

This paper traces how the invented memory of a Roman conquest of India develops and evolves from Actium to late antiquity, and attempts to situate the meaning of this memory in the context of the Roman discourse on India. Previous discussions of Roman Indography have given insufficient attention both to the concept of memory and to Latin poetry and panegyric, especially of the fourth and fifth centuries, while scholarship on later poetry and panegyric has neglected the role of India therein. Targeting these gaps in particular, the paper more broadly explores the relationship between memory and self-identity in Roman society, arguing, in part, that a re-imagining of the past – an India conquered not only by Dionysus, Hercules, and Alexander but also by Augustus and Trajan – reflects a continual process whereby the Romans (re)conceptualized themselves and the place of their *imperium* within the *orbis terrarum*. As for the Greeks before them, India was for the Romans as much a 'thought-world' as it was a part of the real world, an imagined place that served as a means by which to think about the self through thinking about the distant other; and the memorial landscape of India constructed by successive generations of Roman poets, historians, and panegyrists was as distant in time as it was in space.

Beginning with a brief synopsis of Virgilian allusions to anticipated or imagined Roman dominion over India (e.g. *Georgics* 3.26-7; *Aeneid* 6.791-5; 8.705-6), the analysis turns to an enigmatic passage of the *Elegiae in Maecenatem* that alludes in Virgilian terms to a signal Roman victory over India, the meaning of which has been debated by scholars for well over a century: “after we conquered the colored Indians, you drank sweet wine with the aid of your helmet... I am mindful, and I certainly remember...” (*Eleg. in Maec.* 57-61). The theme of a remembered Indian conquest finds several interesting and hitherto unappreciated echoes in Latin authors writing centuries later, for example in Sidonius’ panegyric of the emperor Anthemius, where a personified Roma addresses the goddess Aurora: “I come (cease to be worried and affrighted) not that the Araxes, overpowered by me, might flow under a bridge placed upon it nor that in the ancient manner the Indian Ganges might be drunk from an Italian helmet.” (*Pan. Anth.* 440-3). In the opening of Claudian's *On the War Against Gildo* we find a similarly personified Roma: “Now Roma fearing her destruction and worn out from being deprived of grain, made for the threshold of swift Olympus, not with her usual countenance nor such as she was when she gave laws to the Britons and submitted the frightened Indians to the fasces.” (*De Bello Gild.* 17-20). Through a close reading of such passages, in conjunction with other manifestations of the theme in third- and fourth-century historiography (e.g. Cassius Dio 68.29, Eutropius 8.3), this paper offers an approach to understanding the memory of an India once conquered by Rome, once fearful subject to the fasces.