

Other Pasts: Comparing Landscapes, Monuments, and Memories Across the Mediterranean

The archaeological study of memory in the ancient Mediterranean has spread like a forest fire. Although several scholars are responsible for igniting the initial tinder, it would be hard to overstate the impact of Susan Alcock on the ways archaeologists approach the challenge of exploring how people imagined their own pasts in the ancient Mediterranean and neighboring regions. 15 years after the publication of her main book on the subject, *Archaeologies of the Greek Past: Landscape, Monuments, and Memories* (2002), the moment is ripe for an assessment of the field after the conflagration, as it were, as well as a discussion about new and promising directions in the archaeological study of ancient memory and forgetting. Rather than collecting ever more refined case studies, we invite scholars to engage in comparative analyses.

The Eastern Mediterranean during the Roman period, for example, continues to be the region in which the workings of social memory are understood in most detail, but recent investigations in Iberia, Gaul, and North Africa, have challenged the alleged amnesia of the Western provinces. Classical horizons, especially those in which textual sources seem to coincide with modern interpretations still provide the most transparent cases of remembering and forgetting; research in Anatolia, Mesopotamia, and the Levant, however, demonstrates that many other non-classical horizons not only were favored in antiquity, but are recoverable by archaeologists. Alcock and others have called attention to the virtues of looking beyond the monumental to explore ancient narratives about the even more ancient past; current discussions associated with the archaeology of the senses resonate with the possibility of studying incorporated memories, as well as sensorial and affective mnemonic practices. Finally, does it make any sense to continue to work on the topic of memory discretely, or is it time to abandon it altogether and consider part of what all archaeologists working in the Mediterranean inevitably do?

In this colloquium, we juxtapose case studies from across the Mediterranean that investigate different chronological horizons in a range of archaeological contexts and historical settings as attempts to explore the construction of memories beyond the Classical world. The shared Mediterranean background of the first millennia BCE and CE nevertheless offers enough common ground to engage in detailed and meaningful comparisons.

Other Pasts: Comparing Landscapes, Monuments, and Memories Across the Mediterranean

ABSTRACTS

Josephine Quinn, *Colonial Memory and Ritual Practice in the Phoenician World: The Tophet as Lieu de Mémoire*

This paper addresses how people creatively reimagine their own pasts under new relations of power in colonial contexts. Taking the tophet (or child sacrifice) sanctuaries found in a closely connected set of Levantine migrant communities in the central Mediterranean as a case study, it begins by explaining how closely these sacred spaces resemble the ‘places of memory’ discussed by Pierre Nora in relation to modern contexts, and then looks at what they can tell us about contemporary conceptualisations and memories of past relationships and events in two different time periods.

The first of these is the period of first Levantine settlement in the region, in the ninth-seventh centuries BCE, when the tophets established with the first settlements emphasise the distance and difference the migrants feel from their old homeland; draw attention to the colonial obliteration of local memories and traditions by preserving them; and create shared memories with each other that estrange this group of settlements from those further west, where material memories of the homeland are more positive and straightforward.

The second is the era of early Carthaginian hegemony over the western Mediterranean, from the late fifth to late fourth centuries BCE where the tophets have metamorphosed both in terms of their physical appearance and the memories they preserve. At Carthage, new continuities with the homeland appear in the tophet, at the same time as more positive memories of migration emerge in the local foundation myth of Dido, and a closer relationship with Tyre itself and its civic god Melqart in rest of the city. At the same time the appearance of palm trees among the symbols found in the tophet suggests the creation of shared memories between a larger group of settlements, including those of the homeland.

Andrew C. Johnston, *The Pasts of “Others” in the Roman West*

For well over a century, scholarship has tended to represent the inhabitants of the provinces of western continental Europe as ‘peoples without history’, who “wanted to be Romans... to copy the customs [of Rome], to become part of its history, to lose themselves in its identity... such was the forgetfulness by the conquered of their traditions” (Jullian 1920: 535). This western oblivion supposedly resulted the transformation of the provincials of Gaul and Spain into populations “distinctive among the emperors’ subjects in being only Roman” (Woolf 1996: 361; cf. Price 2012). Recent work, however, is beginning to reappraise the evidence and to challenge this longstanding consensus, demonstrating the vibrancy and complexity of the memory cultures of the West (e.g. Johnston 2017; Jiménez 2015), and emphasizing the broad similarities in discourses, experiences, and practices of local identity across the Roman world.

Building on the groundbreaking work of Susan Alcock on monuments and memories in the Greek East (Alcock 2002) and translating its questions to contexts on the other side of the Mediterranean, this paper takes an interdisciplinary approach to the nexus of provincial agency, local identity, and social memory. It uses the Iberian community of Saguntum as an evocative and representative case study through which to

explore broader trends in the cultural history of the western provinces. Weaving together the evidence of archaeology, epigraphy, and literary narratives, it demonstrates the dynamism and plurality of memories of local pasts, and explicates the ways in which these pasts deeply informed the process of identity formation and ‘communalization’ (Brow 1990). The Saguntine appropriation of ethnographic fictions of Hercules as founder-hero reflects western innovations within longstanding Greek traditions, a reclamation of agency against “that irksome attitude of Greek scholarship” (Bickerman 1952: 70), involving the renegotiation of the meanings of monuments and public spaces. There are traces of Saguntine participation in the creation of a ‘provincial generation’ of the Epic Cycle, which connected the rise of the city to the downfall of Rutulian Ardea attendant upon the Trojan arrival in Italy, and seems to have authorized forms of performative Latin ‘roleplaying’ among the local elite. The complex memorial cityscape of Saguntum featured in Iberian local histories, accommodated vernacular epigraphic monuments, and became a repository for distinctive antiquarian memories of the Roman Republic.

Finally, expanding its view outward from Saguntum to the provinces of Gaul and Spain as a whole, the paper ventures some broader conclusions about the nature of community and history in the Roman west.

Peter van Dommelen, *About the Nuraghe: Iron Age Imaginations and Experiences of a Nuragic Past*

Nuraghi literally stand out on the island of Sardinia as ubiquitous and obvious markers of a past gone by, one that is moreover named after these very towers. Given their unique association with the island and their age-old antiquity, it has perhaps been inevitable that they have been adopted by the regional government and autonomist parties as hallmarks of Sardinia past and present.

Precisely because they dominate the landscape, however, and have long done so, nuraghi are much more than just convenient markers of identities, invented or otherwise. They are also much more than remnants of just a Nuragic past - they are as much part of a Phoenician, a Roman and a Byzantine past.

In this paper, I want to focus on the Sardinian Iron Age, which I suggest is a particularly critical and interesting moment in (past) time, because its traditions remained deeply rooted in the canonical Nuragic past of the Bronze Age, while at the same breaking away in multiple and notable ways. In exploring the Sardinian Iron Age, I hope to show how we may trace beyond, and indeed before, Classical Antiquity how ‘other pasts’ were imagined and memories constructed and experienced.

Carolina López-Ruiz, *Tartessos, Regional Memory, and an Alternative “Classical” Past*

Is it possible to recover the historical or even the perceived pasts of cultures from whom we lack preserved written narratives? The challenges of this task are obvious when we look at the pre-classical indigenous cultures of Iberia, Sardinia, Italy, and other areas of the Mediterranean. Through archaeological remains and philological-literary investigation of Greek and Roman sources, however, we can find traces of local identities based in part on a usable past cherished by communities even when they adapted to and incorporated Greco-Roman world-views. My paper will look into such signs in the region of Tartessos in southwest Iberia. I will argue that when Greek and Roman authors refer to Tartessos as an old, sophisticated, and self-conscious culture for the region of Roman Turdetania, they are not re-inventing local identity but engaging with an existing perception of the past that engages with *pre*-classical traditions. This regional pride can be read, for instance, in the intentional reuse of indigenous Bronze Age relics in Tartessian buildings until the 4th century BCE (e.g., Cancho Roano); in the persistence of a writing system and indigenous languages well into Roman times (cf. also Strabo’s testimony about the Tartessians’ “documents of ancient

records, poems, and metrical laws six thousand years old,” Str. 3.1.6); and in the traces of local legends that include Phoenician traditions (Herakles-Melqart) as well as unique figures (e.g., kings Gargoris and Habis), even if eventually framed and passed down within a Greco-Roman literary tradition.

In a circular way, however, as identities are always under construction, the local idea of Tartessos fed from the spread of the image of Tartessos in Greek literature (e.g., Anacreon, Herodotos), and Tartessos became an icon to be contested and appropriated (e.g., by the Phoenician city of Gadir/Cádiz). Moreover, the Phoenician and Carthaginian presence had been formative in Tartessic culture since the 8th century BCE and was a point of reference even in Roman times. Summing up, the “legendary” Tartessos of the classical sources was a real part of the region’s curated memory, even if entangled with Phoenician and Greco-Roman genres and mythologies. This paper challenges us to retrieve locally-rooted views from a corner of the ancient Mediterranean where indigenous, Phoenician, and vague Hellenic echoes merged; an “alternative,” multi-cultural Mediterranean that did not totally disappear with the triumph of Rome in the west.

Naoise Mac Sweeney, *Remembering Catastrophe at Miletus*

How do we remember the recent past? Is it subject to the same creativity, reinterpretation and revision as the distant past? What is the potential for inscribing ‘other’ pasts when it comes to remembering relatively recent events? This paper focuses on the Persian sack of Miletus in 493 BCE, and the place of this event in civic memory over the course of the 5th century. An examination of the archaeological and epigraphic record from Miletus over this time suggests that this event was understood and portrayed differently over time within the city, and also that the internal Milesian memory sometimes clashed and contrasted with external portrayals. It seems that other pasts could co-exist for different audiences, even for events within living memory.

Felipe Rojas, *Vertigo-Sweat-Funk: Embodied Archaeophilia in Roman Anatolia*

The past was everywhere in Roman Anatolia. Attention to the material remains of pre-classical civilizations in the region was intense and pervasive. People explored, excavated, and reconstructed Neolithic mounds and archaic tumuli; “translated” cuneiform inscriptions; and collected and displayed millennium-old statuary. Some wanted not just to see the past, but also to experience it directly. I use recent scholarship on the anthropology, and archaeology of the senses to shed light ancient evidence that attests to the importance of embodied experience in the interpretation and manipulation of material remains in Anatolia. Through a series of case studies I analyze the urge to interact in fully embodied fashion with the physical traces of the past in the region: to dance on ruins, stage boxing matches by them, and sometimes literally to ingest what were thought to be indices of former times.