

## Strategies of Remembrance in Greece under Rome

**Veranstalter:** Tamara Dijkstra / Inger Kuin, University of Groningen; Muriel Moser / David Weidgenannt, Frankfurt am Main

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The concept of memory as a heuristic tool has seen a great upsurge in historical scholarship in the past decades. Throughout history and notably in periods of great transformation, crisis or upheaval, reaching back to the past to give shape to the experience of the present seems to be a common response to change. In Graeco-Roman studies especially, practices of remembrance are currently employed as a tool to investigate community building, the construction of identity, and the promotion of political ideologies.

The conference 'Strategies of Remembrance in Greece under Rome', organized by TAMARA DIJKSTRA, INGER KUIN (Groningen), MURIEL MOSER and DAVID WEIDGENANNT (Frankfurt am Main) at the Netherlands Institute in Athens, aimed at exploring how memory of the past was used as an instrument to cope with contemporary issues in Greece in the first centuries BC and AD. It has sought to bring new insights to the field of Graeco-Roman studies in the following ways. First of all, the period under study, traditionally considered as the watershed between Hellenistic and Roman times, has remained underexposed as a period of transition in its own right. Secondly, this process of change has often been approached through the unidirectional framework of romanization. In contrast, the SRGR conference presented an attempt to investigate a diverse array of versatile responses to a changing world. Third, by taking Greece proper as its geographical scope, the conference aimed to focus on local mechanisms rather than grand interregional movements. In the process, it shed light on a timeframe that for this area has not been a popular subject of research, namely the late Hellenistic period and the early Principate. Lastly, the organizers set out to include archaeological and historical as well as literary

perspectives, providing an interdisciplinary environment for exploring these themes.

The thirteen papers were divided into five sessions, revolving around 'Honour and Commemoration', 'Sacred and Profane', 'Using the Past in Colonial Encounters', 'Remembrance and Commemoration: Change and Continuity', and 'New Beginnings', respectively. Rather than following these panel divisions necessarily, the papers will be treated here along some common themes that surfaced during the conference. Several related posters were presented at a well-received poster session.

### Burial customs

An important area of interest was the use of funerary monuments as expressive media. The kick-off lecture by ATHANASIOS RIZAKIS and DIMITRA ANDRIANOOU (National Hellenic Research Foundation), laid bare four levels of expression: inscription, iconography, size or type, and allocation. By studying the iconographical elements of funerary monuments from Philippi and Aegean Thrace that contain Thracian names, Rizakis and Andrianou effectively showed how different elements of representation after death can tell us more about the experience of local identity and integration by a minority group. This approach to funerary monuments was complemented on the second day by TAMARA DIJKSTRA (Groningen), who shifted the view to Patras, a Roman colony in the Peloponnese. Treating elite funerary monuments, she neatly illustrated how they can function as an instrument in the struggle for social prominence, emphasizing its importance for the (re-)formation of civic society after colonization.

The paper by JOHANNES FOUQUET (Heidelberg) explored *euergetai* who received hero cults and burials within the city walls. He argued that the location of the heroa, with examples in Messene, Mantinea, and Argos, was not only a matter of materiality and visibility, but also of ideology. A striking example was the heroon for Brutus and Cassius, which was placed close to the statue of Harmodios and Aristogeiton in Athens. Since it was decreed that nothing was allowed to be placed close to this statue group, the breach of this custom send a clear message about the

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close association between the monuments and thus between the Greek past and the Roman present.

### **Corinth as Roman colony**

Corinth is eminently suitable for studying strategies of remembrance in the first centuries BC and AD: after its destruction by Mummius in 146 BC, it was refounded as a Roman colony under Caesar. Although it has been argued that the city thus left its Greek past behind, several contributions to the conference showed how the new inhabitants consciously fell back on the city's mythological past and its Greek cultural background. A very clear paper by PAUL SCOTTON (California State) and CATHERINE DE GRAZIA-VANDERPOOL (American School at Athens) highlighted how the Julian basilica on the Corinthian forum of 2 BC negotiated between Greek past and Roman present by a varied use of form and content in the statues placed there, as well as by its own architecture and position. The paper by LAVINIA DEL BASSO (Venice), too, illustrated how the reshaping of Corinth as a Roman colony was not a strictly Roman affair. When the Isthmian games were hosted again by the city shortly after the colonization, the wreaths of victors seem to have been made of pine again, instead of celery, referring back to the archaic past of the city.

### **Honorific culture**

The papers by DAVID WEIDGENANNT (Frankfurt am Main), MURIEL MOSER (Frankfurt am Main), and CHRIS DICKENSON (Oxford) pertained to the theme of honorific culture and the political strategies employed in the process. With an innovative approach to the language of honorific decrees for civic benefactors, Weidgenannt showed how they were not merely an instrument of remembrance. They also presented a way to show civic resilience in a time of need, as well as to implement preventive measures for future crises. Written sources show that even after the benefactor's death, his descendants were often expected to help the community again. Although it is hard to check to what extent this actually occurred, some sources indeed indicate the system's success.

Moser examined a group of honorary stat-

ues on the Athenian Acropolis that were rededicated by the Athenian people to Roman senators in the period under study. The study of two of these complex monuments revealed how they could allude to various pasts, Athenian and Roman, in both the shape of the monument and the wording of the inscriptions. Her paper then delineated two political strategies pursued in the process: to create competition through a selective granting of such Classical honours to their Roman visitors and, through this careful management of memory space, to allow the Athenian demos to handle both Roman and Athenian elite claims over it.

A well-presented paper by Dickenson treated practices of remembrance in statuary monuments in Messene – a refreshing case study of a city that was not continuously inhabited, and saw its heyday under Roman rule. Dickenson aimed for a holistic approach of the sculptures, not making sharp distinctions between votive offerings and honorary monuments. Showing how these monuments stood both in the context of structures like the gymnasium, heroon, or sanctuary, and amidst other monuments of different periods, Dickenson showed how power was negotiated not through individual monuments, but through a rich patchwork of past and present intertwined.

### **Institutional history**

Two papers specifically focused on the history of institutions. BENEDIKT ECKHARDT (Bremen) spoke on private associations in Roman Greece, seeking a general interpretation of their development and function from a New Institutionalism perspective. Eckhardt argues that Greece was different, since associations had existed there since before the Roman period. This means that whereas in Asia Minor for instance, new associations were easily created in accordance with Roman traditions, in Greece the existing institutions had different social functions (e.g. a prominent religious focus, and no professional orientation) – and did not easily conform to the new model. According to Eckhardt, memory was key in understanding these Greek private associations in the Roman period, specifically investigating how they alternate between 'or-

ganizing the mythological past' and 'mythologizing the organizational past'.

ZAHRA NEWBY (Warwick) presented a series of ephebic reliefs accompanying inscriptions from Roman Athens, spanning from the first to the third century AD. From the Roman period, these monuments were no longer paid for by the city, but by elite members of society who had access to ephebic education. These monuments regularly showed ephebes on ships, rather than more common scenes of the paideia, such as wrestling. This suggests that the Athenian ephebeia was consciously employed to recall the heroic past of naval battles such as at Salamis. Exploring the role of such elements in festivals and the monuments commemorating them, Newby argues that Athenian elites instigated this remembrance of the past to distinguish themselves from other cities competing at festivals.

### A Theoretical Approach

A provocative paper by the scholars connected to The Roman Seminar showed how using memory to make sense of the past is a universal practice rather than one unique to Greek culture. The various backgrounds of the scholars ensured that many examples from different specialties were brought to the fore. Providing a critical note, the paper suggested that although the intensity of the use of the past as a strategy may have been exceptional in Roman Greece, the importance of this phenomenon for our understanding of the period should not be overestimated.

Two other papers that provided a theoretical approach to the conference's themes were given by INGER KUIN (Groningen) and PANAGIOTIS DOUKELLIS (Athens). Kuin's paper illustrated how changes in post-Sullan Athens may be hard to detect because the ancients deliberately sought to present changes as continuities. Combining archaeological evidence (e.g. coins and inscriptions) with Aristotelian philosophy, Kuin was able to set Sulla's reforms of the political institutions of Athens in a new light. DOUKELLIS concluded the conference with his study of Strabo's *Geography*. Making explicit use of memory theorists such as Assmann, Halbwachs and Nora, Doukellis approached Strabo's work as a mosaic of strategic remem-

brances. Seen as such, the *Geography* becomes an exercise in constructing an ideological memory palace out of the Roman world and the areas beyond its limits.

### Conclusions

Specifically limiting the time span and the geographic area under study proved very fruitful for the lively discussions after the papers, where both the established scholars and the younger generation could contribute in a very open atmosphere. Pre-circulating the papers to the speakers as well as providing abstracts to visitors of the conference added to a comprehensive dialogue, in which contributions from earlier in the conference were continuously incorporated.

Although some papers digressed slightly from the strict periodic framework, the talks were generally of a high quality, covering a wide range of topics within the parameters set by the organizers. Nevertheless, it was rightly remarked during the concluding plenary session that the Roman perspective to Greece under Roman rule was relatively absent. A likely cause for this is the prominent use of writers such as Pausanias, who, as an exponent of the so-called Second Sophistic, had a very specific interest in ancient Greek (religious) cultural artefacts. In the discussion, Kuin added to this the insight that most of the writers known to us with a similar focus on Greek matters such as Pausanias, Lucian, and Strabo, were not Greeks themselves, which should complicate our interpretation of their works.

Further critical notes came from the audience regarding the geographical scope of Greece. Ancient Greece was not a unity, and ample identity studies have brought forward that Greeks had multiple identities. This means that strategies of remembrance were also highly pluriform. The contribution by the Roman Seminar can be placed in this light. Problems of differentiation and categorization were also highlighted by Moser, who noted that although different pasts are remembered, similar strategies are deployed both in colonies and in cities. Another problem that surfaced multiple times during the conference is that of agency: in investigating the way the past was used to construct the present, it is always important to ask who did

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this, and for what audience – which in many of the cases presented, remains very hard to pin down.

A most important conclusion to the conference however was the overall appreciation for the focus on strategies of remembrance, rather than simply memory studies. This approach highlights the conscious use of memory not just as a cultural phenomenon, but as an instrument to deal with present concerns, making it an all the more useful heuristic instrument.

### **Conference Overview:**

#### *Session 1a: Honour and Commemoration*

Athanasios Rizakis / Dimitra Andrianou (National Hellenic Research Foundation), Remembrance on funerary monuments of Thracians from Roman Macedonia and Aegean Thrace

Johannes Fouquet (Heidelberg), Heroes of our times. Honouring *euergetai* in the memorial landscapes of Roman Greece

#### *Session 1b: Lightning Presentations and Poster Session*

Caterina Parigi (Cologne), The Augustan building policy in Athens in the light of a general reconsideration of the city in the first century B.C.

Caroline van Toor (Groningen), The return of stelai in Attica. A strategy of remembrance?

Olivia Denk (Basel), The worship of Zeus in Roman Macedonia

Erika Jeck (Chicago), Producing a new countryside: rural landscapes and social memory in Roman Greece

Sam Heijnen (Nijmegen), Becoming Greek, staying Roman: the Greek past in early Roman Corinth

Sarah Rous (Harvard), Upcycling as a strategy of remembrance in early Roman Athens

#### *Session 2: Sacred and Profane*

David Weidgenannt (Frankfurt am Main), *aretēs heneken kai eunoias*: commemorating times of crisis

Benedikt Eckhardt (Bremen), Heritage societies? Private associations in Roman Greece (1st century BCE to 2nd century CE)

Zahra Newby (Warwick), Performing the past

in the ephebic festivals of Roman Athens

#### *Session 3: Using the Past in Colonial Encounters*

Paul Scotton (California State) / Catherine De Grazia-Vanderpool (American School at Athens), Contending with the past in Roman Corinth

Tamara Dijkstra (Groningen), You must remember this: strategic use of memory and commemoration in Roman Patras

Lavinia Del Basso (Venice), Greek panhellenic agones in a Roman colony: Corinth and the return of Isthmian Games

#### *Session 4: Remembrance and Commemoration: Change and Continuity*

Dimitris Grigoropoulos / Valentina Di Napoli / Vasilis Evangelidis / Francesco Camia / Dylan Rogers / Stavros Vlizos (Roman Seminar), Roman Greece and the 'mnemonic turn': some critical remarks

Muriel Moser (Frankfurt am Main), The pasts of Roman Greece: managing memory space in Roman Athens

Christopher Dickellison (Oxford), Spaces of remembrance – statues in the urban landscape of Roman Messene

#### *Session 5: New Beginnings*

Inger Kuin (Groningen), Political change in post-Sullan Athens

Panagiotis Doukellis (Athens), The Time – Space narration at the beginnings of the new era: Strabo as historian and geographer of the empire

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