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THE MAKING OF ROMAN INDIA

Latin and especially Greek texts of the imperial period contain a wealth of references to 'India'. *The Making of Roman India* offers a survey of such texts, read against a wide range of other sources, both archaeological and documentary. It emphasises the social processes whereby the notion of India gained its exotic features, including the role of the Persian empire and of Alexander's expedition. Three kinds of social context receive special attention: the trade in luxury commodities; the political discourse of empire and its limits; and India's status as a place of special knowledge, embodied in 'naked philosophers'. Roman ideas about India ranged from the specific and concrete to the wildly fantastic: it is necessary to account for such variety. The afterlife of such ideas into late antiquity and beyond also receives consideration.

GRANT PARKER is Assistant Professor of Classics at Stanford University.

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The Greek culture of the Roman Empire offers a rich field of study. Extraordinary insights can be gained into processes of multicultural contact and exchange, political and ideological conflict, and the creativity of a changing, polyglot empire. During this period, many fundamental elements of Western society were being set in place: from the rise of Christianity, to an influential system of education, to long-lived artistic canons. This series is the first to focus on the response of Greek culture to its Roman imperial setting as a significant phenomenon in its own right. To this end, it will publish original and innovative research in the art, archaeology, epigraphy, history, philosophy, religion, and literature of the empire, with an emphasis on Greek material.

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Dedicated to my family,
especially Brendah Gaine, Milly and Dave Parker, Joan Subhani
and, of course, Mavis and Dick Parker

Contents

<i>List of figures</i>	<i>page</i> x
<i>List of maps</i>	xi
<i>Preface</i>	xii
Introduction	I
PART I CREATION OF A DISCOURSE	
I. Achaemenid India and Alexander	II
I. The extent of Achaemenid power	13
I.1. Scylax and the King of Kings	14
I.2. Hecataeus' cosmos	18
I.3. Herodotus and the satrapies	21
I.4. Marvels and lies of Ctesias	28
II. Alexander and aftermath	33
II.1. A conqueror and his historians	33
II.2. Megasthenes and Chandragupta's court	42
II.3. Bactrians and 'Indo-Greeks'	48
II.4. Mapping India: from the bematists to Eratosthenes	51
III. Origins and process in the making of Roman India	54
PART 2 FEATURES OF A DISCOURSE	
2. India described	69
I. Contexts of indography	71
I.1. Historiography	71
I.2. Geography	72
I.3. Natural history	78
I.4. Romance and mime	80
II. 'Hanging tags': topics of thought	82
II.1. Indian pasts	83
II.2. Profusion	86

II.3.	Social divisions	87
II.4.	Gender relations	90
II.5.	Space and race	93
II.6.	Catalogue or system?	94
III.	Literary features: modes of description	97
III.1.	The <i>Periplus</i> form	98
III.2.	Omission and abbreviation	100
III.3.	Authors and authority	103
III.4.	Utopianism and barbarism	105
III.5.	Narrative space	110
III.6.	Analogy	111
III.7.	Fragments	113
III.8.	Closure	116
IV.	Conclusion	117
3.	India depicted	121
I.	Varieties of image	122
I.1.	Marvel	122
I.2.	Triumph of Bacchus	125
I.3.	Personification	131
I.4.	<i>Christian topography</i>	135
II.	A typology of Indias	140
III.	Conclusion	142
PART 3 CONTEXTS OF A DISCOURSE		
4.	Commodities	147
I.	Objects of exchange and the materiality of distance	149
I.1.	Spices and aromatics	150
I.2.	Precious stones	154
I.3.	Fabrics	156
I.4.	Slaves	157
I.5.	Animals	159
I.6.	Craft goods	163
II.	The rhetoric of excess	165
III.	Trade networks and the <i>longue durée</i>	171
III.1.	Varieties of evidence	171
III.2.	Chronologies, personnel and routes	178
IV.	Counting commodities, or how to lie with statistics	183
V.	Mapping commodities	189
V.1.	Experience and mediation	191
V.2.	Specificity and identification	196
VI.	Conclusion: fragments and big men	198

<i>Contents</i>		ix
5. Empire		203
I. <i>Pax Romana</i> and people of the dawn		207
I.1. <i>Orbis terrarum imperio populi Romani subiecta</i>		209
I.2. City and empire		214
I.3. The production of imperial space: Strabo and Pliny		217
I.4. Policy and propaganda		219
I.5. Trajan's Parthian campaign		221
I.6. <i>Itinerarium Alexandri</i>		223
II. Christian topography, Christian empire		227
II.1. The western tradition of Orosius and Isidore		229
II.2. The eastern tradition of Cosmas Indicopleustes		236
III. The rhetorical background: imperial panegyric		240
IV. <i>Orbis terrarum urbi spectandus</i> : the mechanics of representation		244
V. Conclusion		247
6. Wisdom		251
I. Writing wisdom		251
II. Wisdoms alien and other		254
II.1. Metamorphoses of <i>sophia</i>		254
II.2. Elements of wisdom		260
II.3. Jews, Chaldeans and Indians		264
III. Brahmins and Gymnosophists		272
III.1. Social hierarchy		272
III.2. Alexander's interview: Palladius and others		278
III.3. Christians and Cynics		286
IV. The diffusion of <i>paideia</i> : Apollonius of Tyana		288
V. Modalities of travel		294
V.1. Pilgrimage into mission		295
V.2. Thomas and tradition		297
V.3. Belatedness and extrapolation		301
VI. Conclusion		305
Conclusion: intersections of a discourse		308
I. Mutations of Indography		308
II. Readers, speakers and popular xenology		311
III. Imperial memories of Alexander		315
<i>Bibliography</i>		319
<i>Index</i>		355

Figures

- | | |
|--|----------------|
| 1. Indian contingent in tribute procession at the Apadana complex in Persepolis, sixth century BC. Courtesy of the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago. | <i>page</i> 14 |
| 2. Monstrous people in Hartmann von Schedel's <i>Nuremberg chronicle</i> (1493). Courtesy of Duke University Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collections Library. | 124 |
| 3. Triumph of Bacchus, second or third century AD: Roman sarcophagus, Walters Gallery, Baltimore. Courtesy of the Walters Gallery. | 126 |
| 4. Marble head with cirrus knot, Trajanic. Villa Borghese, Rome. | 129 |
| 5. Barberini ivory, sixth century AD. Louvre, Paris. Courtesy Réunion des Musées Nationaux / Art Resource, New York. | 130 |
| 6. Personification of India, apse of Great Hunt mosaic, Villa Filosofiana, Piazza Armerina, Sicily, fourth century AD. Courtesy Scala / Art Resource, New York. | 132 |
| 7. Personification of India, silver platter, sixth century AD. Archaeology Museum, Istanbul. Courtesy of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Berlin. | 133 |
| 8. Yakshi. Red sandstone from a Jain temple. Kushan dynasty, second century AD. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum, London / Art Resource, New York. | 136 |
| 9. Cosmas Indicopleustes, manuscript miniatures, eleventh century. Sketches by Alexander Hollmann. | 138 |
| 10. Ivory statuette found at Pompeii, first century BC, Museo Nazionale, Naples. | 162 |
| 11. Peutinger map, thirteenth century, easternmost segment, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. Courtesy of Ancient World Mapping Center, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. | 226 |

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-17536-4 - The Making of Roman India
Grant Parker
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Maps

- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| 1. Eastern Mediterranean and western Indian Ocean | <i>page</i> xiv–xv |
| 2. Alexander's route | 12 |
| 3. Trade route with monsoons | 148 |

Preface

What did India mean to Romans of the empire? Between these covers I outline some possible answers, sifting through a variety of literary and to some degree material and documentary evidence, and paying heed to the different contexts of Roman information about India. The book is aimed not merely at classicists but also at those interested in ancient India or the history of orientalism. As a result, I have not assumed specialist knowledge. If a reader finds a particular discussion or explanation unnecessary, I hope he or she will bear in mind that others will, I trust, come to the book from different backgrounds.

Long ago it became clear to me that a study on this theme cannot be exhaustive, and that no two persons tackling it will produce the same kind of result. This realisation has brought consolation amid the appearance, in recent years, of many works of relevance. As in any work of synthesis, any one topic covered or piece of evidence deployed inevitably leaves room for greater depth of discussion. I have had to make extensive use of the researches of others, particularly archaeologists and other South Asianists. While my own background is in the study of ancient Greek and Roman societies, and particularly Latin literature, I can merely hope that this work contributes to broader debates.

During the late stages of revision, Dominique Lenfant's Budé edition, *Ctésias de Cnide*, and Pierre Schneider's *L'Éthiopie et l'Inde* came into my hands. I have tried to take account of them where possible, but have not been able to engage with them as fully as they deserve. Years ago, two books played a more formative role than their current place in the notes suggests: Arnaldo Momigliano's *Alien Wisdom: The Limits of Hellenization* and James S. Romm's *The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought*. Elsewhere I have delved into material that is touched on here: 'Hellenism in an Afghan context' in *Memory as History: The Legacy of Alexander in Asia*, ed. Himanshu Prabha Ray and Daniel T. Potts (Delhi: Aryan International, 2007).

Preface

xiii

An earlier version of chapter 3 has appeared in *Ancient India in its Wider World*, ed. Grant Parker and Carla Sinopoli (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Centers for South and Southeast Asian Studies, 2008); and of chapter 4 in the *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 45.1 (2002) 40–95. In each case I thank the publishers for permission to reprint.

This book took its current shape at the University of Michigan (thanks to a generous fellowship of the Michigan Society of Fellows) and at Duke University. The reworking process has been much helped by a UNC/Duke graduate seminar jointly taught with Richard Talbert, and earlier by a Michigan symposium co-organised with Carla Sinopoli and Tom Trautmann, as well as a graduate seminar jointly taught with Sue Alcock. Several teachers at Princeton University guided my initial efforts, and continued to take an interest: Peter Brown, Elaine Fantham, Anthony Grafton and Brent Shaw; my debt to Kathleen Coleman goes back to undergraduate days. At a crucial stage, Dieter Harlfinger was my academic host for half a year in the stimulating environment of the Graduiertenkolleg Textüberlieferung und Wissenschaftsgeschichte at the University of Hamburg. A seminar organised by John Hilton at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Durban) helped me clarify my thoughts early on.

My research was supported by the wonderful libraries of Princeton, Hamburg, Michigan, Duke and UNC-Chapel Hill, and for substantial periods also by those of the universities of Cape Town and Sydney.

In this project I have received help of so many kinds from so many people over such a long period that I must avoid naming names: any list would be absurdly long yet unavoidably incomplete. I learned much from the referees' reports, and enjoyed working with the editorial team at Cambridge University Press. In the final stages, Tom Elliott of UNC's Ancient World Mapping Center kindly produced the maps; Marie-Louise Catsalis, Kay Ebel and Alka Patel helped secure images; Richard Parker and Fred Porta helped with proofreading.

To all, my heartfelt thanks; of course, they cannot be blamed for the deficiencies that remain. And how can I fail to mention the support of my family, when they have so long endured my efforts and made them worthwhile?



Map 1 Eastern Mediterranean and western Indian Ocean

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