

Chapter 1

Zimbabwe and Rome: Remembering and forgetting ancient cities

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For a site or monument to retain its significance across time, it must be the subject of continual reinvestment; that is to say, it must be modified and transformed by others who take on its legacy, even if they distort it. Memory is the condition, not the negation nor the opposite, of history.¹

These observations by François-Xavier Fauvelle appear in the introduction to his history of medieval Africa, *The Golden Rhinoceros*. He notes that one of the challenges of writing such a history is the lack of any such continuity of memory among many of the great cities of sub-Saharan Africa in the period. An example of this is the extraordinary remains of the city known as Great Zimbabwe, which flourished in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and the other ‘Zimbabwe-type’ settlements distributed on the Zimbabwe Plateau.² The first European explorer to closely examine the site of Great Zimbabwe in 1871, Karl Mauch, was awed by what he found, but frustrated by the lack of knowledge or interest in the remains shown by the local Shona people.³ Later scholars interested in the history of these remains have attempted to employ oral sources from the Shona, with some success, but the results are controversial.⁴ Something of the difficulty is revealed by the name given to the city, commonly translated as ‘houses of stone’, suggesting a relationship to the site predicated largely on the most obvious physical remains rather than an enduring link to the inhabitants of the city. In the absence of continuous memory, outside narratives have been applied, beginning with Mauch, who attributed the city to King Solomon, whose builders must have raised the city for the Queen of Sheba.⁵ Others saw in the walls of

¹ Fauvelle, *The Golden Rhinoceros*, 7.

² Pikiraya, *The Zimbabwe Culture*, 123–155.

³ Connah, *African Civilizations*, 260.

⁴ Huffman, *Snakes and Crocodiles*. See the criticisms of Beach, ‘Cognitive archaeology and imaginary history’, 47–72.

⁵ Carroll, ‘Solomonic legend’, 233–247.

the city the hands of the Egyptians, or the Phoenicians, or the Arabs, peoples with a respectable pedigree of city-building familiar to the observers. In more recent years they have become symbols of African civilisation and achievement, with the ‘houses of stone’ lending their name to the country they are found in as part of a rejection of the Rhodesian colonial past.⁶

This volume is about ancient cities in the Mediterranean. Yet we begin far away from it because the high veld of southern Africa offers a viewpoint to grasp how unusual this classical or Greco-Roman city is. The cities of the Roman Mediterranean are, for the most part, historically known. Although there is much that is mysterious about them, we have their names, sometimes preserved in daughter languages, sometimes rediscovered through inscriptions in writings we can read and understand. For many of those cities we also have their stones. The essential archaeological labour which is the chief source of our growing knowledge of the Greco-Roman city takes place in conversation with the words of the inhabitants of these cities, whether from learned texts and histories, solemn official inscriptions or from ribald graffiti. Unlike Great Zimbabwe, places like Rome or Leptis Magna or Petra can be understood from the inside view of the past as well as the outside view of the present. Such a comparison is not intended to aggrandise the Roman past at the expense of that of Zimbabwe, for memory is not inherently virtuous. Rather it is meant to make it clear that there is a historical question here that needs an answer.

As Fauvelle observed, the key difference is memory. The Roman city has been continually remembered while those of Zimbabwe – and here we could add Mohenjo-Daro and Teotihuacán and a hundred other cities across the world – have not.⁷ Much of our knowledge of the classical city comes from the work of scholars in the last few centuries. The steady accumulation of knowledge and understanding built by generations of increasingly technically skilled and methodologically sophisticated practitioners standing on the work of their predecessors has resulted in a deeper comprehension of the ancient city than was previously conceivable. But this was made possible because over the course of the past two millennia there has never not been someone interested in the memory of the ancient city. The texts we employ were consciously preserved and used and studied, creating a continuous thread of memory, even when peoples who were not invested in the classical past came and went.

It is with the survival of the ancient city via memory that this volume is concerned. As many of the chapters will demonstrate, the preservation of the memory of the classical city was by no means inevitable. An example of what forgetting the ancient city looks like may be found in the Old English elegy, ‘The Ruin’, which describes (most probably) the ruins of Roman Bath:⁸

⁶ Garlake, *Great Zimbabwe*, 209–210.

⁷ Wright, *The Ancient Indus*; Bueno, *The Pursuit of Ruins*.

⁸ Wentersdorf, ‘Observations on *The Ruin*’.

*Wondrous is this masonry, shattered by the Fates, the fortifications have given way, the buildings raised by giants are crumbling.*⁹

The city is unnamed and its Romanness unspecified and forgotten. For the poet, their bathhouses and ‘wondrous walls’ were both the alien ‘work of giants’ and achingly recognisable in their ‘many mead-halls filled with human-joys’. The tension between foreign and familiar provides much of the energy of the poem, with a universal experience being brought out of contact with a lost and distant past. It is quite possible that the author of ‘The Ruin’ was familiar with classical culture, yet their description shows how even a literate society could potentially forget the Greco-Roman city, reducing their ruins to ‘houses of stone’, to be conjured but not remembered in a context where all standing stone buildings were inherited from this mysterious past.¹⁰ Many of the chapters in this volume are concerned with times and spaces where the Roman city was forgotten. These histories of forgetting are just as interesting and worthy of study as the histories of memory considered elsewhere. As some of the chapters in this book demonstrate, the Islamic world is particularly relevant as a place where the memory of Rome could run thin. The example of Great Zimbabwe is once again instructive here. We will encounter Solomon among the ruins of North Africa and on the Parthenon in Athens.

Continuous inhabitation of the city does not guarantee the survival of its memory. This point is made clear in Rudyard Kipling’s *Jungle Book*, where the Monkey-People squat in the Lost City:

The monkeys called the place their city, and pretended to despise the Jungle-People because they lived in the forest. And yet they never knew what the buildings were made for nor how to use them.¹¹

The monkeys’ claim to the city is rendered hollow by their inability to remember it. When they attempt to make the space their own by rearranging the plaster and stone, their efforts are scuppered because they promptly forget what they have done:

They explored all the passages and dark tunnels in the palace and the hundreds of little dark rooms, but they never remembered what they had seen and what they had not; and so drifted about in ones and twos or crowds telling each other that they were doing as men did.¹²

⁹ ‘The Ruin’, *Anglo-Saxon and Norse Poems*, ‘Wrætlic is þes wealstan— wyrde gebræcon, burgstede burston; broснаð enta geweorc’, 54.

¹⁰ For a range of interpretations, see Keenan, ‘The Ruin as Babylon’; Doubleday, ‘The Ruin’; Thompson Lee, ‘The Ruin: Bath or Babylon?’; Hunter, ‘Germanic and Roman Antiquity’; Abram, ‘In search of lost time’; Critten, ‘Via Rome: medieval medievalisms’.

¹¹ Kipling, *Jungle Book*, 44.

¹² Kipling, *Jungle Book*, 44.

The city is lost because people who built the city, who lived in it and made it their own, are gone and forgotten. The stones have no meaning because they have no memories, and no new ones are being made to replace them.¹³

In attempting to understand the enduring memory of the ancient city, we can draw upon the voluminous scholarship of the field of memory studies.¹⁴ Marlena Whiting and Elizabeth Key Fowden in particular consider in their contributions the ways in which topography encouraged and reinforced communal memory, thereby creating complex relationships with the ancient city. Such consideration of the construction of memory within historical landscape goes back to the accepted founder of the field. In his *La Topographie légendaire des évangiles en terre sainte*, the great Maurice Halbwachs explored the way a shared memory of a fictional past was constructed for sites across the Levant on which Christian communities across the world created their common histories.¹⁵ This importance of place was at the heart of the revival in interest in Halbwachs' work in the 1980s, when Pierre Nora travelled France to investigate the way a national history was built around places of memory.¹⁶ That the city served as a particularly good refuge for memory has long been understood from this perspective.¹⁷ Memory in the specifically ancient world has not been neglected, thanks to the labour of scholars such as Jan and Aleida Assmann and Karl Galinsky.¹⁸ The importance of memories of the Greco-Roman past on subsequent generations has enjoyed much fruitful exploration.

Much of this work has focussed on sites of memory, reminiscent of the urban mnemonics used by Cicero and other classical rhetors to pin the points of memory onto a succession of physical elements of the city.¹⁹ This volume is concerned with something slightly different, the memory of an entire city as a community, the space where, in Fauvelle's words, memory conditions history. In these memories whole cities live because, as present reminders of the past, they exist within the urban space, either physical or cognitive. This multi-dimensional understanding of place allows cities to understand themselves with temporal depth.²⁰ In order to understand the role played by memory in the survival of the ancient city, many of the contributors have embraced resilience theory. Emerging from the study of ecology, resilience theory provides a model for thinking about how systems adapt to change.²¹ While in

¹³ Goswami, *Colonial India*, 117, 126.

¹⁴ Erll, *Memory in Culture*.

¹⁵ Halbwachs, *La topographie légendaire*.

¹⁶ Nora, *Les lieux de mémoire*; den Boer, 'Loci memoriae - Lieux de mémoire'.

¹⁷ Benjamin, *One-way Street*; Crang and Travlou, 'The city and topologies of memory'; Sheringham, 'Archiving', 10.

¹⁸ Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*; Assmann, 'Canon and archive'; Galinsky, *Memoria Romana*; Galinsky, *Memory in Ancient Rome and Early Christianity*.

¹⁹ *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, 3.16.29; Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 11.2.21; Cicero, *De Oratore*, 2.86.

²⁰ Cresswell, *Place*, 7-14; Lalli, 'Urban-related identity'; Stedman, 'Toward a social psychology of space'; Taylor, *Narratives of Identity*.

²¹ Gunderson and Holling, 'Resilience and adaptive cycles', 25-62; Redman and Kinzig, 'Resilience of past landscapes', 14.

the study of the human past resilience has been employed more by archaeologists than by historians, people working with ideas and written texts may also benefit from some of its modes of thinking.²²

Resilience theory places great emphasis on resources that can be drawn upon and exploited at different stages of the cycle. The memory of the ancient city might be one such resource that can be drawn upon by subsequent inhabitants of the city. In the case of the ancient city, some elements, like large buildings, may prove resilient because of their size and their secondary usefulness; some others, like urban councils, may be resilient because their role in managing the city and its community. Some others may prove to be resilient only after being reimagined under a modern light, like urban hygiene. Louise Blanke and Alan Walmsley develop this point in their contribution to this volume, offering a radical statement for the rewriting of the history of the eastern Mediterranean using resilience theory, while both Andrew Wallace-Hadrill and Javier Martínez Jiménez draw upon resilience heavily in their treatments of sixth-century Italy and high medieval southern France respectively.

Resilience theory offers a helpful way of examining how systems under stress can rapidly change while retaining a sense of continuity, or subsequently return to former concepts or methods of organisation in a new context when those resources are once again useful.²³ In this way, the historian or archaeologist can accept both change and continuity as neither diametrically opposed, nor necessarily as markers of success or failure, but instead as part of a process in which systems adapt. This is important for considering the memory of the ancient city. As Fauvelle noted, to survive the ancient city must evolve and adapt, both in its physical structure and in the way it is perceived. Many of the chapters in this volume are therefore concerned with how memory of the city changed, and how those adaptations helped it to survive.

This volume is also interested in the manner in which the ancient city was forgotten. The act of remembering a city can be fundamentally tied to its forgetting; Aleida Assmann observed that ‘when thinking about memory, we must start with forgetting’.²⁴ The manner in which the ancient city was forgotten is as interesting as the way in which it was remembered, revealing as it does much about the needs or desires of those for whom the ancient city had no meaning or purpose. Nor is forgetting a straightforward act of oblivion. The path to Lethe takes many routes, accidental and deliberate, slow and rapid, although its course is unusually difficult to track for obvious reasons. This process of forgetting can interact with others of rediscovery, a resurrection of memories performed in the context of previous amnesia in a new context.

A consequence of this line of thought is the observation that not all places and times remembered the ancient city equally clearly. Two major factors seem to have decided the strength of the lingering echo of Greco-Roman urbanism. The first is how

²² See the use made by Walmsley, *Early Islamic Syria*, 146–147.

²³ Redman, ‘Resilience theory in archaeology’, 70–77.

²⁴ Assmann, ‘Canon and archive’, 97.

easily accessible the ancient city was. One obvious yet somewhat misleading element here is chronology. As Andrew Wallace-Hadrill demonstrates, the ancient city was easy to remember in sixth-century Italy because the inhabitants effectively still lived in it. Yet, as we have seen with the Old English ‘The Ruin’, chronological proximity does not guarantee memory. The ancient city could be forgotten with remarkable speed, before being aggressively reclaimed in modernity, as posited by Sofia Greaves’ examination of nineteenth-century Naples. Nor did being near the physical remains of the ancient city necessarily guarantee that it would be remembered. The ruins of the Roman world would catch the imagination of many in North Africa, but Ibn Khaldūn would be forced to chastise his fellow Maghrebis for their ignorance. For the ancient city to be remembered accurately depended upon preserving rites, *habitus*, and knowledge. To a degree, ancient urban *habitus* and rites that proved resilient beyond antiquity preserved local versions of memories of the ancient city, but historical knowledge and access to the languages needed to be available to continue and interpret these memories. Here we can see the significance of the Carolingian Renaissance in preserving and circulating classical texts.²⁵

But for that to happen depended upon a second factor, which is that the Greco-Roman past had to be relevant. There had to be a reason to copy ancient texts and drill young people in increasingly foreign languages. There had to be a purpose to remembering who lifted up the walls of the crumbling buildings around which you happily lived your lives or other, more useful, histories would quickly take their place. It is tempting to turn to Pirenne here and declare that the Arab conquests marked the great divergence point in remembering the ancient city.²⁶ In this reading, the continuity of the Church with its emphasis on Latinity and interest in the Christian Roman past, combined with a reverence for the political legacy of Rome as the model of rule, ensured that the Roman city remained accessible. This is opposed to the Islamic world, which had its own language of religion and government and a history of the community of the faithful in which Rome was either irrelevant or the enemy.

Such a binary comparison offers some useful possibilities. It highlights the importance of the late antique Christian Roman city. Forgotten or disregarded as a poor mockery of the true classical city for much of modernity, the post-Constantinian period loomed large in the urban memories of medieval Europe. Its architecture of basilicas offered a physical model even as its Christian emperors and writers offered moral examples and intellectual resources. As a result, this volume contains a number of chapters such as those by Andrew Wallace-Hadrill and Thomas Langley that tackle the late antique city directly, while other contributors, such as Javier Martínez Jiménez, consider its legacy for subsequent urbanism. This line of consideration also invites us to examine alternative ancient cities to the Greco-Roman one, which could offer their own intellectual hinterlands and link to a distant past that might prove

²⁵ Pohl and Wood, ‘Cultural memory and the resources of the past’.

²⁶ Pirenne, *Mahomet et Charlemagne*; Effros, ‘The enduring attraction of the Pirenne thesis’, 188–194.

more useful. Edward Zychowicz-Coghill addresses this subject in his chapter as he considers the parallel importance of the ancient Iranian city in the Islamic world.

These are fruitful avenues to explore. But as a group our contributors would reject any false dualism between a Christian European world that faithfully remembered the Greco-Roman city and an Arabic Islamic world that forgot its classical past. The ancient city was remembered as it was needed, intertwined with other memories and reimagined to be of use to those who came after it. Biblical villains and Greek aetiological narrative strengthen each other in the Carolingian narratives discussed by Sam Ottewill-Soulsby, while Hannibal makes common cause with Solomon in the histories addressed by Amira Bennison. The result is not confusion, but rather a profusion of narratives tailored to the purposes of those who told them. That the ancient city lived and mattered can be attested by the manner in which it was remembered.

The resilience of the ancient city

In the popular imagination, the Roman city is fundamentally remembered by its buildings. Elegant columns raise up dignified temples next to rowdy baths fed by mighty aqueducts, while their more bloodthirsty neighbours cheer the gladiators in the circus. These elements have been subsequently employed by modern artists and writers, being present in both *The Course of Empire* cycle of 1833–1836, in which the American painter Thomas Cole sought to depict what he saw as the universal rhythms of the rise and fall of civilisation by depicting a decidedly classical city, to the highly successful young-adult novels and subsequent film adaptations of Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games*, where the oppressive urban regime of Panem (*et circenses*) is clad in Roman aesthetics.²⁷ Classicists of the last few generations have sought to add more colour to the gleaming white marble of this vision of the ancient city, but the enduring memory of the Roman world for the public remains enduringly monochrome.²⁸ The physical fabric of this Roman city, replicated in monumental scale across the empire in the first and second centuries AD, is also of great importance to scholars in defining a specific type of urban experience.²⁹ The decay or demolition of structures such as aqueducts, baths and theatres is employed as a measure for determining the end of not just of a type of city, but of the Roman world as a whole.³⁰

In defence of this approach, the erection of these monumental buildings demanded a huge expenditure in time, resources and labour, as did their subsequent upkeep. They thus offer powerful testimony to the priorities of both wealthy elites and city governments in the period. The facilities and amenities they provided changed the

²⁷ Miller, 'Thomas Cole and Jacksonian America'; Collins, *The Hunger Games*; Makins, "'Written in a language called Latin about a place called Rome"'; Makins, 'Refiguring the Roman Empire'.

²⁸ Bradley, 'The importance of colour', 427–457.

²⁹ Stambaugh, *The Ancient Roman City*.

³⁰ Liebeschuetz, 'The end of the ancient city', 1–49; Liebeschuetz, *Decline and Fall of the Roman City*; Underwood, *(Re)using Ruins*.

lifestyles of the inhabitants of the city, but they were also part of the way that cities in the period were identified and distinguished from other forms of settlement. Pausanias' celebrated doubts in the second century AD about whether or not Panopeus in Phocis could truly claim to be a city centred on precisely this physical infrastructure, over whether:

one can give the name of city [‘πόλιν’] to those who possess no government offices [‘ἄρχεῖα’], no gymnasium, no theatre, no public square [‘ἀγορὰν’], no water descending to a fountain, but live in bare shelters just like mountain cabins, right on a ravine.³¹

Yet this passage also offers a hint at the importance of other factors in the definition of the city. The entity that Pausanias considers bestowing the name of city upon is not a place, but a group of people (who no doubt had their own opinions about Pausanias' qualifications for deciding whether or not they got to be a city).

This was not to say that the physical landscape of the city was meaningless, but rather that its significance came from its relationship to the people of the city. The buildings offered a service to the city, helping it to live its best life, but they were also the spirit of the city made manifest in stone and timber. Pausanias could know the people of Panopeus by the rudeness of their houses. The construction of a monumental temple told watchers both temporal and supernatural that the city was willing to mobilise its community's labour for a generation in order to express its piety and reverence for its past.³² Augustus' rebuilding of Rome provided amenities for the citizens and provided good public relations for his regime, but also communicated the nature of the city and the greatness that had won it an empire.³³ These were structures raised not just for the present but also for the future, to provide the physical evidence for the peculiar spirit of an urban community to be used for the construction of later memory, which would inspire emulation.

The monumental buildings mattered, but as an extension of a civic community, subject to its needs, expectations and desires.³⁴ The raising and lowering of these structures, while worthy of notice, did not necessarily signify change in the way the city thought about itself or a rejection of its history and its identity. Any analysis of the ancient city and when it ended that depends entirely on its physical landscape misses something essential because the ancient city was never defined purely by its buildings. Whether the inhabitants thought of themselves as part of the ancient city matters precisely because that was one of the most important ways the city was identified in the classical past. This is why all the best arguments for a rapid collapse of the Greco-Roman city have examined the human element in the city, whether it is Liebeschuetz's analysis of the decline of *curiales* or the brilliant volume assembled

³¹ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 10.4.1.

³² Woolf, *The Life and Death of Ancient Cities*, 216–217.

³³ Suetonius, *Life of Augustus*, 29.

³⁴ Smith, 'Form and meaning in the earliest cities', 25.

by Brogiolo and Ward-Perkins in 1999.³⁵ Many of the contributors to this volume challenge this literature, either because they disagree on points such as the decline of the *curiales*, or because they view the late antique city as a category of Roman city linked to those that came before it. Nonetheless, they have to engage with them precisely because they take the ideas of the city seriously.

This volume takes a different approach, arguing that change in the ancient city was not a sign of its death, but rather of its life. Much like Tancredi in Lampedusa's *The Leopard*, many of the inhabitants of the ancient city were well aware that to remain static was to court oblivion and that change could be the only way to maintain the values that they believed defined their community. This observation of the potential preservative or restorative properties of carefully managed destruction, inspired by resilience theory, is a key theme for many of the contributions to this volume. In all of these cases, the physical fabric of the city was altered precisely to maintain or resurrect a defining virtue associated with the ancient city. Memory was essential to this process, because it provided the inhabitants of the city with a sense of connection to their past even as they altered the physical landscape beyond recognition. Taking this approach offers a means to get past the somewhat stale debate about the end of the ancient city, by asking what the inhabitants of those cities thought was happening, and the extent to which the gradual disappearance of the physical structures associated with a particular sort of Roman city necessarily meant the end of the civic community with it.³⁶ Rather than pitting decline against transformation, we can instead employ new lenses to think about changes to the ancient city.

Andrew Wallace-Hadrill demonstrates the potential use of resilience theory in the second chapter of this book for re-examining the ancient city. He considers how the cities of early sixth-century Italy adapted to a new political environment under the rule of a Gothic dynasty. As he shows, Cassiodorus repeatedly ordered or praised the dismantling of ancient buildings not because the regime of Theoderic wanted to forget the ancient city, but precisely because they wanted to remember it. In order to preserve the civic communities of Italy it was necessary to repair their crumbling infrastructures, something most easily achieved by repurposing marble and other building stones from elsewhere. This destruction led to creation, the formation of a new embodiment of all the virtues of the ancient city at Ravenna. For Cassiodorus, the defining idea of the civic community was *civilitas*, the virtue that differentiated humans from animals by making them a sociable being that lived by laws and justice. As Wallace-Hadrill indicates, Cassiodorus may well have been aware that he lived in 'modern' times, sensing a chronological distance between the Classical ideal he had been brought up in and the actual civic and urban contexts of his own time, but he was determined that the civic virtues of the past would not be forgotten, even if they required that the city undergo considerable adaptation.

³⁵ Liebeschuetz, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman City*; Brogiolo and Ward-Perkins, *The Idea and Ideal of the Town*.

³⁶ Humphries, 'Cities and the meanings of Late Antiquity', 5–16.

Another benefit of this engagement with the memory of the city is that it makes it easier to embrace multiple different ancient cities. If the ancient city could retain a sense of its own identity despite a changing urban landscape, then it becomes possible to consider many more types of Greco-Roman city beyond those with the strict armature desired by observers such as Pausanias. A prime example is the late antique Roman city. For much of medieval Europe, the Roman city was that of the third and fourth centuries, its heroes the early Christian martyrs and bishops who represented and protected the citizens of the city long after their deaths, its defining landscape the cemeteries, churches and basilicas where the people of the city gathered for worship as a community.³⁷ As Fustel de Coulanges suggested, the city as a community defined by its shared participation in cult, mediated by the specific remembered civic history, was not an entirely alien concept for older forms of the Roman city.³⁸

Our understanding of the way these civic communities were perceived is fundamentally shaped by the sources available. In the *Variae*, Cassiodorus is at his most classicising, the good Roman official in the service of a good Roman state. His retirement in his monastery at Vivarium suggests a very different interpretation of Cassiodorus. If not for the survival of the *Variae* it would be very easy to view him as a much more stereotypically ‘medieval’ figure. Likewise, Thomas Langley’s examination of the *Liber Pontificalis* and its portrayal of papal building programmes suggests that their work in repairing the urban infrastructure was presented in terms that were at odds with the classical tradition even when they were apparently similar. Langley demonstrates that this was an unusual perspective in the wider context of other Italian cities, particularly when compared to similar texts in Ravenna. This indicates the importance of understanding depictions of the city within their broader setting, but also that there were times when strategically forgetting the ancient city was a desirable rhetorical strategy.

It is precisely such forgotten ancient cities that Louise Blanke and Alan Walmsley address in the third chapter of the book through the application of resilience theory. Rebelling against past narratives that have positioned the late antique period as an age of urban collapse and despair in the east Mediterranean, they offer a clarion call for a new way of writing history drawing upon resilience theory. Using the cities of Baysān/Scythopolis, Fiḥl/Pella and Jarash/Gerasa as case studies, they reread the physical record of these sites to show a series of communities that responded to repeated crises caused by invasion, disease and earthquakes by adapting, retrenching and persevering.

In doing so, they remind us of the ancient cities forgotten by modern scholarship for being inconvenient to European concepts of what it meant to be Roman, employing ‘the cities of stone’ to challenge the erasure of the late antique city. In all three communities, memory of the past city was deployed differently in response to the crisis. Jarash shows the clearest emphasis on preserving the past. At Baysān and Fiḥl,

³⁷ Humphries, ‘Cities and the meanings of Late Antiquity’, 24–28.

³⁸ Momigliano, ‘The ancient city of Fustel de Coulanges’, 325–343.

new types of settlement developed, but ones which rested within the former cities. Resilience theory allows these pasts to be addressed. Blanke and Walmsley present a new vision of how cities and communities can survive, one that is applicable to the modern world. In this way the memory of the ancient city plays a role in the resilience of current societies.

Javier Martínez Jiménez applies a similar lens of resilience theory while demonstrating the importance of remembering the ancient past for the inhabitants of the medieval cities of southern France. In his chapter, Martínez Jiménez explores the replacement of the late antique churches of these cities with new Romanesque cathedrals in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Despite our understanding that this dismantling constituted a break with the ancient city, this church building was part of the way the citizens reaffirmed their connection to their forebears by celebrating the first bishops of their communities. Their city was defined by its shared love of God, a virtue they associated with their Roman past that could be best preserved and celebrated by remodelling the last remaining elements of the urban fabric from that past. Far from forgetting the ancient city, these Romanesque cathedrals were part of its remembering.

The concept of the ancient city as the ideas and virtues that animated its community was also of significance to those who sought to return to it in the modern period. Sofia Greaves explores the ways in which urban reformers in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Naples attempted to restore their idealised understanding of the Roman past, defined in their minds by its rationality as manifested by its hygiene. New buildings were required to retrieve this ancient spirit that lay in their memories. While few were as radical as Marino Turchi, who advised affecting the rebirth of the city by copying the example of Nero and torching it, the quest to restore the virtues of the Roman past necessitated a complete overhaul of the urban fabric of the city, one that would return Naples to its true glory with sewers and aqueducts.

It was revulsion at the physical casualties of this sort of dramatic remodelling of the ancient city in order to save it that motivated Giovanni Piccinato to seek another way of interacting with the urban past. In the last chapter of this book, Suna Çağaptay shows how Piccinato applied the lessons he had learned from interactions with the Roman city in Italy to the redevelopment of Ottoman Bursa after the fire of 1958. Of particular importance to him in preserving Bursa's memory were the spaces between the monumental structures. He sought to refashion the city in a way that was ready for the needs of the future, while true to all the layers of its past. Çağaptay's work on this decidedly unclassical city thereby offers a useful point of comparison to developments elsewhere in the Mediterranean, where the desire to restore the ancient city has come at the expense of other layers of the urban past. In doing so, she illuminates the tensions involved in attempting to preserve the classical city by destroying it.

Together, these chapters point to the importance of the memory of the ancient city as a community identified by its shared values connected through an ancestral link to the place in which it lives. The ancient city validates, legitimises and defines

because it explains the present with the gravitas and malleability of the past. As these contributors show from their variation, this was not a fixed concept, with the nature of the defining virtue shifting from justice to faith to rationality, with many other interpretations available. For all of these perspectives, the urban fabric was a tool to achieve the preservation or restoration of the memory of the ancient city. The destruction or alteration of the physical city was not always an act of forgetting and could be a statement of memory.

Tales of the city

An integral part of becoming a classical city was adopting a shared past that placed the urban community within a wider cultural history. This involved changes to the reckoning of time. An ancient city might not participate in the Olympics, but it could count its years and fix its chronology by them.³⁹ But it also required positioning the city within the recognised history of the Greek world. Panopeus' status as a city may have been dubious when measured on the basis of its buildings, but Pausanias did observe that in addition to sending 'delegates to the Phocian assembly', the place could claim a deeper heritage.⁴⁰ Panopeus lacked grand monuments, but it possessed a connection to Prometheus in the form of two large stones which 'smell very like the skin of a man. They say that these are remains of the clay out of which the whole race of mankind was fashioned by Prometheus'.⁴¹ While pungent clay was not the most obvious or fragrant item to build a community's claim to significance on, this tie to humanity's deepest origins gave it a place in the deeper Greek understanding of the past.

Participation in the memory of these particular historic events played an enormous part in a city's identification as part of the Greek world. Of these, the most revered was probably the Trojan War. Panopeus' case for city status was reinforced by its mention in the *Iliad*, as Schedius, king of the Phocians, who 'dwelt in a house in famous Panopeus', was slain by Hector in the battle for the body of Patroclus.⁴² Pausanias undermines this point by speculating that Schedius might have feared the Boeotians and used Panopeus as a fortress to protect himself against them.⁴³ Nonetheless, an appearance in the works of Homer was an important statement of legitimacy. The efforts made by Virgil and other Roman writers to link their city and their struggle with their defining opponent, Carthage, to the fall of Troy, speak to the value of being able to claim such a connection.⁴⁴ Less legendary conflicts could be used to similar effect. Just as Rome sought to place its wars with Carthage as part of the legacy of Troy, so too did Syracuse seek to connect its battle with Carthage to the Persian

³⁹ See for example the efforts of Quintus Fabius Pictor, Beck and Walter, *Die frühen römischen Historiker*, 92.

⁴⁰ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 10.4.1.

⁴¹ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 10.4.4.

⁴² Homer, *Iliad*, 17.1307.

⁴³ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 10.4.2.

⁴⁴ Erskine, *Troy between Greece and Rome*; Feeney, *Caesar's Calendar*, 82–84, 98; Dillery, 'Roman historians and the Greeks', 77–107.

wars that took place at the same time, as the western half of a grand struggle for the survival of Greek civilisation.⁴⁵

As Virgil understood, being able to place the founding of a city within a reputable history as the offspring of a celebrated parent (albeit in his case one that was opposed to the Greeks), was a key part of joining the club of civilised cities.⁴⁶ Mercantile trading settlements in the western Mediterranean rebranded as Greek colonies in the sixth century BC.⁴⁷ In doing so, they became the descendants of communities in the Greek homelands.⁴⁸ These largely fictive kinships could have very real political and economic consequences. Being founded by a heroic figure was also a way in which cities became part of this world. Hercules was a common ancestor for settlements across the Mediterranean. In later centuries Alexander and Augustus would offer a similar service for cities stretching from Afghanistan to Spain.⁴⁹ Essential to this process was the active remembering of a particular understanding of the city's past and its relation to a wider Greek and later Roman history. In this way the past became a resource to be discovered and exploited. Resilience theory suggests that such resources may be abandoned when a change in circumstances makes them no longer useful, but that they may then be returned to in a different way at a later point, an insight that many of the contributors to this volume engage with.

The arrival of a new universal model of the city could have a major impact on pre-existing urban settlements.⁵⁰ In her chapter in this volume, Marlana Whiting explores the manner in which Greco-Roman civic cult interacted with the pre-existing sacral landscape of Nabataean Petra. Local gods were matched to those familiar to the classical pantheon, while a new set of temples were erected in the city centre, away from the traditional sites of worship. Whiting demonstrates that there were multiple traditions of the city in the ancient Mediterranean apart from the Greco-Roman, the memory of many of which proved surprisingly durable in the face of the political and cultural power of the classical city. Elizabeth Key Fowden adds to the polyphony in her account of the Olympeion precinct in Athens by undermining the unity of the concept of the 'Greco-Roman' city and how such an idea is perceived or fabricated during the early Modern period. As her analysis of Pausanias shows, the many layers of Greek and Roman urbanism frequently rested uncomfortably against each other. Pausanias' efforts to downplay Hadrian's building programme speak to the conflicts within the concept of the ancient city. To these varieties of ancient city can be added the late antique city, a much-debated entity organised around a new religion and architecture and with changes in its elite management that was nonetheless entirely Roman in its self-understanding. The way in which these very different sorts of Roman cities could

⁴⁵ Asheri, 'The art of synchronization in Greek historiography', 52–89; Harrison, 'Sicily in the Athenian imagination', 84–96; Harrell, 'Synchronicity', 119–134; Feeney, *Caesar's Calendar*, 44–59.

⁴⁶ Horsfall, 'Aeneas the colonist', 8–27.

⁴⁷ Woolf, *The Life and Death of Ancient Cities*, 213–222.

⁴⁸ Malkin, *Myth and Territory*.

⁴⁹ Millar, 'Empire and city, Augustus to Julian', 76–96.

⁵⁰ Fentress, *Romanization and the City*.

be remembered as a singular ancient city are suggested by the writings of Frechulf of Lisieux, discussed by Sam Ottewill-Soulsby. From his ninth-century vantage point, the cities of Virgil, Josephus and Boethius coalesced into a unified urban past.

Frechulf's problem was to integrate a pagan classical memory of the city with a biblical one. The rise of new faiths and powers brought with them new pasts. Already in the Hellenistic era, Greeks, Jews, Egyptians and Babylonians had debated how their widely divergent deep chronologies could be reconciled or decided between.⁵¹ As Christianity increased in power and influence across the fourth-century Roman Mediterranean, a new geography and history emerged. Palestine and other places associated with the Biblical past developed a far greater significance.⁵² Other cities, including the mightiest and most celebrated Rome, acquired a new Christian past and landscape, one of martyrs and bishops and churches. Not the least of the cities affected was Petra, as Whiting shows, which became integrated into the topography of divine history as part of the Exodus narrative. The result was a complicated and contested process of integration into the new memorial priorities of the fourth century.

A similar process accompanied the spread of Islam, starting in the seventh century. While there was considerable continuity, this new Islamic world brought new cities, particularly in north Africa, and new layouts, as existing settlements shifted to reflect the economic and social power of Muslim Arab settlers and the amenities they needed.⁵³ New antiquities, flavoured by Qur'anic interpretation, Arabic poetry and legend and Persian history and mythology, rose to prominence as the interpretative framework by which the past city could be understood. Fowden guides us through the subtleties of this process, showing how the temple completed by Hadrian in honour of Zeus became the Persianate palace of Solomon raised by jinn, in a manner reminiscent of Great Zimbabwe. These varying elements brought by the expansion of knowledge associated with the Islamic world were by no means without their inner tensions. Edward Zychowicz-Coghill provides a vital perspective to this diversity of approach in his analysis of the embrace of pre-Islamic Sasanian ideas of the city by Persian Muslim writers such as Ḥamza al-İşfahānī. In doing so he offers a comparison to the challenges faced by those wrestling with the Greco-Roman city.

The rise of these new pasts frayed the connections between the cities of the Mediterranean and the Greco-Roman world, which was entirely forgotten in some places, and preserved as an echo in others. Here the remains of Roman urbanism were most likely to become 'cities of stone'. Nonetheless, both the physical remains and the ideas of the ancient city represented a challenge to those who came after them. As Amira K. Bennison observes in this volume, the ruins of the ancient city in North Africa demanded explanation from the region's inhabitants and scholars in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. These were survivals of a civilisation divorced from the present, and potentially a moral warning. The remnants of the Christian late

⁵¹ Dillery, *Clio's Other Sons*.

⁵² Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage*.

⁵³ Fenwick, *Early Islamic North Africa*, 54–80.

antique period also represented a conquered past whose defeat was a central part of the story of Islamic north Africa. Despite this distance, the power of the ancient city continued to fascinate. The texts Bennison examines draw upon the many pasts available to learned Muslims of the period, including biblical narratives and Arabic folklore, to which Roman accounts such as those of Tacitus and Orosius were part of a wider range of ingredients. These histories were added to scientific observations and measurements of the wondrous structures still standing.

Not all Muslim writers discussed the physical landscape of the ancient city from such a distance. Elizabeth Key Fowden introduces us to Mahmud Efendi and his approach to the remains of the Temple of Olympian Zeus in Athens. He was a native son of Athens and his history of the 'City of Sages' fused an Islamic past with a Greek one, in which Hadrian builds a palace in a city founded by Adam and Cecrops. These figures were a vital part of the history of the urban community to which he belonged. Similarly, Ḥamza al-İşfahānī felt a deep connection to the ancient ruined cities of Iran, seeing in their remains a civilised Iranian past that he was the heir to which had been destroyed by outside tyrants, most notably Alexander. The stone fragments of the ancient city became part of the story of the current city. For Ḥamza and Mahmud they were earlier stages of their history, whereas for the writers of north Africa, they were the previous world that their own had to defeat in order to begin.

It was not just the physical remains of the ancient city that could be troublesome for those who came after. Classical ideas of the city also potentially posed difficulties for those who came after it. Greco-Roman culture possessed great authority over large swathes of the medieval world. A case in point is the Carolingian empire as discussed by Sam Ottewill-Soulsby in this volume. The Carolingians promoted a grand revival of classical texts and Latin culture. The descriptions of cities in some of these writings meshed uncomfortably with the Christian knowledges that dominated intellectual thought. But these contrasts could also be an opportunity for scholars. Ottewill-Soulsby shows how Frechulf of Lisieux brought together Greco-Roman and the biblical concepts of the first city into a coherent narrative. In doing so, he used the former to strengthen and deepen his understanding of the city as a corrupting influence, a loss of innocence that shaped the subsequent course of human history. While it would have been much easier for Frechulf to have ignored these divergent voices, the ancient city mattered to him enough that he had to incorporate it into his vision of what it meant to be human in a fallen world.

Frechulf was the subject of Carolingian monarchs who saw themselves as the heirs to the pagan emperors of Rome. A century later, Ḥamza al-İşfahānī wrote for Būyid patrons who fashioned themselves on the model of pre-Islamic Persian monarchy. Like Frechulf, Ḥamza wrote a universal history by bringing divergent accounts into alignment, in his case, the traditions of Persia and the Arabs. In particular, he drew upon the potentially difficult materials of the Zoroastrian Avesta scripture. In doing so, he succeeded in fashioning a universal aetiological narrative of Iranian culture driven by Persian monarchs which could dovetail with an Islamic history

of the world. His cities were the beneficial gifts of wise monarchs that served the development of human civilisation, unlike those Frechulf, which were the tools of greedy tyrants intended to oppress their fellows in pursuit of luxury. For both, the ancient city was an essential means of understanding the development of human society.

The same tools of wide learning, synthesis and omission that served Frechulf and Hamza in their placing of the ancient city in the universal course of history were also employed by Mahmud Efendi in his local history of Athens. All three lived in intellectual contexts where multiple traditions of knowledge possessed authority, but they also showed an unusual openness to working with the contradictory accounts they found of the city. In doing so, they made a conscious decision to attempt to find the truth of the past by wrestling with difficult sources because understanding the ancient city mattered to all of them. It was memories of the ancient city preserved in texts like these that ensured that the Greco-Roman city would continue to survive as a historical concept that could be accessed by later scholars.

As Whiting suggests, the arrival of Greco-Roman ideas of what a civic community should be sometimes had disruptive effects on the pre-existing city. Fowden indicates that this was not a phenomenon confined to the ancient world as she discusses the reactions of Western Europeans to worship at the *musalla* established in the Olympeion precinct in Athens. Their expectations whetted by their education in the classics, nineteenth-century visitors were often disconcerted by this apparently profoundly un-Greek activity, which was frequently erased in their depictions of Athens. Fowden nonetheless places prayers for rain at the *musalla* within a long tradition of water-related worship, stretching back to the temple of Zeus itself. This discussion of long patterns of religious activity in an area just outside an ancient city which adapted to multiple different layers of faith and practice resembles Whiting's analysis of Jabal Harun outside Petra. Ancient cities were defined by their ideas and some of them proved surprisingly resilient in the face of external change.

As these chapters indicate, although all ancient cities developed in their own geographical and historical context, they were also interpreted in the light of more general concepts of what cities were, fixed within a specific history of the development of urbanism. The Greco-Roman city was one such history, applied both in antiquity and then in modernity, but the imperial faiths of late antiquity, such as Christianity, Zoroastrianism and Islam, would create their own. These models existed in conversation with what went on before, sometimes in dialogue, sometimes drowning them out. Old layers could be entirely effaced or restored. The results were very rarely uniform, with a complex and partially digested mixture being more the rule than elegant stratigraphy. The contributors to this volume have taken all these memories of the ancient city seriously, no matter how poorly they may fit modern understandings of it. If nothing else, they testify to the continuing impact and resilience of the ancient city for those who came after.

Cities of stone

This interest in the memory of the ancient city in the post-Roman world sometimes takes us to very strange places. We shall wander through curious lands that seem designed to mock the cities we know. The ancient city as recalled by those who came after could be downright risible. In this category we can include the *Libro Fiesolano*, a late thirteenth- or early fourteenth-century history of Florence which sought to develop an alternative Roman past for the city. According to the chronicle, the city of Fiesole, from which the Florentines were descended, was ruled by Catilina and his plausibly named son, Hubert Caesar, 'and so it happened that this Hubert Caesar took a Fiesolan wife and had sixteen children, who multiplied greatly in their realm, as it pleased God'.⁵⁴ To modern eyes such a story is almost charmingly ludicrous. This attempt to interweave a late medieval Italian city into Roman history, making the inhabitants literal descendants of a famous if poorly understood Republican figure, stands out for its clumsiness among many other similar chronicles of the past.

This illustrates the point that the people discussed remembered the Greco-Roman city from different distances. Sometimes this was a matter of geography. Frechulf of Lisieux and Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī spent most of their lives at a remove from the Mediterranean. Although both encountered the physical fabric of the Greco-Roman past, it remained something of an abstraction to them, a set of ideas for the former, a rival to the Iranian past for the latter. Chronology also had an impact. Cassiodorus was born at a time when the last flowering of the Western Roman Empire was still very much in living memory. This was not the case for the other contributions to this volume, with consequences for how visible the institutions and buildings of the ancient city were. The amount of chronological distance does not straightforwardly equate to knowledge about the ancient city. Modernity saw the rise of a more historically accurate view of the Greco-Roman past, albeit one shaped by happy accidents such as the discovery of Pompeii.⁵⁵ But the passing of the years encouraged those interested in the ancient city to think in terms of restoring it or reviving it rather than continuing it. As in the case of the nineteenth-century visitors to Athens, it could mean that observers fluent in the classics could fail to see a very real living, resilient city stood in front of them because their vision was obscured by the ruins of the past.

The variable distance is important when we think about remembering the ancient city. But the accuracy of the post-Roman world's ideas of the ancient city are entirely orthogonal to the concerns of this volume. Rather, the contributors explore that world's relationship to the ancient city on their own terms. We intend to travel to the strange ancient cities remembered by our subjects. Some of the people in this book attempted to understand the ancient city with the resources and perspectives available to them. Others sought to preserve and continue it by repairing and replacing the buildings. Still others endeavoured to restore the ancient city by rearranging or

⁵⁴ Beneš, *Urban Legends*, 25.

⁵⁵ For a fascinating series of case studies on the complicated reception of the site of Pompeii, see Hales and Paul, *Pompeii in the Public Imagination*.

demolishing it. Yet the ancient city remained something to be remembered, valued and imagined for all of these people, allowing it to survive as more than houses of stone raised by jinn.

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Resilience and memory

