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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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BY
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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi
Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK
Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521858342

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First published 2008

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-0-521-85834-2 hardback

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

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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).

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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