virtue of their neighbours. Their territory encompasses a five-day journey³⁶.

This short description shows the peculiar absence of any authority among the Brahmins, but this element does not prevent them from living a very serene and happy life. The text provides yet another interesting observation: the Brahmins are “good neighbours” (*bonitas vicinorum*)³⁷, with reference to the population of the Camarini, that are described in the previous chapters³⁸.

³¹ See *Vita Apollonii* by Philostratus. On the character, see the extensive work by: M. Dzielska, *Apollonius of Tyana in Legend and History*, Roma 1986.

³² J. Elsner, *Hagiographic Geography: Travel and Allegory in the Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, “The Journal of Hellenic Studies”, 1997, 117, pp. 22-37; Jas’ Elsner, *Beyond Compare: Pagan Saint and Christian God in Late Antiquity*, “Critical Inquiry”, 2009, 35/3, pp. 655-683. On the miracles accomplished by Apollonius of Tyana see J.A. Francis, *Subversive Virtue. Asceticism and Authority in the Second-Century Pagan World*, University Park, PA 1995, pp. 118-126.

³³ J. AJI 1, 3; Pall. *Gent. Ind.* I 1 (ed. Berghoff); Philost. III 10; Cosm. Ind. II 81; XI 16; XXIV 2.

³⁴ *Ep.* 125, 3: *ad Indiam pervenitur, et ad Gangem fluvium (quem Phison Sancta Scriptura commemorat) qui circumit totam terram Evila, et multa genera pigmentorum de paradisi dicitur fonte devehere. Cf. Hier. Sit. et nom., in Onomastica sacra, ed. P. De Lagarde, Gottingae 1870, p. 122; Fison (quod interpretatur caterva), fluvius, quem nostri Gangem vocant, de paradiso exiens et pergens ad Indiae regiones, post quae umpit in pelagus. Dicit autem Scriptura circum iri ab hoc universam regionem Evila, ubi aurum praecipuum nascitur et carbunculus lapis et prasinus.*

³⁵ *Expos. mundi* 8. Regarding the dating and context of the work see the introduction in the edition of *Expositio totius mundi*, ed. J. Rougé, Paris 1966. See the integration to the quoted text in B. Breloer, F. Bömer, *Fontes historiae religionum Indicarum*, Bonnae 1939, p. 185: *post ipsam gentem (sc. terram Eden inhabitantem).*

³⁶ Translation by the author.

³⁷ Here J. Rougé, *op. cit.*, p. 149, translates *bonitas vicinorum* as “les mêmes biens que leurs voisins”, i. e. “the same property as their neighbors”.

³⁸ *Exp. mundi* 4-7 (ed. Rougé). On the Camarini as one of the communities representing a Christianisation of utopias, as already described in the Hellenistic age, see: R. Stoneman, *Legends of Alexander...*,

The narration concerning them in the *Expositio* is incomplete, because the first part is missing, but it can be integrated with the shortened version of the *Descriptio totius mundi*³⁹. Summarizing the text of the *Descriptio* we learn first of all that the Camarini are said to live in the East, where a wide river flows that then splits into four: the Gihon, the Phison, the Tigris and the Euphrates. They are extremely pious and good-hearted, do not eat our bread, nor any other similar food, nor do they know fire, but they feed on what falls from the sky every day and drink wild honey and pepper. Their sun is so hot that they have to bathe in the river for a long time⁴⁰. Later, the text of the *Expositio* refers that “they live without a supreme authority and are self-governing”⁴¹. Then, in brief, we read about their singular customs: they have no illnesses, do not wear the usual clothes, but uncontaminated garments⁴²; they neither sow nor reap, but have extraordinary and rare goods, like precious stones⁴³; they live happily without working and never catch a disease, and know when they must die and live up to 120 years of age⁴⁴. Both in the *Descriptio* and in the *Expositio* is mentioned the fact that they have no *malitia* either in the body or in the soul⁴⁵. According to this tale, the Camarini possess an ideal, idyllic lifestyle where there is no imperfection and their main feature is that of a permanent condition of total bliss⁴⁶.

op. cit., pp. XIX-XXII; idem, *Tales of Utopia: Alexander, Cynics and Christian Ascetics*, [in:] *Philosophy and the Ancient Novel*, eds. M.P. Futre Pinheiro, S. Montiglio, Groningen 2015, pp. 51-63, in particular p. 56.

³⁹ The text of the *Expositio* has reached us headless, and there fore the beginning of the work can be integrated by the reduced version of the *Descriptio* [in:] J. Rougé's edition, *op. cit.*, the first four chapters belong to the *Descriptio*, of which chapter 4 constitutes the first part of the account on the Camarini. The second part of their description, i. e. chapters 5, 6, 7, belongs to the *Expositio*. Explanations on the whole complex textual history can be found [in:] J. Rougé's introduction, *op. cit.*, pp. 106-118.

⁴⁰ *Descr. mundi* 4 (ed. Rougé). On this passage see M. Humphries, *A New Created World: Classical Geographical Texts and Christian Contexts in Late Antiquity*, [in:] *Texts & Culture in Late Antiquity. Inheritance, Authority, and Change*, ed. J.H.D. Scourfield, Swansea, The Classical Press of Wales, 2007, pp. 47-49.

⁴¹ *Exp. mundi* 5 (ed. Rougé): *Suntautem et sine imperio se regentes uidelicet.*

⁴² See the whole passage of *Exp. mundi* 5 (ed. Rougé): *Neque enim vestimenta utuntur omnibus communia. sed ita inlibata est vestis eorum quae neque insordidari potest; et si hoc contigat, per ignis†gladium †loturam expectant, ardens melior fit.* “They do not use clothes common to all, but their clothes are so pure that they cannot get dirty, and if this happens, they rely on † the sword † of fire to purify them, for by burning them they become better” (translation by the author). It is worth mentioning that in the *Ethnica* by Stephen of Byzantium the same details are reported about the clothes of the Brahmans: cf. *Stephani Byzantii Ethnica. Vol. 1: A-Γ*, ed. M. Billerbeck, Berlin-New York 2006, lemma 164.

⁴³ *Exp. mundi* 6 (ed. Rougé).

⁴⁴ *Ibidem* 7 (ed. Rougé).

⁴⁵ *Descr. mundi* 4 and *Exp. mundi* 5 (ed. Rougé).

⁴⁶ R. Stoneman, *Legends of Alexander, op. cit.*, pp. XXI-XXII, clarifies that *Camarini* is the Latin form of Μακαρῖνοι ο Μακαρτοί, i. e. “The Blessed”, the Greek term that appears in the Ὀδοπορία ἀπὸ τοῦ παραδείσου ἄχρι τῶν Ῥωμαίων “The journey from Eden to the Romans”. This document has clear affinities with the *Expositio*: N. Pigulewskaja, *Bizanz auf den Wegen nach Indien. Ausder Geschichte des Byzantinischen Handels mit dem Orient vom 4. bis 6. Jahrhundert*, Berlin 1969, pp. 152-153. See also: U. Livadiotti in Anonimo del IV secolo, *Descrizione del mondo e delle sue genti*, eds. U. Livadiotti, M. Di Branco, Roma 2005, pp. 14-15.

Comparable to their customs is the Brahmins' lifestyle who share with them two features: the original goodness and the lack of any form of government. It should be noted that some narrative elements of the *Expositio* are particularly relevant with regard to the association between the Camarini and the Brahmins: 1) both groups are located in the East; 2) the description of the Camarini coincides with what the classical and late antique sources transmitted about the Brahmins; 3) the Camarini live in Eden and their heavenly condition is shared by the Brahmins. The emphasis on utopian traits in the representations of these communities clarifies how the image of the Brahmins was transmitted to John of Salisbury.

In this regard, it is worth remarking that many of the features assigned to the Camarini by the *Expositio* are reproduced in an almost identical way with regard to the Brahmins in the *Collatio Alexandri et Dindimi*. In short, in the second letter of the *Collatio*, Dindimus says to Alexander that the Brahmins have a simple diet; they have no diseases, but are perfectly healthy; equality makes them all rich; they have no laws and processes; they do not work; they do not plough the fields; they do not fish or hunt; they do not know the thermal baths; they sleep on the ground; they have no buildings, but live in caves, which are also their graves; they have no precious clothes or ornaments; they have no weapons and wage no wars; they do not fear death, because they reach an advanced age, nor have they tombs or urns⁴⁷. This kind of description is dominated by a rhetoric that defines an existence based on a series of "deficiencies" that can be positive or negative connotations, which in any case represent an idealized, utopian, and out-of-history lifestyle. The two descriptions of the Camarini in the *Expositio* and of the Brahmins in the *Collatio* highlight several positive traits, such as the absence of greed, of diseases or of a premature death, but at the same time negative elements emerge, such as the lack of productive activities and the absence of houses⁴⁸. In any case, the lifestyle of these communities is "atypical" if compared to the parameters of what Graeco-Roman culture considered to be the norm of civil life. In this regard, it should be remembered how Apuleius, a 2nd century writer, already expresses his admiration in the *Florida* for the gymnosophists, i.e. the naked sages of India, who do not know how to cultivate the land, tame animals or sift gold, but who have learned the practice of philosophy⁴⁹. Similarly, Palladius

⁴⁷ *Collatio* 2, 2-8 (ed. Steinmann). In addition, Dindimus states that the Brahmins do not go to theatrical performances, do not use rhetoric, and do not attend the schools of philosophers (2, 12-15). These elements also mark the distance from what classical culture considered as civilization.

⁴⁸ See in particular *Collatio* 2, 4-6 (ed. Steinmann). Negative opinions on the lifestyle of the Indian wise men emerge from Cicero, who attacks the barbarity of India because the sages spend all their lives naked and are insensitive to the snows and winters of the Caucasus (*Tusc.* V 77), and from Curtius Rufus, who defines them as *agrestem et horridum genus* (VIII 9, 31).

⁴⁹ Apul. *Flor.* VI.

claims that the Brahmans “keep no four-footed animals, and use no farmland, no iron, no houses, no fire, no bread, no wine, no clothing, nor any of the other things that are designed for use or enjoyment”⁵⁰. In the specific context of this passage, the life of the Brahmans is characterized by ascetic renunciations, as it is evidenced by the explicit connection between the Christian monks and the idealized Indian sages⁵¹.

This idealization of the Brahmans as a utopian community appears in explicit terms in the *Policraticus sive de nugis curialium et vestigiis philosophorum* by John of Salisbury written in the 12th century, in which the author mainly deals with questions of political theory⁵². In Book IV, which focuses on the behaviour of the prince, there is a chapter that investigates the optimal duration of a reign to guarantee the stability of faith and justice. The example given in this connection is a letter that the Brahmans sent Alexander⁵³ asking to be spared his military assault⁵⁴:

Fertur enim quod cum magnus Alexander ultimum litus Oceani perlustraret, Brachmanorum insulam debellare parabat. Ad quem illi in his verbis epistolam miserunt: Audivimus, invictissime rex, proelia tua, et felicitatem victoriae ubique subsecutam. Sed quid erit homini satis, cui totus non sufficit orbis? Divitias non habemus, quarum cupiditate nos debeat expugnare; omnium bona omnibus communia sunt. Esca est nobis pro divitiis, pro cultibus et auro, vilis et rara vestis. Feminae autem nostrae non ornantur ut placeant; quem quidem ornamentorum cultum, potius oneri deputant quam decori. Etenim nesciunt in augenda pulchritudine plus affectare quam quod natae sunt. Antra nobis duplicem usum praestant, tegumentum in vita, in morte sepulturam. Regem habemus, non pro justitia, sed pro nobilitate conservanda. Quem enim locum haberet vindicta, ubi nulla fit iniustitia? His verbis motus Alexander nullam ratus victoriam, si eorum pacem perpetuam turbaret, in quiete sua dimisit. Et forte, si eos bello fuisset aggressus, minime praevaluisset adversus innocentes, eo quod innocentia non facile superatur et veritas suis viribus constans de malitia quantumvis armata triumphat.

It is told that when Alexander was scouring the farthest coast of the Ocean, he was preparing to subjugate the island of the Brahmans. They sent him a letter with these words: “Oh invincible king, we learnt of your battles and of your victories everywhere. But what will suffice the man for whom the whole world is not enough? We have no riches for whose possession we must fight, everything we have is collective. Instead of riches, luxuries and gold we have

⁵⁰ Pall. *Gent. Ind.* I 11 (ed. Berghoff). Transl. by R. Stoneman.

⁵¹ On the issue of the asceticism of the Brahmans as an ideal for Christian ascetics, see: B. Berg, *Dandamis, an Early Christian Portrait of Indian Asceticism*, [in] “Classica et Mediaevalia” 1970, 31, pp. 269-305.

⁵² See the critical edition Ioannis Saresberiensis Episcopi Carnotensis, *Policratici sive de nugis curialium et vestigiis philosophorum libri VIII*, ed. C.C.J. Webb, 2 vols., Oxonii 1909, and the studies of C.J. Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, Tempe, AZ 2005 and *A Companion to John of Salisbury*, eds. C. Grelard, F. Lachaud, Leiden 2015.

⁵³ M. Steinmann, *Eine fiktive Depesche der Gymnosophisten an Alexander den Großen: die Epistula Bragmanorum ad Alexandrum als Einleitung zu einer moralisch-ethnographischen Epitome*, “Classica et Mediaevalia” 2015, 66, pp. 221-242, has demonstrated that this *Epistula Bragmanorum* would be a compendium of the *Collatio Alexandri et Dindimi*. He also published the critical edition of the *Collatio, op. cit.*, and in the above quoted article he has offered a critical edition of the *Epistula*.

⁵⁴ *Policraticus* IV 11 (ed. Webb).

food and inexpensive and few clothes. Our women do not adorn themselves in order to be admired; they believe that the habit of ornamentation is a burden rather than a decoration. And therefore, they do not wish to enhance their beauty more than what nature gave them from their birth. Our caverns have a twofold function, shelter during our lifetime, and grave after our death. We have a king not for the preservation of justice, but of nobility. Indeed, what is the use of revenge, where there is no injustice?" Struck by these words, Alexander decided that it would not be a victorious accomplishment, if he were to disrupt their enduring tranquillity. And if he had assaulted them with a war, he would never have prevailed against innocent people, because innocence is not easily overcome and the truth which is firmly based upon its own strength triumphs over malice however armed⁵⁵.

This passage is clearly a re-elaboration of the Latin tradition on the episode of the meeting between Alexander and the gymnosophists and the above mentioned letter is a reworking of the second letter in the *Collatio*⁵⁶, which is mostly quoted⁵⁷.

Turning to a detailed analysis of this passage, the first element we can observe in this letter of the Brahmins is that they live on an island beyond the last beach on the Ocean. As M. Steinmann noted, the presence of the island in the tradition reported by John of Salisbury reveals much older traces⁵⁸. In fact, the recensions γ and ϵ of the *Alexander Romance*⁵⁹ already mention Alexander's decision to go and explore an island: here he finds men completely naked – later defined Brahmins⁶⁰ – who address him with words very similar to those in the Brahmins' letter in the *Policraticus*. In addition, the first part of Palladius' *De gentibus Indiae et Bragmanibus* already mentions some information about the island of Taprobane⁶¹, which, in the process of rework-

⁵⁵ Translation by the author.

⁵⁶ As to the philological questions on the derivation of the *Policraticus*' passage from the *Collatio*, see M. Steinmann, *Eine fiktive Depesche der Gymnosophisten an Alexander den Großen...*, *op. cit.*, in particular pp. 223-226. The article of G. Cary, *A note on the Mediaeval History of the Collatio Alexandri cum Dindimo*, "Classica et Mediaevalia" 1954, 15, pp. 124-129, illustrates how the *Collatio* was variously included in their works by medieval moralists and historians. Cf. R. Gelders, *Genealogy of Colonial Discourse: Hindu Traditions and the Limits of European Representation*, "Comparative Studies in Society and History" 2009, 51, pp. 563-589, especially pp. 568-569, that explores the literary and cultural context in which the *Collatio* and the Brahmins were re-used by Christian thinkers for their internal theological debate.

⁵⁷ Compare *Collatio* 2, 6 (ed. Steinmann): *Quin potius in defossis telluris speluncis aut concavis montium latebris capaciter habitamus. [...] Tutius nos defendit ab imbre spelunca quam tegula, cuius geminus nobis usus est: mansioni dum vivimus proficit, dum morimur sepulturae*. See also *Collatio* 2, 7 (ed. Steinmann): *Feminae nostrates non ornantur, ut placeant. Quae quidem ornamentorum cultum magis oneri deputant quam decori. Etenim nesciunt in augenda pulchritudine plus affectare quam natae sunt*.

⁵⁸ M. Steinmann, *Eine fiktive Depesche der Gymnosophisten an Alexander den Großen...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 226-227, refers to the recension ϵ of *Alexander Romance*, and *Suda* β 524.

⁵⁹ Ps.-Callisth. II 35a, 1 in the edition by R. Stoneman – T. Gargiulo (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 225-227. R. Stoneman clarifies that the recension γ derives from ϵ , which is dated to the middle of the 7th century: *Il Romanzo di Alessandro*, vol. I, eds. R. Stoneman, T. Gargiulo, Milano 2007, p. LXXX. See the recension ϵ in J. Trunpf ed., *Anonymi Byzantini Vita Alexandri Regis Macedonum*, Stuttgartiae 1974, pp. 105-108, ch. 30, 1-5.

⁶⁰ Ps.-Callisth. II 35a, 3 (ed. Stoneman-Gargiulo).

⁶¹ Pall. *Gent. Ind.* I 4 (ed. Berghoff).

ing and compiling of the Byzantine chronicles – such as that of George the Monk, dating from the 9th century⁶² –, becomes the island of the Brahmans⁶³.

In the letter quoted by the *Policraticus* several factors emerge that closely link this text to the earlier tradition on the customs of the Brahmans. The motif of the absence of female ornaments is connected to the *topos* of the Brahmans' continence, which is a rather widespread trait in the writings of the late antique authors who represent them⁶⁴, and in particular in the treatises that rework the episode of the meeting with Alexander, including the *Collatio*⁶⁵ and Palladius' *De Gentibus Indiae*⁶⁶. This theme is naturally associated with that of the Brahmans' humble garments: it is a re-elaboration on the feature of their nudity which appears quite often in the sources⁶⁷. In the Brahmans' letter, reported in the *Policraticus* – which reproduces information from the *Collatio*⁶⁸ – it is said that their caves have a double function: they are their shelters, but they are also their tombs⁶⁹. On this regard, it should be considered that already in Pseudo-Callisthenes' text they reside in "huts and caves" (ὑπὸ καλύβας καὶ σπήλαια)⁷⁰, while in Iulius Valerius' work their houses are carved out of the ground with their own hands⁷¹. On this figurative level of the Brahmans' description, we can see how the conditions of the living and of the dead are symbolically equated. This contributes to the definition of a conventional image of these figures, who have no contact with the real world. They rise to an extreme level of spiritualization.

⁶² C. De Boor ed., *Georgii Monachi Chronicon*, vol. I, Lipsiae 1904, pp. 35-37, ch. I 19.

⁶³ Cf. R. Stoneman, *Naked Philosophers: The Brahmans in the Alexander Historians and the Alexander Romance*, "The Journal of Hellenic Studies" 1995, 115, pp. 99-114, in particular see: p. 107, n. 52.

⁶⁴ Already in Str. XV 1, 65 (=FGrHist 134 F 17 a) the Brahman Mandanis tells Onesicritus, a general of Alexander, that one should not be ashamed to walk around naked, and to live with simplicity (ἀπὸ λιπῶν). Starting from the earliest Greek sources, the theme of the absence of ornaments is in fact connected with the nudity of the Brahmans. D. Chr. Or. 49, 6 says that the Indian select the Brahmans as superintendents and advisors to the king because they excel in continence, justice and familiarity with the sacred.

⁶⁵ Several times in the fifth letter of the *Collatio*, addressed to Dindimus, Alexander argues against the excessive *continentia* of the Brahmans, who do not act freely, but are forced to live according to strict prescriptions (*Collatio* 5, 1; 3; 5).

⁶⁶ Pall. *Gent. Ind.* I 13 (ed. Berghoff): the people (τὸ ἔθνος) of the Brahmans do not become numerous because of their physical continence (ἐγκράτεια) and their bad geographical position.

⁶⁷ The Greek-Roman sources on the nudity of the gymnosophists/Brahmans are analyzed by K. Karttunen, *op. cit.*, Helsinki 1997, pp. 55-64.

⁶⁸ *Collatio* 2, 6 (ed. Steinmann).

⁶⁹ This information is also in the recensions of the *Historia de preliis*: A. Hilka, K. Steffens eds., *Historia Alexandri Magni (Historia de preliis). Rezension J¹*, Meiseheim am Glan 1979, p. 184; A. Hilka ed., *Historia Alexandri Magni (Historia de preliis). Rezension J² (Orosius – Rezension)*, II Teil, Meiseheim am Glan 1977, p. 84; K. Steffens ed., *Die Historia de preliis Alexandri Magni. Rezension J³*, Meiseheim am Glan 1975, p. 134.

⁷⁰ Ps.-Callisth. III 4 (ed. Bergson). γυμνοσοφιστὰς ὑπὸ καλύβας καὶ σπήλαια οἰκοῦντας.

⁷¹ Iul. Val. III 4 (ed. Rosellini): *quae humi manu exhauriunt aditibus perangusta*.

In order to understand the reception of the image of the Brahmins in the text of John of Salisbury, we must consider that the process of idealization of the Indian sages has its roots first of all in the Graeco-Roman culture, and then develops in the cultural context of late antiquity, where representative models of a symbolic type are used in connection to notions, themes and ideas, typical of the Christian world, in which the elevation of meanings to a spiritual level is predominant⁷². Later, the writings of the medieval chronographers and encyclopaedists introduce new developments in a context of revival, elaboration and expansion of older themes⁷³. In addition, the genre of the literary representations of utopian communities⁷⁴ was already popular first in the Greek culture and then in Latin one – as in the case of Camarini – and its legacy had come as far as John of Salisbury.

On the other hand, peculiar to the text of the *Policraticus* are the relevant terms used to define the life of the Brahmins, which present a special semantic intensity: *pax perpetua*, *quies*, and later *innocentia*. This representation transfers them symbolically to a category of human beings that live peacefully in the spirit of an original purity, with no conflicts or external intrusions, so much so that even Alexander, the world ruler, abstains from conquering them. Another new element is the political organization of the Brahmins: John of Salisbury reports that they have a king, not for keeping *iustitia*, but *nobilitas*, which means that the function of their authority is not political but moral, that is to preserve the integrity of their customs⁷⁵. This idea is explained later when it is said that they have no injustice and therefore no *vindicta* (“revenge”) is ever necessary. This element confirms the idea of a totally peaceful existence, according to the values of justice and nobility of character.

Finally, another important element in the Brahmins' letter reported in the *Policraticus* contributes to the image of their Edenic life. They possess no riches and they share everything. The motif of the lack of possessions is much older, because it is

⁷² In this regard, the essay by B. Berg, *Dandamis... op. cit.*, is emblematic, as the author refers to Palladius' *De Gentibus Indiae*, but also finds connections between the contents of this text and Hipp. *Haer.* I 24.

⁷³ See R. Gelders, *op. cit.*, p. 569: “This edifying image of the Brahmins appeared and reappeared prior to the age of exploration”. The author then refers to the medieval works in which the Brahmins reappear prior to the age of exploration, including John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*, Vincent de Beauvais' *Speculum Maius*, Goffredo di Viterbo's *Pantheon*, and several other later authors. Cf. G. Cary, *A note on the Medieval... op. cit.*; T. Hahn, *op. cit.*

⁷⁴ On utopian communities in Graeco-Roman literature, see J. Ferguson, *Utopias of the Classical World*, Thames & Hudson, London 1975; M. Winiarczyk, *Die Hellenistischen Utopien*, Berlin 2011; K. Vlassopoulos, *Greeks and Barbarians*, Cambridge 2013, pp. 200-206; I. Sulimani, *Imaginary Islands in the Hellenistic Era: Utopia on the Geographical Map*, [in:], *Myths on the Map. The Storied Landscapes of Ancient Greece*, ed. G. Hawes, Oxford 2017, pp. 221-242.

⁷⁵ The term *nobilitas* is used here to define nobility of spirit.

a recurring one in the testimonies of Greek⁷⁶ and Christian authors⁷⁷. In this regard, it should be noted that in the second letter of the *Collatio*, Dindimus states that: “equality in poverty makes everyone rich”⁷⁸ and then that God the Father promised all those who were begotten as brothers “a shared inheritance of property” (*communium bonorum hereditas*)⁷⁹. In the specific context of the *Collatio*, which can be traced back to the apologetic literature⁸⁰, the eschatological implication is quite evident, but it is not implied in the text of the *Policraticus*. In the various recensions of Leo the Archbishop’s *Historia de preliis*, which contains a revised version of the *Collatio*⁸¹, Dindimus states: *divitias non amamus*⁸². These words are repeated almost identically in the passage of John of Salisbury: *divitias non habemus*. However, it is worth noting that the statement on the collective ownership of goods (*omnia bona omnibus communia sunt*) is peculiar to the passage from the *Policraticus*.

All in all, this document amplifies and takes to the extreme a profile that had already been drawn, in similar terms, from the previous writings on the Brahmins. They are shown as a utopian community, located in a faraway space and in a non-historical temporality, that is to say, in an essentially idealized dimension. In this regard, the impact of constructing such an image is evidenced by the fact that this passage from John of Salisbury’s *Policraticus* became a model for several later authors, such as Vincent of Beauvais⁸³ and Ranulf Higden⁸⁴. Both their works, the *Speculum*

⁷⁶ Strabo quoting Megasthenes (XV 1, 59 = *FGrHist* 715 F 33) reports that the Brahmins stay out of town, and live “simply” (ἁπλῶς) on blankets of rags and skins.

⁷⁷ In Palladius’ treatise *De gentibus Indiae et Bragmanibus*, reference is made several times to the fact that the Brahmins despise gold and material goods (II 10; 16; 20; 25; 37; 49; 52).

⁷⁸ *Collatio* 2, 3 (ed. Steinmann): *omnes divites facit paupertatis equalitas*.

⁷⁹ *Ibidem* 2, 5 (ed. Steinmann): *quos nobis fratres eadem natura progenuit et quibus ab uno Deo patre communium bonorum spondetur hereditas*.

⁸⁰ On the connection between the *Collatio* and the texts of the Christian apologists, see C. Morelli, *Sulle tracce del romanzo e della novella*, “Studi italiani di filologia classica” 1920, 1, pp. 25-100; E. Liénard, *La Collatio Alexandri et Dindimi*, “Revue Belge de Philologie et d’Histoire” 1936, 15, pp. 819-838.

⁸¹ The version of the *Collatio* interpolated in the *Historia de preliis* is commonly called *Collatio III*. On this question see M. Steinmann, *Alexander der Grosse...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-29.

⁸² See A. Hilka, K. Steffens eds., *op. cit.*, p. 182; A. Hilka ed., *op. cit.*, p. 80; K. Steffens ed., *op. cit.*, p. 134.

⁸³ At the end of the fifth Book of the *Speculum Historiale* there is an *Epylogus de pace Bragmanorum cum Alexandro*, containing a letter from the Brahmins to Alexander, and then a summarized version of the *Collatio Alexandri et Dindimi*. The entire sequence of texts is reported in the analytical study of I. Villaroel Fernández, *La Collatio Alexandri et Dindimi según Vicente de Beauvais. Estudio y edición crítica de la versión del Speculum historiale*, “Cuadernos de Filología Clásica. Estudios Latinos” 2016, 36/2, pp. 233-253.

⁸⁴ At the end of the third Book of the *Polychronicon* there is a chapter entirely dedicated to the arrival of Alexander on the Brahmins’ island. In this chapter we read a re-elaboration of the *Collatio*, where the beginning of the first letter, attributed to Dindimus, closely recalls the words of the letter sent to Alexander by the Brahmins in the *Policraticus*. See the text in *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higdenmonks Cestrensis. English translations of John Trevisa and of an unknown writer of the fifteenth century*, ed. J.R. Lumby, vol. III, London 1871, pp. 454-478.

historiale – dated to the 13th century – and the *Polychronicon* – which dates back to the 14th century – presenta section with a letter of the Brahmans to Alexander, and then an apocryphal epistolary between Dindimus, king of the Brahmans, and Alexander. All these passages show several lexical similarities with the quoted text of the *Policraticus*⁸⁵. The coincidence of the same expressions and themes implies not only a mechanical transmission of data from one text to another, but allows us to presume a process of standardization of stereotypes, reproduced to “construct” an image, that of the Indian sages, functional to the definition of cultural and conceptual models of Western civilization. Such a wide production of *topoi* has its roots in Greek culture, which constructed narratives on the Indian wise men as a reality distant from its own world, but in some cases already idealized them as a model of wisdom⁸⁶. The ideal portrait of the Brahmans became later widely consolidated among the Christian authors who, as R. Gelders observed, thought of them and described them as “the proto-Christian expressions of religion in the East”⁸⁷. From the late antiquity, when the circulation of different versions of the *Alexander Romance* and other related texts dealing with the encounter between Alexander and the Brahmans – namely the *Collatio Alexandri et Dindimi* and Palladius' *De Gentibus Indiae* – became widespread, medieval polygraphs and moralists received and adopted the same cultural device of creating a model for an ideal Eastern community whose customs were Christian “by nature”⁸⁸. The Eastern community of the Brahmans living at the margin of the then known world becomes the emblem of a perfect lifestyle, in which the original human innocence, and the happiness of the state of nature are fully preserved⁸⁹.

Now just a few final observations. The construction of the image of the Brahmans – especially in the terms offered by John of Salisbury – encompasses elements that will appear in the texts of Renaissance utopias, first of all the well-known one by Thomas

⁸⁵ On the textual coincidences between the *Epylogus* in *Speculum Historiale*, V 66, and chapter IV 11 of the *Policraticus*, see I. Villaroel Fernández, *op. cit.*, pp. 235-236.

⁸⁶ On the idealization of India in Graeco-Roman sources, see A. Zambrini's essays: *Gli Indiká di Megastene*, “Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa” 1982, s. III, 12/1, pp. 71-149; (1985), *Gli Indiká di Megastene. II*, “Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa” 1985; s. III, 15/3, pp. 781-853. On the idealized “Eastern wisdom”, see: K. Karttunen, *Greeks and Indian Wisdom*, [in:] (eds.), *Beyond Orientalism. The Work of Wilhelm Halbfass and Its Impact on Indian and Cross-Cultural Studies*, eds. E. Franco, K. Preisendanz, Amsterdam-Atlanta 1997, pp. 117-122.

⁸⁷ R. Gelders, *op. cit.*, p. 565. See also p. 571: “While the «austere» Brahmans were represented as proto-Christians, they were thought to guard the central aspects of true religion: good morals, faith, and the belief in the biblical God”.

⁸⁸ Pall. *Gent. Ind.* I 11 clearly states that the Brahmans were “almost” Christians: “They reverence God and have some slight knowledge of him, and although they are unable to analyse the ways of providence in a sophisticated manner, they never the less pray unceasingly” (transl. by R. Stoneman).

⁸⁹ On the Noble Savage and the state of nature as an expression of “primitivism” in medieval sources, see what G. Boas had already collected, *Primitivism and Related Ideas in the Middle Ages*, Baltimore 1948, pp. 129-153.

More⁹⁰, published in 1516. The ideal community imagined by the famous humanist also lives on an island⁹¹. The Utopians, like the Brahmans, practice virtue and live according to nature⁹², wear simple clothes⁹³, their women do not use embellishments⁹⁴; moreover they despise precious metals⁹⁵ and deeply abhor war⁹⁶. Finally, the most relevant connection to the text of John of Salisbury is that in More's utopian community there is an abundance of goods for all⁹⁷. If we consider all these aspects, it is possible to presume that the works describing the Brahmans⁹⁸, or in any case the numerous literary texts in which they are mentioned, were among the sources used by More to imagine the society of Utopia. Although in More's work these elements are not supplemented by other traits peculiar to the Brahmans in ancient sources, it is quite clear that the humanist writer imagined a utopian community according to a series of cultural models already elaborated for groups such as the Brahmans, or the Camarini⁹⁹, who represented the best of all possible worlds, founded on an ideal, idyllic and untimely happiness.

⁹⁰ J.D.M. Derrett, *Thomas More and Joseph the Indian*, "Journal of Royal Asiatic Society" 1962, 1/2, pp. 18-34, already assumed that the way of life of the gymnosophists, described by Greek sources, might have inspired More's treatise (pp. 21-22). See also: G. Desantis in Pseudo-Palladio, *Le genti dell'India e i brahmani*, Roma 1992, pp. 7-8. See the observations of: R. Stoneman, *Tales of Utopia: Alexander, Cynics and Christian Ascetics*, [in:] *Philosophy and the Ancient Novel*, eds. M.P. Futre Pinheiro, S. Montiglio, Groningen 2015, pp. 51-63, in particular p. 53, where the scholar admits that the lifestyle of the Brahmans can be defined as "utopia", even if the Renaissance utopias, properly speaking, have to do with politics.

⁹¹ The first chapter of Book II of *Utopia* begins with *Utopiensium insula*. See the edition: T. More, *Utopia: Latin Text and English Translation*, eds. G.M. Logan, R.M. Adams, C.H. Miller, Cambridge 1995.

⁹² T. More, *op. cit.*, p. 162: *Nempe virtutem definiunt, secundum naturam vivere ad id siquidem a deo insitutos esse nos*.

⁹³ *Ibidem*, p. 132: *Iam in vestibis vide quam paucis operi segeant*.

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 194: *Ut enim formam naturalem non tueri segnis atque inertis ducunt, sic adiumentum ab fucis quaerere infamis apud illos insolentia est*.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 150: *Ita omnibus curant modis, uti apud se aurum argentumque in ignominia sint*.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 200: *Bellum utpote rem plane beluinam, ne culli tamen beluarum formae in tam assiduo, atque homini est usu, summopere abominantur*.

⁹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 144: *Quem populi morem necesse est omnium rerum copia sequi*.

⁹⁸ See D.F. Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe. Vol. II. A Century of Wonder*, Chicago-London 1970-1977, pp. 364-365: "it appears from the two verses that prefix the early editions that More had in mind a re-creation of the ideal state of the Gymnosophists of India celebrated in medieval and contemporary writings". R. Gelders, *op. cit.*, p. 572, n. 34, refers to these pages.

⁹⁹ Beside the Camarini there is a large number of ideal communities that share similar traits to those of the Brahmans. Just to give an example, see the long section on the models of men who abstain from animal food in Porphyry's *De Abstinencia* (IV, 2-18), where the author recalls a series of "groups" (ἔθνη), who followed this prescription: the Greeks of ancient times, belonging to a "golden lineage", the Spartans of the Lycurgus era, the Egyptian priests, the Essenes among the Jews, the Syrians, the Magi among the Persians and the gymnosophists among the Indians. R. Stoneman, *Legends of Alexander...*, *op. cit.*, pp. XIX-XXII, had identified other ideal communities described by Greek authors, namely Theopompus' Meropis, Euhemerus' Panchaea, and Iambulus' Island of the Sun, and then the utopian societies of Jewish-Christian area, such as that of the *Narrative of Zosimus*, and that of the *History of the Rechabites*. See also idem, *Tales of Utopia...*, pp. 52-56. On the Rechabites, see the study by C. Jouanno, *Des Gymnosophistes aux Réchabites: une utopie antique et sa christianisation*, "L'Antiquité Classique" 2010, 79, pp. 53-76.

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THE BRAHMANS' UTOPIA FROM THE GREEK SOURCES TO JOHN OF SALISBURY'S *POLICRATICUS*

S u m m a r y

This work focuses on the Graeco-Roman sources which describe the remote space inhabited by the Brahmans, the Indian sages who met Alexander the Great. The aim of the research is to illustrate: a) the impact of the descriptions by Greek authors who employ the *topos* of the spatial remoteness of the Brahmans from the Western world; b) how the same theme becomes even more evident in the late antique sources up to the medieval texts, among which a passage from John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* constitutes a relevant part of the investigation.

Keywords: Brahmans, Alexander, Island, Utopia, *Policraticus*

UTOPIA BRAMINÓW – OD ŹRÓDEŁ GRECKICH PO *POLICRATICUS* JANA Z SALISBURY

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Artykuł skupia się na grecko-rzymskich źródłach, opisujących odległy obszar zamieszkiwany przez braminów, hinduskich mędrców, którzy spotkali się z Aleksandrem Wielkim. Celem badania jest przedstawienie: a) wpływu opisów greckich autorów, którzy posługują się toposem oddalenia przestrzennego braminów od świata zachodniego; b) w jaki sposób ten sam motyw staje się bardziej widoczny w późnoantycznych i średniowiecznych źródłach, spośród których fragment dzieła *Policraticus* Jana z Salisbury stanowi znaczącą część badania.

Słowa kluczowe: bramini, Aleksander, wyspa, utopia, *Policraticus*