Introduction.

The author of this work composed in the middle of the First Century CE seems from internal evidence to be an Egyptian Greek who had made some of the journeys which he describes. The language is the normal *koine* of the period. There is a lost work of Egyptian geography entitled *On the Erythraean Sea* which was written by Agatharchides of Cnidus. It is quoted in Photius Codex 250, as well as Diodorus 3 12-48 and Strabo 16 4 5-20. For text of fragments see Burstein (ed. and trans.) *Agatharchides of Cnidus On the Erythraean Sea* (Hakluyt Society 1989). The ‘Red Sea’ has its usual meaning of ‘Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean’ found in early geography. *Periplus* lit. ‘circumnavigation’ was the standard title for treatises on sea routes and as such rarely contain much information about places inland. Fragments of similar works will be found along with this text in Müller *Geographi Graeci Minores* vol 1 Didot (Paris 1855; reprinted (Hildesheim 1965). The earliest ms. (Tenth Century), which wrongly ascribes authorship to Arrian, has an interesting history. It originally belonged to the Heidelberg Library to which it was restored in 1816 after being taken to Rome during the Thirty Years War (1618-1648 CE) and from there to Paris by Napoleon. The first published edition by Froben (1533) was done from a corrupt copy and needed substantial correction when the Heidelberg ms. became available for collation. Schoff *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* trans. and ed. (London 1912) pp 7-15 was the first proper attempt to site the work historically and is the basis for all later scholarship on the *Periplus*. The work comprises sixty six chapters, most of which are simply substantial paragraphs. It contains lists of the goods traded, some of which are of uncertain interpretation. The importance of the *Periplus* lies in the fact that it is the earliest evidence we have in western literature for countries situated to the east of the mouths of the Ganges. Useful editions are Huntingford, G.W.B. *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* (London 1980) and Casson, L. *The Periplus Maris Erythraei* (text and commentary) (Princeton University Press 1989).
Greek Text. Ed. Fabricius (Leipzig, 1883)

60. Τῶν δὲ τοπικῶν ἐμπορίων τε καὶ ὁμοίων, εἰς οὓς οἱ τε ἀπὸ τῆς Λιμυρίκης καὶ ἀπὸ ἄρχου πλέοντες κατάγονται, ἐπισημότερα καὶ κατὰ τὸ ἐξῆς κείμενα ἐστὶν ἐμπόρια Καμάρα καὶ Πωδούκη καὶ Σώπατμα, ἐν οἷς τοπικὰ μὲν ἐστὶ πλοία μέχρι Λιμυρίκης παραλεγόμενα τὴν γῆν, ἔτερα δ᾽ ἐκ μονοξύλων πλοίων μεγίστων κατεξεζευγμένα, λεγόμενα σάγγαρα, τὰ δ᾽ εἰς τὴν Χρυσὴν καὶ εἰς τὸν Γάγγην διαίροντα κολανδία ὅταν μέγιστα.

63. Μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα, εἰς τὴν ἀνατολὴν πλεόντων καὶ τὸν ὠκεανὸν ἐν δεξιοῖς ἐχόντων, εὐώνυμα δὲ τὰ λοιπὰ μέρη ἔξωθεν παραπλέοντων, ὁ Γάγγης ἀπαντὸ καὶ ἡ περὶ αὐτὴν ἑσχάτη δῆς ἀνατολῆς ἔτερος, ἡ Χρυσή. Ποταμὸς δ᾽ ἐστιν αὐτὸς ὁ Γάγγης λεγόμενος μέγιστος τῶν κατὰ τὴν Ἑλλάδαν ἀποθαίνον δ καὶ ἀνάβασιν τὴν αὐτὴν ἔχον τῷ Νείλῳ, κατὰ δὲ καὶ ἐμπορίον ἐστιν ὀμώνυμον τῷ ποταμῷ, ὁ Γάγγης, διὰ οὗ φέρεται τὸ τε καλάβαθρον καὶ ἡ Γαγγητικὴ νάρδος καὶ πανικὸν καὶ σινδόνες αἱ διαφοράται, αἱ Γαγγητικαὶ λεγόμεναι. Λέγεται δὲ καὶ καλαπόθραπος καὶ περί τούτων τοὺς τόπους ἐναι, νόμωμα τε χρυσοῦ, ὁ λεγόμενος κάλτης. Κατ᾽ αὐτὸν δὲ τὸν ποταμὸν νῆσος ἐστίν ωκεάνιος, ἐσχάτη τῶν πρὸς τὴν ἀνατολὴν μερῶν τῆς οἰκουμένης, ὑπὸ αὐτὸν

Translation.

60. Of the places of commerce and anchorages into which those sailing from Limyris and the north land their ships the most famous are the adjacent markets of Kamara, Podouka and Sopatma in which there are local vessels which sail along the coast as far as Limyris; there are others called sangara which are tied together from very large craft made from a single log – as for those which sail to Chryse and to the Ganges the largest are the kolandia.

63. After that (the east coast of India) if one sails to the east, having the ocean on one’s right and passes the remaining parts outside on the left, the Ganges is reached and Chryse, the easternmost land. The River Ganges is said to be the greatest of those in India and has the same ebb and flow as the Nile; on it there is also a market named Ganges the same as the river through which malabathon is transported, as well as Gangetic nard, mother-of-pearl and excellent linen materials called Gangetic. There are said to be goldmines around these parts and a gold currency called Kaltis. In the river area there is an island of the ocean, the furthermore of the eastern parts of the inhabited world, lying below the place of the
ἀνέχοντα τὸν ἥλιον, καλουμένη Χρυσῆ, χελώνην ἔχουσα πάντων τῶν κατὰ τὴν Ἑρυθρὰν τόπων ἀρίστην.

64. Μετά δὲ ταύτην τὴν χώραν ὑπὸ αὐτὸν ἱδη τὸν βορέαν, ἐξωθεὶς ἐφ᾽ [Σηρών] τινά τόπον ἀπολιγνουσὶς τῆς θαλάσσης, κεῖται ἐν αὐτοῖς πόλις μεσόγειος μεγίστη, λεγομένη Θίναι, ὥστε ὑπὸ τὸ τῇ ἔριον καὶ τὸ νήμα καὶ τὸ ὠθόνιον τὸ Σηρικὸν εἰς τὰ Βαρύγαζα διὰ Βάκτρων πεζῇ φέρεται καὶ εἰς τὴν Λιμυρικὴν πάλιν διὰ τοῦ Γάγγου ποταμοῦ. Εἰς δὲ τὴν χώραν ταύτην οὐκ ἔστιν εὐχερῶς ἐπελθεῖν· σπανίως γὰρ ὑπὸ αὐτῆς τινὲς οὐ πολλοὶ ἔρχονται. Κεῖται δὲ ὁ τόπος ὑπὸ αὐτῆς τὴν μικρὰν ἄρκτον, λέγεται δὲ συνορίζειν δὶς ἀπειραμμένοις μέρει τοῦ Πόντου καὶ τῆς Κασσιάς θαλάσσης, κατὰ ἣν ἡ παρακείμενη λίμνη Μαιώδ εἰς τὸν ὦκεανὸν συναναστομοῦται.

65. Κατὰ ἔτος δὲ παραγίνεται ἐπὶ τὴν συνοριάν τὴν Θινῶν ἔθνος τι, τῷ μὲν σώματι χολοβοῖ καὶ σφόδρα πλατυπρόσωποι, έννοιας δὲ λυστοι· αὐτοὺς δὲ λέγεσθαι φασὶ Βησάτας, παρομοίους ἀνθρώπους. Παραγίνονται σὺν γυναιξὶ καὶ τέκνοις, βιαστάζοντες φορτία μεγάλα καὶ ταρτόνας ὑμματελίνοις παραπλησίας, εἴτ' ἐπιμένονσιν ἐπὶ τινὰ χρόνον ἐν ὑπὸ συνορία ταύτων καὶ τῶν Θινῶν καὶ ἐφοτάζουσιν ἐπὶ τινὰς ἡμέρας, ὑποστρώσαντες ἐαυτοῖς τὰς ταρτόνας, καὶ ἀπαιροῦσιν εἰς τὰ ἱδία, εἰς τοὺς ἐσωτέρους τόπους. Οἱ δ' ἐγχώριοι sun's rising, called Chryse, which produces the best tortoise-shell of all places in the Red (Sea) (i.e. the Indian Ocean).

64. After that place, lying already in the same north region where the sea comes to an end into some place outside (Seres), there lies a very large inland city called Thinai from which cotton and textiles and silk are transported on foot to Baryzaga through Bactria and back to Limyrice through the Ganges River. It is no simple matter to enter that place, for few and far between are those who come back from there. The place lies beneath the Small Bear and is said to have its border with opposite parts of Pontus and the Caspian Sea beside which the adjoining Lake Maeotis debouches with it into the ocean.

65. Each year a certain race stunted and with very broad foreheads but superior intellect arrives in the neighbouring region of Thinai. They say that they are called Besatai and are very like the savages. They arrive with their women and children carrying in their hands large crates and baskets very similar in colour to that of fresh vine leaves; then they stay in a certain place on their border and that of the Thinai and hold a feast for some days and they use the crates as bedding for themselves and set off for their
ταύτα δοκεύοντες τότε παραγίνονται ἐπί τούτος τοὺς τόπους καὶ συλλέγουσι τὰ ἐγίνων ὑποστρώματα καὶ ἐξινιάσαντες καλάμους τοὺς λεγομένους πέτρους ἐπὶ λεπτὸν ἐπιδιπλώσαντες τὰ φύλλα καὶ σφαιροειδῆ ποιοῦντες διείρουσι ταῖς ἀπὸ τῶν καλάμων ἰναις. Γίνεται δὲ γένη τρία· ἐκ μὲν τοῦ μείζονος φύλλου τὸ ἀδρόσφαιρον μαλάβαθρον λεγόμενον, ἐκ δὲ τοῦ ὑποδεεστέρου τὸ μεσόσφαιρον, ἐκ δὲ τοῦ μικρόσφαιρον τὸ μικρόσφαιρον. Ἐνθεν τὰ τρία μέρη τοῦ μαλαβάθρου πάντοτε φέρεται εἰς τὴν Ἰνδικὴν ὑπὸ δῶν κατεργαζομένων αὐτά.

66. Τὰ δὲ μετὰ τοὺς τόπους τοῦτοὺς εἴτε διὰ ὑπερβολᾶς χειμώνων τε καὶ πάγους μεγίστου δύσβατα εἴτε καὶ θεία τινὶ δυνάμει θεών ἀνεφεύγητα ἐστίν.

own lands in the interior. Neighbouring people waiting for this moment then approach this locality and collect the bedding of the others and after removing the stalks which they call ‘petroi’ and rolling up the leaves very tightly making them into balls they bind them together with the fibres from the reeds. There are three kinds: from the larger leaf, the so-called ‘thick-balled malabathrum’; from the smaller leaf the ‘middle-balled’ and from the leaf which is smaller still the ‘small-balled malabathrum’. This is the origin of the three types of malabathrum which are at all times carried by their manufacturers into India.

66. The regions beyond these have not been explored, being difficult of access either owing to the extreme cold of the winters and intense frosts or through some supernatural power