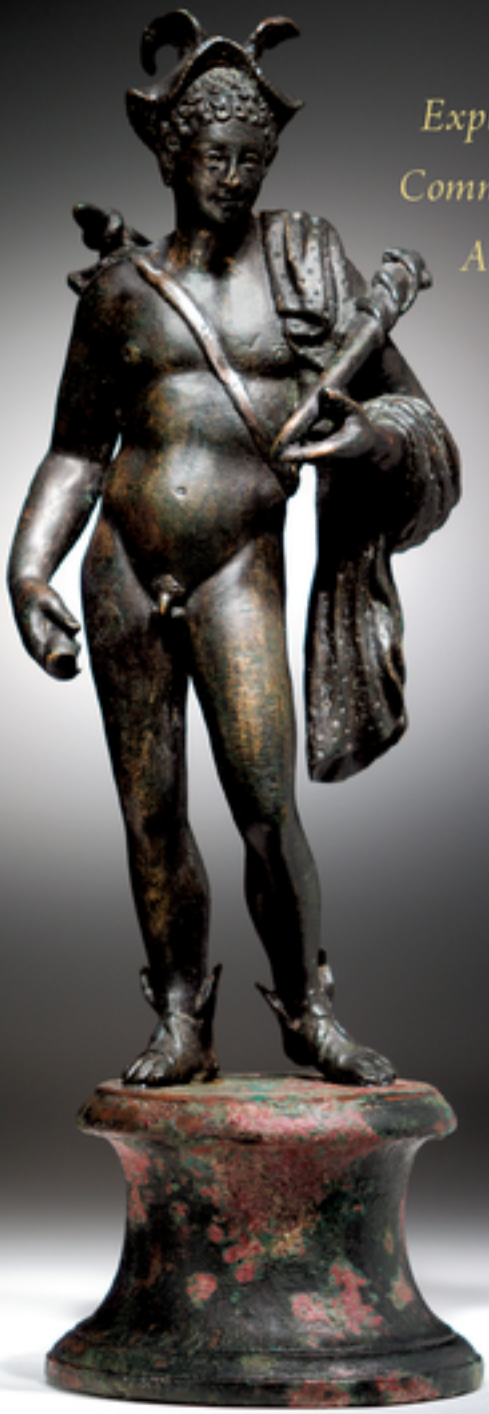
MERCURY'S WINGS

Exploring Modes of Communication in the Ancient World



Edited by

F. S. NAIDEN *and* RICHARD J. A. TALBERT

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Abbreviations

Scholarly journals, collections, editions, and names of ancient Greek and Latin authors are abbreviated as in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (*OCD4*), 4th ed. 2012. Eds. S. Hornblower, A. Spawforth, and E. Eidinow (Oxford: Oxford University Press); otherwise as in the Packard Humanities Institute, "Searchable Greek Inscriptions," <http://epigraphy.packhum.org/inscriptions>, and (for Classics journal titles) *L'année philologique*. Akkadian documents of all kinds are abbreviated as in the *Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* (*CAD*) (1956–. Chicago: University of Chicago Press); Akkadian dictionary entries also refer to this work. Akkadian and other Near Eastern journal titles are abbreviated as in the Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative, "Abbreviations for Assyriology," <http://cdli.ox.ac.uk>. Numismatic works and journals are abbreviated as by the American Numismatic Society, <http://numismatics.org/Library/Abbreviations>.

Other Abbreviations

BMNP	*Bollettino. Monumenti, Musei e Gallerie Pontificie.* 1959–. Vatican City: Musei Vaticani.
BtM	*Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature.* Ed. 2. 1996. Ed. B. Foster. Bethesda, MD: CDL Press.
EAH	*Encyclopedia of Ancient History.* 2012. Eds. R. Bagnall et al. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
ESAR	*An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome.* 1935–1940. Ed. T. Frank. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
FDA	*Studien zu Fündmünzen der Antike.* 1979–. Eds. H.-M. von Kaenal and M. R.-Alföldi. Berlin: Mann, and (from 2000) Mainz: von Zabern.

Franke-Nollé	*Die Homonoia-Münzen Kleinasiens und der thrakischen Randgebiete*. 1997–. Franke, P., and M. K. Nollé. Saarbrücken: Saarbrücker Druckerei und Verlag.
JMA	*Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology*
Kroll	*The Athenian Agora, Volume XXVI. The Greek Coins*. 1993. Kroll, J. H. Princeton, NJ: American School of Classical Studies in Athens.
Le Rider	*Le monnayage d'argent et d'or de Philippe II frappé en Macedoine de 359 à 294*. 1977. Le Rider, G. Paris: Bourgey.
MIG	*Indo-Greek and Indo-Scythian Coinage*, 9 vols. 1975–1976. Mitchiner, M. London: Hawkins.
Neue Pauly	*Der neue Pauly. Enzyklopädie der Antike*. 1996–2003. Eds. H. Cancik and H. Schneider. Stuttgart: Metzler.
OBO	*Oxford Bibliographies Online: Classics*. 2009–. Ed. D. Clayman. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Pangerl	*Collezione Pangerl, Contromarche Imperiali Romane*. 2003. Ed. R. Martini. Milan: Ennerre.
P.Fayum	*Fayûm Towns and Their Papyri*. 1900. Eds. B. P. Grenfell, A. S. Hunt, and D. G. Hogarth. London: Egypt Exploration Fund.
TPSulp	*Tabulae Pompeianae Sulpiciorum: Edizione critica dell'archivio puteolano dei Sulpicii*. 1999. Camodeca, G. Rome: Quasar.

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Introduction

F. S. Naiden and Richard Talbert

NO DOUBT THE subject of this book, ancient communications, first came to preoccupy its editors' attention in the same way that it has engaged many scholars—through their own work, such as Richard Talbert's mapping of the classical world. The project of editing a volume of essays on ancient communications—a book that had no forerunner—materialized in 2006, when Oxford University Press approached Talbert with an invitation to join his old friend and collaborator Kai Brodersen (then professor of ancient history at Mannheim University) in co-editing a communications handbook. Discussions were still at a preliminary stage, however, when the pressure of unanticipated professional and personal obligations led Brodersen to ask to be relieved of his commitment.

Talbert then hesitated to persevere alone, especially in view of his growing concern that the scope initially envisaged for the handbook—a "roads and seafaring project," as one e-message had summarized it—would prove unsatisfyingly limited. Moreover, it seemed to run the risk of needlessly duplicating much of John Oleson's *Oxford Handbook of Engineering and Technology in the Classical World*, a volume that was already approaching publication (in 2008). Talbert expressed to Fred Naiden—his new University of North Carolina colleague recruited in 2007—his sense of frustration that communications ought somehow to be addressed across a broader and more rewarding canvas. Naiden's sympathetic reaction and shared outlook soon prompted Talbert to request that the Press offer him Brodersen's place. It agreed. Between them, Naiden and Talbert next began to reconceive the volume as an initial exploration of a new field rather than as the kind of comprehensive reference work that could be produced for an established, well demarcated subject; in other words, as a set of essays and not a handbook.

We struggled for several years to define our vision and to involve colleagues willing and able to contribute effectively to its articulation. We are grateful to the readers commissioned by the Press to react to a first, inadequate proposal in 2008. Generous colleagues next aided our rethinking of several aspects at a meeting in Vancouver in 2009. The critical turning point came two years later, however, when the National Humanities Center kindly provided the venue for a workshop at which a dozen potential contributors presented draft papers for roundtable discussion. Their courageous efforts, and the responses to them, finally gave us the confidence to mold the work into its present form. It must still be regarded as a pioneering and experimental endeavor, because the topic of ancient communications has been so persistently neglected. Indeed, despite attention to some aspects, especially under the Roman Empire, this remains a topic that to date has received no wide-ranging treatment. Only one classical dictionary or encyclopedia includes an entry for it: "Kommunikation" in the late-1990s *Neue Pauly*, inevitably brief. As token acknowledgement of the challenge to be confronted, the subsequent English-language version of this encyclopedia offers not just one entry (as in the German), but two: "Communication" and "Communications." The former offers a concise description of ancient communications, and the latter mainly gives examples.[1]

This volume dares to take the broad view that communications are a vehicle, not just for the transmission of information, but also for the conduct of religion, commerce, and culture. Encompassed, too, within this scope are varied purposes of communication such as propaganda and celebration, as well as profit and administration. No less varied are the means and mechanisms of communication taken into account—from coins, papyri, artwork, and inscriptions on durable surfaces, to transient forms like watch-fires and mounted messengers. This said, we maintain that, for all its breadth, the scope of "communications" thus conceived should not be as extensive as that of general cultural expression, especially literary or artistic expression. Even so, works of literature and visual art merit inclusion insofar as they achieved communicative effects (resulting from public performance, for example), as distinct from achieving aesthetic effects.[2] In addition, we recognize that the communicative skills required to create and deliver works of literature and art—the skills of composition, performance, and dissemination—are indispensable for ancient communication, not just in these two fields, but also in

1. Hadot (1998); (2002); Neumann and Kolb (2002).

2. Cf. the treatment of literature in Hedrick (2011).

related ones ranging from oratory to graffiti. The topic of communications is larger than (and largely different from) that of technology, as treated in *The Oxford Handbook of Engineering and Technology in the Ancient World* already noted. It is smaller than (and again largely different from) that of social relations, as covered in *The Oxford Handbook of Social Relations in the Roman World*.[3]

The spatial, temporal, and cultural boundaries of this volume are extended but firm. The Near East formed a diplomatic and commercial communications network by the middle of the second millennium BCE, one that included part of Greece; this network then reemerged, with all of Greece now included, before the middle of the first millennium BCE. The eastern boundary of the network encompassed Persia, and from the early first millennium onwards, the western boundary included Greek, Punic, and Italian city-states; later, this boundary moved farther west and north to include Roman possessions. Just as the volume's *terminus post quem* is the emergence of a Near Eastern network in the second millennium, so its *terminus ante quem* is the division of the Near East soon after the rise of Islam.[4] Nonetheless, we do not attempt to be comprehensive in our coverage. That would be a gargantuan, as well as premature, undertaking.

In the chapters that follow, seventeen scholars whose previous work has to some degree or other engaged with communications now devote their attention to aspects reflecting communications as a specific perspective. The diversity of these contributors is exemplary. Some are building here on decades of work, others are working from recent monographs or dissertations; some synthesize familiar evidence, others address new discoveries or forge fresh links. Altogether, the contributors' attention is divided more or less evenly among the Near East, Greece, Greece and Rome together, and the Roman Empire as a whole. Predictably enough, a few chapters do not fit this classification, while several cross boundaries within it.

IN AN ANCIENT context, what are "communications"? Can today's communications terminology help explain the ancient variety, or were ancient communications, as Deleuze and Foucault implied, part of a world that was too simple or naïve to require any terms or ideas of this kind?[5]

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3. Peachin (2011).

4. For essays on medieval communications, a subject of comparable scope, see Mostert (1999); Canepa (2010a). On Late Antiquity: Ellis and Kidner (2002).

5. Deleuze (1990); Foucault (1998). A contrary view: Chase-Dunn and Hall (1999).

As an academic pursuit, communications developed from the older, focused field of rhetoric. In the 1940s and 1950s, the study of communications began to involve electronics. Since then, sociology has been injected into this study, along with elements of anthropology and economics, and those disciplines in turn have taken account of communications.[6] However, in spite of these developments, there is no general theory of communications, and no prospect of one. Instead, the theory of communications has become a subfield, with its own journals.[7] The reconfiguring of various fields of social science and the humanities as developments in the practice of communications is a process that is just beginning, and that to date has progressed further in some disciplines than in others. The claim could be made that, within Classics and Near Eastern studies, most of the work done so far relates to Roman history.[8] In Roman economic history, for example, the study of transaction costs is partly a study of the costs of transmitting information, undertaken notably by Bruce Frier and Dennis Kehoe, and now in this volume by Joseph Manning.[9] Abundant earlier work on the dissemination of propaganda and ideology did not conceive of these phenomena as "communications." The important exception to this generalization was the use of semiotics, which entered Classics and Indo-European linguistics after World War II.[10] Semiotics, however, dealt only with symbolic aspects of communications; in other words, with several kinds of signs. It did not deal with communications infrastructure, or with networks as opposed to transmissions.

Describing communications in the elementary physical sense—in other words, as movement and interchange—is an obvious starting point. In the *Federalist Papers*, for example, James Madison wrote of "communication between the western and Atlantic districts" in the United States; in other words, of the movement of people and goods as well as of information. Madison predicted that, as the nation expanded, communications would, too, and that communications would unite the nation.[11] For communication in

6. Early evolution of the field: Innis (1951); Inose (1979). For anthropology and sociology, see Vansina (1985), who addresses communications explicitly; Geertz (1973), who addresses them implicitly.

7. Note Shepherd et al. (2006). A possibly unique philosophical treatment: Habermas (1970a, b).

8. Achard (2006); Corbier (2006); Nicolet (1991).

9. Frier and Kehoe (2007). Signaling theory underlies their work, as in Connelly et al. (2011), following Spence (1973).

10. A general treatment of this much-discussed subject: Manetti (1993).

11. *Federalist Papers*, no. 14.

this sense, the physical environment is crucial. Madison saw it as an obstacle to be overcome. In the ancient Mediterranean, the environment was both an obstacle and a theater for communications, as Plato wrote when comparing Greek communities to frogs around a pond.[12] In the Near East and India, river valleys ringed by deserts or mountain ranges played the same role, but with less isolation within watersheds and more isolation between them.

Communication in these environments bore some resemblance to its character in early eighteenth-century North America and also Europe. Sea routes were often better than routes by land.[13] The thirteen colonies and Europe had nothing to match Roman roads. Waiting for the mail had already become a routine reason for annoyance or anxiety, even if use of the mail was the privilege of a relative few. Population growth produced great crowds, large armies, and grand parades, but it also created a corresponding need for new kinds of controls or stabilizing forces—for propaganda, court orders, and "multimedia" scripts for public performances.

This is one, not entirely dated, sense of "communication." Applicable to any one region or nation, it also applies to continents or civilizations. Diplomacy is an international example of this kind of communication; commerce is another, with both international and local dimensions. Institutions like armies and navies are in turn agencies of communication.[14] Communication on this scale required networks, of which three basic types may be identified: first, a hub with spokes; second, plural hubs with links from one to the next; and third, connected nodes.[15] The first of these types concentrated power in senders with a knowledge of routes located at a hub. If messages took the form of information or directives, there was an issue of credibility; to resolve it, ancient communicators sometimes used exceptionally costly and impressive media. Issues of information-management also arose: ancient rulers (like their modern counterparts) needed to signal what was inconvenient or impossible for them to say, or what should be impossible for others to detect.

A salient political concern in any hub-and-spoke network was its vulnerability to an attack on the hub—that is, in the case of military communications, an attack on the commanders of an army or fleet. This vulnerability influenced both organization and tactics. The opposite possibility was that a hub might be used to block or censor communications. Several ancient societies practiced

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12. Pl. *Phaedo* 109b.

13. Note, in this connection, Andreau and Virlouvet (2002).

14. Note Brosius (2003).

15. Figures 4.1 and 4.2 illustrate the first and second types.

damnatio memoriae in one form or other—for example, destroying images of an individual, erasing all mention of his name, and annulling his public measures, as the Romans did,[16] or more broadly, blocking communication between deposed rulers and their erstwhile subjects.

The second type of network, plural hubs with spokes, appeared in the Archaic period among the Greek city-states (*poleis*), but far earlier in the Near East. In this type, alternative routes provided greater flexibility, but one hub might interfere with messages meant for another. Diplomatic and commercial protocols, however, served to reduce this threat.[17] In the Roman and Persian empires, where the network of plural hubs took the form of a central hub surrounded by peripheral ones, another issue arose: the degree of centralization, or of alternating recentralization and decentralization, between the imperial center and the periphery.

The third, nodal type of network resembles a grid or rhizome rather than a wheel, as with the hub and spoke. Today's World-Wide Web is one example of such a network.[18] An older example is the U.S. interstate highway system, in which each node is an interchange. Yet the oldest well-documented examples are ancient networks of archives and libraries. If archives were semi-secret, they are better described as part of a hub-and-spoke system; but if they were open to the reading public, they resembled nodes. The ancient agora or forum, with its give-and-take, was nodal, too, but used mostly oral rather than written communication.

No matter what kind of network was involved, the media, or means, by which ancient communications were conducted were as diverse as several centuries ago (although less diverse than today). Gestures, music, art and architecture, and, of course, writing and numbers systems, from personal letters to business ledgers and works of literature—all appear as early as the third millennium BCE in Mesopotamia and Egypt, and, by the start of the Common Era, in all settled regions from Britain to India, and from the Black Sea steppes to Ethiopia. Rapid, long-distance communications were lacking, although the signal-fire relays used by Greeks and Persians provided some primitive telegraphy.

Comparison between ancient communications and those of the early modern period sharpens an appreciation of the range of messages sent. Some messages are intended to impart directives or information, not necessarily

16. Flower (2006).

17. For modern protocols, see Galloway (2004).

18. Berners-Lee (1999).

always with the use of language: ancient Greek *symbola* or *sēmeia*, for example, correspond to modern tokens, flags, or signals. Other messages seek to influence their recipients. Such messages may be speech-acts (including fictions); equally, they may take the form of objects or of processes. Ancient (and modern) terms for these messages are diverse, but several examples illustrate the parallels between ancient and modern practices. Both Greek *poleis* and early modern nations published laws and decrees, both used military insignia, and both organized public ceremonies to legitimize magistrates as well as to inaugurate them. As James Madison understood, communication of this kind was a means of achieving political and social unity. It was affective in nature, whereas communication of the first kind was informative.

Among the informative means of ancient communication are letters and epigraphical texts; among affective means are gestures and music.[19] Some means belong to both groups, and so can be regarded either as conveying a message, or as doing that and more—music accompanied by singing, for example; rituals that recount myths but also unify worshippers; works of art that glorify as well as depict. Another feature linking some means of communication is the resemblance between human practices and those of mankind's remote, primate ancestors.[20] Supplicating a Roman magistrate or a king of Judah are two instances of ritualized communication occurring on a vertical axis—ruler above, subject below—that derives from the behavior of other hominids and higher mammals.[21]

Informative and affective communications differ in their relation to the physical environment. The informative kind transmits messages through space; the affective kind may maintain relations over time. In the second case, the purpose is to cooperate or persuade, not to inform or coerce, and the outcome is a confirmation or change in relations, not a transmission. The two kinds may have the same content—for example, a piece of news—but in the first sense, the news is merely reported, while in the second, it is both reported and ritualized.[22] The two kinds must both have senders and recipients, but only the second has an active recipient, a co-participant. Just as the first kind is economic and political, the second is religious and cultural.

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19. For epigraphy in its social context, see Meyer (2011). A general study of gestures: Bolens (2009). Gestures in other nonverbal forms: Catoni (2008).

20. Maynard-Smith and Harper (2003).

21. Naiden (2006), 29–104.

22. Ancient Greek news and information-gathering: Lewis (1996); Russell (1999). Roman circulation of information: Capdetrey and Nelis-Clément (2006).

Written communications appear in both circumstances. One potential effect of the use of writing is the dissemination of copies that inform and empower those in the hubs or centers of a network. Another is the assertion, and also the extension, of the privilege of literacy.[23] Neither effect, however, is achieved through writing alone. Images, too, may be standardized and multiplied, and then displayed in contexts that complicate their meaning and also their social impact. Just as the spread of writing is an outstanding feature of the first two millennia covered by this volume, so the spread of standardized messages is an outstanding feature of the millennium thereafter; that is, the Hellenistic period followed by the Roman Empire.

Religious communications differ from other kinds with respect to networks and also to range. Religious communications commonly have two recipients: one, a god or spirit, and the other, fellow worshippers or priests who may observe or overhear. As a result, religious communication is oblique: what is said to one party must be redirected towards, and reinterpreted by, another. All statements are effectively double, and some are obscure. Oracles depend on this obscurity. Dedications and other acts of ostentatious piety are costly signals, like the signals conveyed by royal monuments. Signals of this sort permit the signaler to accumulate prestige; at the same time, they give material benefit to the community.

Religious communication in later periods has some of these features, but it lacks the outstanding feature found in antiquity: ubiquity. Most ancient historical records are, formally speaking, religious records: the doings of gods; the outcome of rituals, portents, and divine judgments; the countless plagues and famines caused by divine displeasure, or victories and harvests due to divine complaisance. Religion is everywhere in the ancient communications stream, as advertising is today, or propaganda was at the height of communism and fascism. In Mesopotamia, rulers wrote letters to gods. In Greece, gods inspired verses for the edification of oracular consultants. In both these societies, as well as in Egypt, gods made suburban boat trips, and worshippers for their part gratefully undertook long-distance pilgrimages. There was no avenue of communication considered inappropriate for addressing a god—not dancing or libanomancy, nor sharing food and drink. Gods were no less liberal in response, using birds in flight and nodding statues, earthquakes and sheep livers.

If religion was important from the very beginning of ancient communication, a second distinctive feature emerged mostly in the last millennium or so BCE, under the Achaemenid Persian and Roman empires, and also the empire of the Maurya in India. Such far-flung states not only ruled diverse peoples—a

23. Ancient writing as communication: Arslan (1998); Bresson et al. (2005).

phenomenon going back to the unification of Egypt, and then Mesopotamia, in the fourth and third millennia—but also integrated them through deportation or immigration, the establishment of garrisons and military colonies, and the encouragement of urban growth through building projects. Although there had always been bilingual populations at the interstices of ancient societies, such as the Phoenicians and later the Greeks, now there were bilingually administered empires, like Persia, which used Persian and Aramaic, and Rome, which used Latin and Greek. In such empires, religious life, too, was more complicated than in earlier states, and commerce was more active, better organized, and farther-reaching. Communication tools like maps and coins became more sophisticated as well as more common.

These changes were not only extensive but also intensive. In the most populous and wealthy regions, like Egypt, the intermingling of populations from the Hellenistic period onward led, not just to bilingualism, but to biculturalism, too. In Rome (its population as high as one million) and leading cities elsewhere—including those of the rival Parthian and Sasanian empires, like Ctesiphon with a reported population of 400,000—the multiplication of inscriptions and images combined with the larger and more diverse population to cause a growth in communications comparable to what the modern world has experienced. The quantitative change was so great that the quality of communications must have changed also: it became cross-cultural.[24]

Two means of communication illustrate this change—currency and religious proselytism. For the first time in antiquity (indeed, in history), fiduciary coinage appeared, the result of innovations in Roman financial policy during the third and fourth centuries CE. Moreover, for the first time, Greeks and Romans came into extensive, permanent contact with the interior of the Levant, the Iranian plateau, and India, and with religions notably more different from their own than those they had encountered in Celtic Europe or the Punic Mediterranean. The spread of Christianity to Roman cities was one eventual result. At the end of antiquity, the Mediterranean basin had more money than it would again until the early modern period, and more places with Christian majorities than it ever would again.

EACH OF THE seventeen chapters here touches on one or more of these issues, but each chapter also primarily addresses either a communications network, a means of communication, or a dimension of religious or cross-cultural communication. These broad themes comprise the four parts of the volume. The order of the parts is consciously progressive: "Networks" make

24. A survey: Canepa (2010a).

communication possible; "Means" render it variable; "Divinities" make it ambiguous; and cross-cultural "Engagements" make it complex.

Grant Parker's chapter introducing Part I, "Networks," underscores the importance of the physical environment, both water and land, while also issuing a timely reminder that the Mediterranean Sea has been a topic unjustifiably neglected by modern scholarship. To be sure, as early as the eighth century BCE, Homer features Odysseus' epic travels across a Mediterranean of the imagination, etching him permanently into the memory of all educated Greeks and Romans (and readers ever since, too) as a quintessential traveler. Nonetheless, scholarship has been slow to appreciate the remarkable contrasts in the region's landscape, climate, and ecology, not to mention the varied means by which connectedness was achieved across such a vast expanse and beyond. The slowness may be explained in part by the relative reticence of the surviving geographical writers: they focus their attention on places for the most part, with less regard for the opportunities and difficulties of moving between them. Parker redresses the imbalance by singling out Delos, Delphi, Ostia, and Palmyra as instructive examples of how places may be connected; the last of the four—a desert oasis—most strikingly by the creative integration of land, river, and sea routes.

In addressing libraries, the author of the next chapter, Matthew Nicholls, broadens traditional scholarship to gauge the roles of these institutions in promoting the exchange and transmission of ideas and values, and the mobility of people, objects, and texts. The privileged ability of libraries to select and canonize texts has long been appreciated, but recognition of their widespread communicative value in Greek and Roman society is a revealing recent advance. Among Hellenistic rulers, efforts to develop libraries as centers of culture and learning became a significant form of interchange and rivalry. At the same time, such libraries furnished a valued means of communication between the ruler and his subjects, most notably in the case of the Ptolemies. Also in the Hellenistic period, Roman aristocrats developed a similar passion for libraries. However, it was Augustus' new regime at Rome that elevated the importance and visibility of libraries to an unprecedented degree. Their sheer physical scale here, the scope of their collections, the sense of permanence that they projected, and above all their open embrace of a broad, public readership, were extraordinary. Moreover, the communicative and commemorative roles of the great libraries in Rome itself were expanded into a network by the establishment of similar prestigious institutions at the heart of leading cities elsewhere across the empire.

It is Taco Terpstra's claim, made in the third chapter of Part I, that scholarship on Roman long-distance trade has been preoccupied by questions of

its scale and importance for the overall economy. In consequence the role and importance of communication for this Roman trade have remained overlooked. Terpstra's chapter therefore seeks to recover the nature of this communication—both written and oral—and of the communications network in circumstances where the pace at best was pitifully slow by modern standards, and, to make matters worse, was often prey to storms, say, or bandits. Given the nearly complete loss of commercial correspondence from classical antiquity, but not from the medieval period, Terpstra draws on material from the latter for evidence. He also assigns a higher value and importance to oral rumor than scholarship has typically favored. For anyone engaged in business, he urges, it was vital to maintain a solid reputation, and the development of centers where traders would operate in close proximity—the "Piazzale delle Corporazioni" at Ostia serves as an outstanding example—undoubtedly increased the chances of information being passed on verbally.

In the last chapter of Part I, Fred Naiden reminds us that ancient warfare was, among much else, an act of communication. He explores the ways in which communication determined the outcome of battles in classical Greece—encounters where an army's victory would depend upon its continued cohesion and its soldiers' ability to remain in effective communication with one another. Neither Thucydides nor Xenophon (our principal sources for the battles in question) draws specific attention to these two vital needs, let alone their synergy, but Naiden demonstrates how readily identifiable they are. A distinction is to be drawn between networks of "horizontal" communication among an army's mass of soldiers on the one hand, and officers' top-down "vertical" communication on the other, the latter form conveyed by symbolic gestures as well as by verbal instructions (sometimes including calculated resort to falsehood). Well-drilled Spartan armies—and, to a lesser extent, Boeotian ones—stood out not least for as many as six officer-ranks, for their communication through music, and for their ability to execute orders conveyed in the heat of battle, including the maneuvers for an orderly withdrawal. To be sure, Spartan steadiness also stemmed from the ingrained mentality of a citizen body where individual private identity was to be subordinated to the needs of the community. Athenian performance was more typical: here, army discipline was inferior by contrast, although in Xenophon's estimation the navy's discipline did match that of the Spartan army.

The chapters in Part I all place institutions and organizations—libraries, trading associations, and armies—in a natural setting. The chapters in Part II, "Modes," consider manmade environments dominated by the arts and by social and literary conventions. James Osborne's opening chapter on Hittite and Neo-Assyrian monuments engages with some of our oldest evidence for

communications, as well as some of the most spectacular. For his discussion, Osborne exploits two interpretive concepts, one that he terms "relationality," and the other, known as "costly signaling theory," imported from recent work in evolutionary anthropology. Relationality calls for reckoning with changes over time in how a monument communicates messages and how it is perceived; costly signaling theory serves to explain why some monuments communicate more effectively if they are large and expensive. Both concepts assist in analyzing the ideological content of the monumental royal sculptures that form Osborne's focus. Familiar as these objects may be for Near Eastern specialists, Osborne shows how the perspective of communications can reveal interpretive complications. One is religious: many monuments are placed on inaccessible sites where the apparent viewer is a god. In this respect, these monuments resemble Mesopotamian royal letters to the gods, but in the form of colossal stone parcels, not the epistolary tablets that are the subject of a chapter by Seth Richardson in Part III.

In the next chapter, Jennifer Trimble argues that the size, diversity, and connectivity of the Roman Empire in the first centuries CE fostered developments in image communication. This was a world where levels of visual literacy, especially among city populations, should be considered quite well developed. At the same time, a full grasp of a monument's iconography was not essential for effective communication at a range of levels. For our understanding, a "transmission" model of communication (with the message intended by the sender in individual instances forming the primary concern) is liable to prove less satisfying than a broader, "ritual" one. Here collective, repeated expressions become the focus, with special attention devoted to particular social, cultural, economic, and political contexts. A remarkable, seemingly modern phenomenon of the period is the proliferation and stability of image use, enabling complex, varied interplays of empire and place to be articulated in all segments of society, with or without the involvement of the authorities. Trimble illustrates this interaction with reference to three contrasting uses of the same visual motif, a man wearing the Greek *himation* (mantle) in the "armsling" scheme.

Like art, music is an avenue of communication with both aesthetic and political dimensions that differentiate it from gestures. For Timothy Power, writing on archaic and classical Greek music in the third chapter of Part II, the political dimensions of musical expression are paramount. There is little Greek evidence for instrumental music apart from poetry meant to be sung, and also little evidence for musical scores as opposed to the words—the "libretti," as Power terms them—that were meant to accompany the instruments. Music, accordingly, presents us with a synaesthetic form of communication: verse, instruments, often dance and, in Athenian drama, prose dialogue. The modal

complexity of this kind of communication was unrivaled; so, too, Power implies, was its political impact. Solon and other politicians used music, while Pindar and other poets introduced political motifs into performances of their works. In Power's view, the generally accepted notion that early Greece was a "song culture"—differing in this respect from ancient Mesopotamia with its scribal culture, or from imperial Rome with its predilection for monuments and public spaces—should not lure us into laying undue stress on private life and personal communication. On the contrary, this culture was not only saturated with political values, but also periodically reoriented through innovative uses of song to introduce new political ideas.

The following chapter, Gregory Aldrete's study of gestures, addresses the oldest of all means of communication, shared by mankind with primates. Yet it is also one of the most complex, since it often occurs in conjunction with other means: first, speech, and second, culturally created means such as images and music. To convey the subtleties and flexibility of gestures in short compass, Aldrete focuses on Roman practice, mainly during the late Republic and Principate. However, he also takes into account Roman encounters with Greeks, as well as variations of gesture at different levels of Roman society, from the imperial court to the arena. This environment of stereotyped gestures depends upon protocols for time, place, and purpose of use; yet Aldrete demonstrates repeatedly how Romans distorted, or even violated, these protocols to diverse effect. Some of these acts of manipulation involve religious gestures of the type treated at greater length in Part III; other such acts relate to the intercultural communication treated in Part IV, by Sheila Ager especially. Nonetheless, encounters between individuals remain Aldrete's main focus, rather than networks of communication on a larger scale.

WHILE THE FIRST two parts of this book display topographical and chronological variety, Part III, "Divinities," limits itself to three of many eligible ancient religions, and to two closely related practices. It opens with a chapter by Seth Richardson, in which he addresses worshippers' messages to Mesopotamian gods and explores the duality of this kind of communication. Certain "genres" of communication, as he terms them, are for the worshipper to initiate; some, but not all, require expert assistance. Other such genres, in contrast, are for a god to initiate; here, too, the worshipper may require outside assistance. Moreover, there is always the possibility that some messages meant for a god will fail to arrive: hence, Richardson stresses occasional "general failure" of communications. At the same time, some messages sent from the gods prove inscrutable, creating another reason for failure. Because of this risk, the Mesopotamians developed protocols to account for failures. They

also developed an elaborate communications infrastructure—places, genres, and formulae. Richardson's focus encompasses, not just individual worshippers, but shrines and their staffs, too. Notably, he identifies a characteristic Mesopotamian style for religious communications: it is at once elaborate and pessimistic.

Ian Rutherford's chapter, which follows, illustrates how the perspective of communications may reveal unnoticed features in familiar phenomena. Extending the scope of his 2013 monograph on *theōria*—pilgrimage by delegates sent to religious festivals by Greek *poleis*—here he considers pilgrimage in other ancient societies, and takes the opportunity to differentiate between features that were distinctively Greek and those that are commonly found. His insight into pilgrimage networks highlights how important the *polis* and the federation were as Greek forms of religious organization, and how they contributed to the special character of Greek pilgrimage. Moreover, Rutherford's discussion of how pilgrimage reinforced cultural norms and contributed to social cohesion leads him to an instructive comparison between Greece and ancient Israel. The latter society might appear to be the polar opposite of Greece, since sacrifice and accompanying religious activities were long confined to a single shrine, the Jerusalem Temple. In fact, however, pilgrimage to the Temple largely resembled Greek pilgrimage to shrines like Delphi or Delos; indeed, Rutherford speculates, it may have been modeled partly on Greek pilgrimage. This resemblance vindicates several decades of scholarly work—by both Rutherford and others—visualizing Eastern Mediterranean religions as a spectrum in which neighboring religions have much in common.

Among types of religious communication, oracles are paradigmatic, as Julia Kindt explains in the third chapter of Part III. Man proposes, but God disposes, so the act of communication cannot be said to accomplish any of the typical aims that otherwise may be taken for granted—such as transmitting information, influencing recipients or observers, or fostering relationships. The same limitation applies to portents and epiphanies, too. However, only oracles institutionalize this sort of communication, reduce it to writing, and make it available to all manner of inquirers, from states seeking political advice to individuals asking about marriage, business prospects, and other personal matters. A distinctive feature of oracles in Greece was their verbal ambiguity. Although any portent—and many other messages—might be misinterpreted, some Greek oracular shrines encouraged misinterpretation by adopting an enigmatic style of expression that mixed ambiguity with vagueness, opacity, and a countervailing impression of divine infallibility. Kindt focuses on this "enigmatic voice" at Delphi, the most famous ancient oracle. She seeks to explain why this voice characterizes some oracles but not others;

how it complicates the interpretation of oracular messages; and how oracles confirm, but adjust, the Greeks' notion of a barely bridgeable gap between human and divine participants in their polytheistic religion. Kindt's chapter complements Rutherford's explanation of how Greek worshippers communicated with each other while addressing the gods in such unambiguous practices as festival-going.

Like Rutherford's chapter, Michael Kulikowski's, on Christianity, illustrates how the perspective of communications may bring to our attention the importance of underappreciated features in familiar topics of study. It is indeed already widely appreciated that (as Kulikowski observes) Christianity would have been unable to develop in the unprecedented way it did, had not the Roman Empire already opened up a vast domain to networks of communication. Almost from the moment of its origin, Christianity conceived itself as a network of congregations professing the same faith and maintaining communication (or communion) with one another. Kulikowski goes much further, however, when he brings to our attention two unforeseen consequences of Christianity's success in eventually securing the adherence of emperors from Constantine onwards. First, Constantine's decision to declare the rulings of the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE universally binding on all Christians, and his successors' concern to enforce orthodoxy, inevitably strained Christian interaction. Even so, Christianity's regional groupings and the communication network within each of them gained strength as a result, enabling them to endure independently—in the West especially—after the imperial governmental structure on which they were based fell apart. Second, despite their intervention in church affairs, emperors could not serve as arbiters of matters of belief (all-important to Christians), so that laymen in search of guidance turned to alternative, and often competing, sources of authority. In time, the habit served to influence their political thinking, too: again, it was the West that became most susceptible to division and less dependent upon the traditional imperial structure.

This synoptic view of a major religion concludes Part III. In Part IV, the chapters turn from topics that mostly involve one culture, religion, or period to larger topics such as great-power diplomacy and cultural exchange, imperial finance, and worldview. This part opens with a chapter by Matthew Canepa that immerses us in a world where the Persian Empire had long been the physical and cultural center, and Northern India and the Mediterranean were no more than outliers to the east and west. Canepa's concern is the cross-cultural interaction that developed during the Hellenistic period in the aftermath of Alexander's conquest of the Persian Empire as the land and sea routes between the Mediterranean and India opened up. Despite their constant

warfare, the kings who dominated this region established diplomatic ties influenced by Persian, Greek, and Indian thinking, one reliant upon a rich range of linguistic, visual, spatial, and ritual idioms: among much else, lavish spectacles were mounted, gifts exchanged, and learning displayed. Moreover, Canepa urges, Mauryan pillars and inscribed edicts issued by Emperor Aśoka should be viewed as responses both to local South Asian traditions of religion and empire, and also to those of the Achaemenids and Seleucids. The coinage issued by the Hellenistic kings, too, introduced a new technology for communicating power and propaganda into western and south Asia. The cross-cultural interaction of this period not only transformed contemporary worldviews and traditions, but also formed the basis for future exchanges among the Romans, Arsacids, Kuṣāṇas, and Sasanians.

The next chapter, in which Joseph Manning focuses on Egypt, offers a paradigmatic case of cross-cultural communication. This is partly because Egypt was the longest-lived ancient society, and one of the most highly developed, yet partly also because of the superficial impressions—articulated by authors from Plato onwards—that it was hieratic and unchanging. Manning stresses that, from its very beginning, Egyptian society was multicultural. Even so, Egyptian communications had a single focus, the pharaoh, who set high standards for monumental communications of the type examined by James Osborne in Part II. Because it was pictographic, Egyptian hieroglyphic script combined the literary and the visual in a way that rendered communication both a priestly privilege and a royal one. It was an important public phenomenon, too, analyzed by Manning in terms of transaction costs. Commonly applied to the study of the ancient economy (the nature and extent of transaction costs would affect economic growth), this concept also explains why and how the pharaohs used monuments and decrees to unify a diverse society. The use of hieroglyphics did not prevent the use of other scripts as well, and in Late Antiquity, Egypt became partly bilingual. Bilingualism had always existed at the interstices of the ancient world, in major marketplaces and at royal courts, but it now became widespread—a situation with a single parallel, the Roman Empire, of which Egypt was an important part.

Sheila Ager's chapter, the third in Part IV, returns to the subject of diplomacy, but with the Mediterranean world as the center of attention. Her discussion invites comparison with Canepa's chapter as well as with several others. Her rejection of the widespread impression that diplomatic communication was severely hampered by the slowness of travel recalls Grant Parker's emphasis on how creatively connectedness was in fact maintained. Equally, her warning that diplomacy by no means necessarily took improved relations as its goal, but might be driven as much by aggression or deceit, reminds us

that inter-state relations were liable to suffer from "information asymmetry," like the long-distance commerce treated by Taco Terpstra. This was a world of manifold networks, where knowledge was power, and where the safeguards provided by formal, permanent international institutions of the modern type were lacking. In the same spirit, the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilīya (summarized by Canepa) approached diplomacy as an extension of war. Although envoys were not professionals, the means of conducting diplomacy were varied and sophisticated, with tones ranging from wheedling flattery to blunt coercion. Symbolic messages of various kinds (including inscriptions, monuments, and coins) had an important role to play. In certain circumstances, kinship diplomacy might prove decisive, as might "deprecation" offered by third parties to avert a catastrophe. Our understanding, gained as it is through incomplete or unsatisfactory sources of information, relies heavily on what was said or done publicly; it is impossible to gauge the importance of what was said behind closed doors.

The fourth chapter, by Kenneth Harl, deals with Roman coinage as a distinctive type of communication that developed in the centuries preceding the empire's fall in the West and the loss of Egypt and Syria to the Moslem caliphs in the East. During this period, the Romans minted standardized images in the hundreds of thousands, even millions. In Part II, Jennifer Trimble showed how multiplication of images affected visual and verbal discourse in various public settings, and now Harl, echoing this theme, describes how such a massive output of coinage affected marketplaces, and through them the economy of the empire. Linked to coinage in this period was unprecedented government regulation of the economy, a further extension of the capacity of both rulers and—in their reception of coinage—the ruled, to communicate with one another. Harl concentrates on by far the most important innovation, the establishment of a fiduciary coinage in the third and fourth centuries. While this step has typically been taken to signify economic decline or incapacity, Harl argues that fiduciary coinage represents a new level of communication, in which what is conveyed so widely—the value contained in a circulating medium—is an abstraction.

The conveying of abstractions is also a theme in the final chapter of Part IV, Richard Talbert's consideration of the conceptual foundations of Roman map-making. The ancient notion of a "map" was so different from today's that this term itself should be used with caution, a surprising as well as disappointing conclusion, because classical antiquity witnessed scientific progress in the related fields of astronomy and geography. Instead of describing the earth as accurately as was possible at the time, the maps of the Roman era depict, and glorify, Roman rule of what was, for the Romans, the larger part of the

inhabited world. In this respect, maps served the same purpose as panegyric of the imperial period. Even so, there was much more to Roman maps than this propaganda purpose. On one hand, some maps, like the colossal Marble Plan of the city displayed in Rome itself, were costly signals, conveying their meaning by the effort made to express it, a theme in the chapters of Osborne and Manning. On the other hand, much of the Marble Plan was invisible to any spectator, implying that it was also intended for divine spectators, and thus had a kind of double identity evoking religious communication, as analyzed by Kindt and Richardson.

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PART ONE

Networks

1

Environmental Perspectives on Ancient Communication

Grant Parker

Odyssean Landscapes

Odysseus, having taken refuge among the Phaeacians, recounts his wanderings in partial recompense for the hospitality he receives. At the prompting of King Alcinous, Odysseus starts his tale immediately after his departure from Troy and continues at considerable length. One episode in the story is his encounter with the Cyclops Polyphemus, which takes place on an island that receives a detailed description:

> For it is not a bad place at all, it could bear all crops
> in season, and there are meadow lands near the shores of the gray sea,
> well watered and soft; there could be grapes grown there endlessly,
> and there is smooth land for plowing; men could reap a full harvest
> always in season, since there is very rich subsoil.[1]

These lines, with their many realistic details, convey a vivid sense of place. Homer's readers and listeners imagine the place in terms of both the physical environment and also the human interactions it elicits—even if those interactions remain hypothetical in the poem. In particular, agricultural potential comes to the fore ("there could be grapes"). Not surprisingly, therefore, some readers have sensed a connection with the establishment of colonies by Greek

1. Homer, *Odyssey* 9.131–135, trans. R. Lattimore (New York: Harper Collins, 1965). Further extracts from the *Odyssey* are drawn from the same translation.

city-states. If we accept that the *Odyssey* was composed in the final decades of the eighth century BCE, then it closely overlapped with the early stages of Greek colonization, which is broadly dated to the period between the later eighth century and 500 BCE. During this time, new settlements were established by Greek-speakers in an area ranging from the Black Sea to as far as the western Iberian peninsula. One of the earliest settlements was established by Euboeans on the volcanic island of Pithecussae, modern Ischia, at the northern edge of the Gulf of Naples (Map 1.1). It is no accident that this island was famous for its natural resources, including fruit, wine, and minerals.[2] Southern Italy—and arguably Sicily—would become known as "Great Greece" (*Megale Hellas* or "Magna Graecia").

The *Odyssey* has been analyzed productively against this background. It is striking, for example, that it also contains a passage outlining the duties to be fulfilled by a colony leader in order ensure the success of the venture: at *Odyssey* 6.6–10, we hear of Nausithous, who had settled in Scheria, building walls around the settlement as well as houses and temples, and allotting landholdings.[3] This Homeric passage thus serves as a reminder of the centrality of agriculture to the ancient Greek and Roman economies, a point we shall return to in due course.

However, in Odysseus' narration to the Phaeacians, it is not only the agriculture of the island that has significance, but its connectedness, too:

> Also there is an easy harbor, with no need for a hawser
> nor anchor stones to be thrown ashore nor cables to make fast;
> one could just run ashore and wait for the time when the sailors'
> desire stirred them to go and the right winds were blowing.[4]

Ease of access is clearly a feature of the landscape here. The lack of labor required is in keeping with other elements of the description, which strike an idealizing note insofar as they evoke an age that preceded hardship.[5]

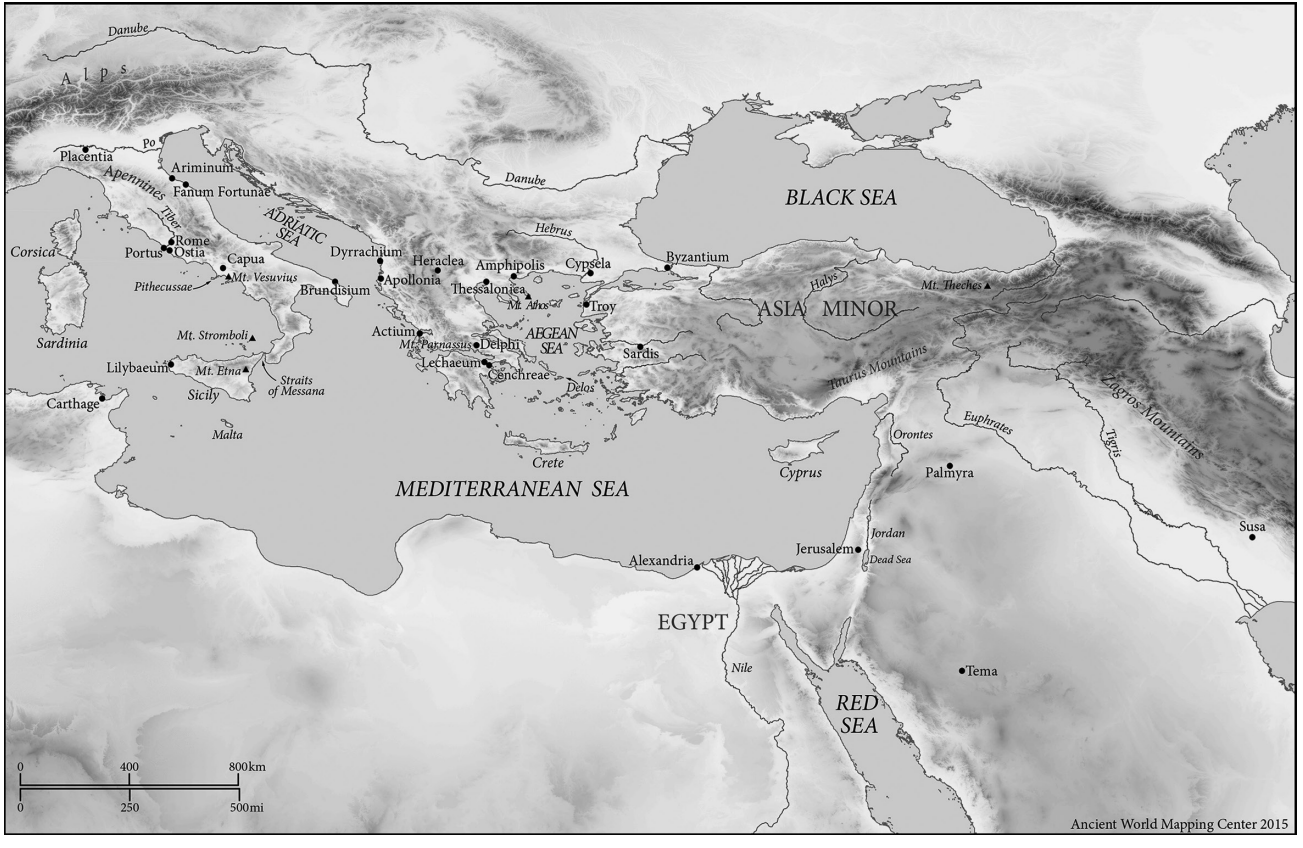
If access and mobility frame the present volume as a whole, the focus of this chapter will be on the former; namely, the aspects of the environment that either enabled or encumbered the connectedness of ancient places. It would be reasonable to assume that those elements should be taken in conjunction

2. Strabo 5.4.9; Plin. *NH* 31.9.

3. See further, Malkin (1998).

4. *Od.* 9.136–139.

5. Hes. *Op.* 106–201 spells out the doctrine of the five human races beginning with a Golden Age, only to mark human decline from a period that preceded hardship.



MAP 1.1 World of the Eastern Mediterranean and beyond

and should be regarded as twin aspects of the ancient Mediterranean environment. The two are brought together in the Homeric passages discussed above, in a seamless way, as part of an idealizing image. In a roughly contemporary text, Hesiod in *Works and Days* offers an entirely different picture of the relationship of agriculture and sea-travel: "there is nothing about it that I find pleasant" (683), he says of sailing. The speaker here is a man of the land, and his travels are undertaken infrequently and grudgingly, necessitated by economic considerations of trade (618–694). Yet even this text, with its markedly different balance, serves to remind us of the broader interrelationship of land and water.

Where exactly is the location described by Homer? Since antiquity, the urge to identify the specific place has been irresistible.[6] It is a reaction in part to the vividness (*enargeia*) of Homer's description, but in no small measure also to the high cultural status that his poems enjoyed throughout antiquity and after. Euripides, in his satyr play *Cyclops*, dating from the late fifth century, explicitly locates Polyphemus in Sicily, near Mount Etna (lines 20–25). This Sicilian location receives support from the historian Thucydides (6.2.1): in setting the scene for Athens' late fifth-century Sicilian Expedition, he first outlines the geography of the island, going back to the mythical pasts involving Cyclopes and Laestrygonians. Characteristically of the island, Thucydides' mini-history provides rich evidence for the many waves of settlement and migration to which Sicily has been subject over millennia. By the time of Theocritus' *Idylls* 6 and 9 in the third century BCE, Polyphemus' Sicilian location is well established.

Together, these texts provide a vague but undisputed localization for one Homeric episode. However, Homer's cultural preeminence meant that his poems were subjected to close geographical critique over a long period, as Strabo makes clear in the first book of his *Geography*. Writing in the Augustan period, he goes as far as to describe Homer as the "founder of geographical inquiry" (1.1.2).[7] Despite his own engagement with detailed debate on specific topographies and their relation to mythology, Strabo writes: "You will find the scene of Odysseus' wanderings when you find the cobbler who sewed up the bag of winds" (1.2.15, quoting Eratosthenes). This apparent contradiction by Strabo of his own practice may perhaps be explained by the breadth of his intended audience; namely, both statesmen and philosophers. In other words,

6. Note, for example, Bittlestone (2005). Such books are salutary in the fresh examination they bring to ancient places and texts, yet they often fail to address a very basic issue: What is at stake in drawing connections between ancient texts and modern travel? Is the goal to prove a point about the text or about the location, and with what implications?

7. In fact the term he uses, *archegetes*, is the same as that typically used to denote the founder of Greek colonies.

it appears that he wanted his colossal *Geography* to have both practical and scientific value (1.1.22).

In the end, the search for Odyssean locations that can be mapped on Google Earth or the *Barrington Atlas* can only go so far and never be exhaustive. But that is hardly the point of the description. Rather, Homer's island may be considered a familiar kind of landscape: one that would have been readily identifiable to his listeners and readers over many centuries, and still today seems like a distinctively Mediterranean location. Indeed, much of the discussion of the environment in this chapter focuses on the Mediterranean area, which has been the subject of considerable scholarly interest. As we shall see, it forms a highly productive line of inquiry, in terms of both histories and representations, but it is also a problematic one, in that the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations neither exhausted the Mediterranean zone nor were they restricted to it. While the matter of territorial limits will have to be addressed, it is nonetheless the Mediterranean basin with its recognizable features that provides the core of our material.

Features of the Landscape

"Islands," write Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell in their book *The Corrupting Sea*, "are places of strikingly enhanced exposure to interaction" (76).[8] It is therefore natural for islands to loom large in that influential study. For the co-authors, islands epitomize a quality characteristic of the Mediterranean landscape in general: "the insular quality of being 'in the swim' of communications" (76). Indeed, the Mediterranean as a whole has a large number of islands. They are unequally distributed, with the eastern half, and especially the Aegean, offering a much greater profusion than the western, even though the Balearics and several other large islands are in the west (see Map 17.1). It is the small islands that especially reveal the "variety of landscape—aspect, geology, relief, soil, altitude, hydrology—that creates a microregional topography" (224). Indeed, as we shall see, this microregional composition is one of the qualities that characterize the Mediterranean landscape in general.

Horden and Purcell's judgment about "enhanced exposure to interaction" certainly applies to Sicily, which attracted the attention of so many ancient geographers: several make particular mention of its fertility, particularly with regard to the production of wheat.[9] Unsurprisingly, there is an experiential dimension in such descriptions: a voyage around the island, says Strabo, requires five days and nights (6.2.1). Even more impressively, and with reference to lines

8. Horden and Purcell (2000). For critique, see, for example, Harris (2005).

9. Most notably Strabo 6.2.1–11 and Plin. *NH* 3.86–94. Fertility: see, for example, Strabo 6.2.7.

of sight, he states: "The shortest passage from Lilybaeum across to Libya in the neighborhood of Carthage is 1,500 stadia; and on this passage, it is said, men of sharp vision, from a look-out, used to report to the men in Lilybaeum the number of ships that were putting to sea from Carthage" (6.2.1). The narrowness of the Straits of Messana, separating Italy and Sicily at distance of only some three to five kilometers, is put to melodramatic use by Cicero in a prosecution speech: when a Roman citizen, Gavius, was tortured illegally at Messana by Verres, the corrupt provincial governor of Sicily, it was "where he could nearly see Italy and the walls of Rhegium, a city of Roman citizens" (II *In Verrem* 5.160). Cicero is clearly exploiting topography for rhetorical effect here, but nonetheless the passage reminds us of physical proximity and visibility.

How exactly might we characterize the Mediterranean landscape more generally? It is already clear that we are dealing with a jagged coastline, part of an irregular, highly subdivided set of landscapes. This is a setting of microecologies, which are subject to microclimates. As *The Corrupting Sea* illustrates, microecologies both enabled and necessitated contact between early Mediterranean inhabitants. First, closely neighboring valleys produce different foodstuffs, so that exchange is needed, a point that emerges even in Hesiod's *Works and Days*, as we have seen. At the same time, the large number of natural harbors makes small-scale journeys possible. The protagonists of *The Corrupting Sea* are thus not storied heroes such as Odysseus or Aeneas, but rather small-scale *caboteurs* or coasters, engaged in tramp trading; these latter are much less visible in ancient literature.

Mountains are a major part of this landscape and are central to the Mediterranean's five major peninsulas.[10] It would be no exaggeration to speak of a general pattern consisting of mountains, with valleys between. The Greek landscape is especially mountainous. Even elsewhere, major riverine valleys are rare, the Po Valley and Nile Delta being rare exceptions, discussed below. Such a mountainous environment—in the northern Mediterranean, too—accounts for the importance of "transhumance," the seasonal migration that is fundamental to the pastoral economy. Sheep and other livestock flourished on higher mountain slopes in the hot summer months, while the lower-lying plains provided relief from the winter cold. In Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, the Corinthian messenger recalls that he and the shepherd of King Laius both pursued this pattern of pastoralism:

> I am sure he knows well of the time we dwelled in the region of Cithaeron for six-month periods, from spring to Arcturus, he with two

10. Braudel (1972), 25.

flocks, and I, his comrade, with one. And then for the winter I used to drive my flock to my own fold, and he took his to the fold of Laius.[11]

The evidence for ancient transhumance is very limited, but it is now gradually being substantiated by surface survey. From Visigothic Spain, there are some references to "*calles*" and "*callitani,*"[12] namely, the routes and persons involved in transhumance, and from this much has been extrapolated into the Roman imperial period. Indeed, a high altitude renders much of the Iberian peninsula unsuitable for agriculture, though it was well known in ancient times for its rich stock-breeding.[13] Transhumance is thus a kind of mobility closely related to the more mountainous parts of the Mediterranean landscape. It was economically important, even if it was not so celebrated as the long-distance travels of epic heroes such as Odysseus and Aeneas.

The tectonic plates that account for mountains and jagged coastlines are also the cause of some natural catastrophes, earthquakes and volcanoes. Italy alone has active volcanoes at Etna, Stromboli, and Vesuvius; many other volcanoes throughout the Mediterranean are dormant. The anonymous hexameter didactic poem *Aetna*, probably of Neronian date, contains a critique of cultural tourism in favor of the natural environment. In a lengthy passage (ll. 569–599), such tourism is derided for its preoccupation with the glories of human achievement, temples piled with wealth, and mythical narratives linked to particular places: "we marvel at Troy's ashes and its citadel lamented by the vanquished" (590–591). This is the kind of tourism reflected in Pausanias' description of the ancient Greek landscape in his second-century CE *Periegesis*: here the mythical and historical pasts define the landscape. Instead, the anonymous poet praises Etna as a natural phenomenon: "look upon the colossal work of the artist, nature" (601), he enjoins climactically. Among the many mythological explanations that authors offered for this volcano, Virgil's *Aeneid* refers to two: the smithy of Hephaestus (8.416–422) and the burial of the giant Enceladus (or Typhoeus) underneath the eruptions (3.578–582).

Earthquakes are a common occurrence in the Mediterranean, again as a result of plate tectonics.[14] Northern Anatolia is particularly susceptible in this respect. While there were ancient scientific explanations for earthquakes

11. Lines 1133–1139, trans. R. Jebb.

12. *Ephemeris Epigraphica* 8 (1899), 139; cf. Crawford (1996), no. 2 line 26.

13. See further, Gómez-Pantoja (2004).

14. Sonnabend (1999), 109–114.

and tsunamis,[15] the habit of attributing seismic activity to the gods is much older: consider the epithets of Poseidon as *Ennosigaios* ("earth-shatterer" in Homer) and *Asphaleios* ("protector"). From both the Hellenistic and Roman worlds, there is evidence for royal generosity in providing rebuilding costs after earthquakes.[16]

The rivers of the Mediterranean are relatively small, and there are few major river plains.[17] In this respect, as in so many others, the Nile is an exception: it runs from south to north, draining large parts of the African continent, before emptying into the Mediterranean. By virtue of its rivers, the Mediterranean is unlike the Black Sea, into which major rivers flow with deleterious consequences, for the Black Sea is now anoxic (lacking in oxygen) beneath a depth of 45–65 meters and thus unable to support any life below that depth. Ironically, such ecological factors have rendered the Black Sea a fertile area for marine archaeology, since the lack of oxygen has left ancient shipwrecks in an unusually good state of preservation.

There are some deserts in close proximity to the sea, though none is fully lying in what might be considered the Mediterranean zone. Much of its southeastern littoral is desert or adjoins it. The Nile valley forms, in essence, a narrow, elongated oasis in the middle of a major desert. Yet ancient geographic discourse concerning deserts is underdeveloped. This lack of engagement persisted into the early Christian period, until, in the late third century, the desire to escape society led St. Antony to seek out remote desert locations in Egypt, centered on oases. In Christianity, the desert thus took on new significance as a guarantee against the spiritually corrosive effects of human society. Nonetheless, the location of Palmyra in the Syrian desert, and of Babylonian Tema in Arabia,[18] shows that a harsh environment was no absolute obstacle to a prosperous settlement.

Long-term studies of the landscape sometimes run the risk of implying or assuming that the Mediterranean environment constituted the limits of ancient Greek and Roman histories. In fact, even if we discount ancient attempts to theorize about the edges of the earth and explore them,[19] any consideration of those histories requires a wider purview: at the least, its scope should encompass Britain and other parts of northern Europe, as

15. Note Thuc. 3.98.4.

16. Polyb. 5.88; Tac. *Ann.* 2.47.

17. Campbell (2012).

18. *Jeremiah* 25.23; Hausleiter (2010).

19. Romm (1992).

well as the Fertile Crescent. Meantime, the Black Sea remains an anomaly. On the one hand, it is a subsidiary sea of the Mediterranean and exchanges water with it. Yet, on the other hand, it is different and independent in many respects, subject to many of its own characteristics, including the profusion of rivers; the fertility of its northern littoral made it a major source of wheat. The Nile valley is an anomaly of a different kind, in that it drains into the Mediterranean, yet the river mostly traverses areas with much harsher climates. These include the equatorial region where the White Nile rises, and the Sahara desert through which the united Nile flows. Nonetheless, the Nile Delta contained (and still contains) fertile agricultural land. This made it a breadbasket, particularly in Roman times once Octavian (later Augustus) had triumphed over the forces of Cleopatra VII of Egypt and Marcus Antonius at the Battle of Actium in 31 BCE and had captured Alexandria. The subsequent annexation of Egypt gave Rome control of the entire Mediterranean basin.

"The Sea! The Sea!"

In their attempt to return to the Aegean after a failed mercenary expedition deep into Mesopotamia (401 BCE), the Greek Army of the Ten Thousand struggled with conditions in mountainous Anatolia. When the troops reached the summit of Mount Theches, the cry went up, "The sea! The sea!" At that moment, Xenophon, the author of the account (*Anabasis*) as well as a stand-in commander, happened to be in the rear and was taken aback by the outburst. It was the Black Sea that the men had glimpsed, rather than the Aegean.[20] Yet the water itself promised a more expeditious return home. The emotion and enthusiasm of the occasion illustrate a strong affective link between the Greek soldiers and the sea—and indeed, beyond that, Greek culture's profound reliance upon the sea. In fact, no location in Greece is more than 110 kilometers from it.

Winter conditions made sailing impossible in the colder months: thus Hesiod advised his brother Perses to avoid the winter sea because of severe winds.[21] The sailing season ran from March 10th to November 10th.[22] Even so, voyages were sometimes undertaken out of this season, under duress or for special reasons: Julius Caesar had a narrow escape when trying to cross

20. Xen. *An.* 4.27; Rood (2004).

21. Hes. *Op.* 619–625.

22. Veg. *Mil.* 4.39.

the Adriatic in winter.[23] The Apostle Paul's shipwreck on the island of Malta took place late in the season (September or October) during the mid–first century CE.[24] While the winter cyclones are dangerous, the summer cyclone is advantageous for sailing because of its reliability. Sometimes mountainous landscapes create an interplay of sea and land breezes. On the other hand, the Mediterranean's mountainous rim was generally very beneficial to sailors, offering points of orientation; only relatively seldom would cloud cover or fog interfere. The Mediterranean tide is low, given that it is an inland sea.[25] Apart from an inflowing current at the Straits of Gibraltar, there are few important sea-currents; the anti-clockwise current washing the coast of Asia Minor is insubstantial. In short, the seagoing conditions of the Mediterranean provide opportunities for travel, but they also impose severe constraints.

Means of Connectedness

With the main features of the environment thus described in outline, it remains to take stock of the human interventions with land and sea. It is important to recognize how multifarious they were, a point that has become increasingly clear in light of contemporary human destruction of the environment. They include stock-breeding, hunting, mining, and deforestation, to say nothing of agriculture or public and private construction projects.[26] We have already noted Homer's reference, in relation to Scheria, to the duties of the founder of a colony. All those duties—the building of defensive walls, domestic houses, and temples, as well as the demarcation of land allotments—involve some kind of intervention in the landscape. However, not all are necessarily linked with communications, at least not in a direct way.

Perhaps the important kind of human negotiation with geographic space is travel itself, in both its long- and short-distance forms. In this respect, the literary texts often disappoint us. Most geographical writers—including Strabo and Pausanias, the two whose work survives most fully—have much to say about specific places, but much less about going from one to another. There are a few exceptions, however, with even hints of practical instructions for the traveler, as when Pausanias (10.5.1) compares two different routes by which to ascend Mount Parnassus; one longer, the other harder. It is all the more

23. Suet. *Iul.* 58.2; Plut. *Caes.* 38.3.

24. *Acts* 27.9.

25. Semple (1931), 579–612.

26. Thommen (2012).

important, therefore, to appreciate to the full such texts as the detailed description of the storm experienced by the Apostle Paul as he traveled, as a prisoner, from Jerusalem to Rome (*Acts* 27–28). This account gives a taste of everyday experiences of travel, in this case during an involuntary journey. Another, very different text from the mid–first century CE, the anonymous *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, sheds light on ancient mobility in a valuable and unmatched way.[27] With uniquely unpretentious practicality, it sketches the sea routes from the Red Sea via the Gulf of Aden, first to the area around Zanzibar, and then to the west coast of the Indian subcontinent (see Map 13.1). For both routes, the use of the monsoon winds is essential: in fact, by this means a merchant could leave Egypt in June or July, and return in December.

The road infrastructure is famously a Roman legacy, lasting in many places into modern times. The mountainous Greek landscape and the autonomous character of Greek city-states militated against the development of a road network. Nonetheless, in Asia Minor there was already a considerable Near Eastern tradition of roads, particularly among the Hittites; farther east, the Neo-Assyrians and the Achaemenid Persians had created their own systems of royal roads.[28] These were apparently built for vehicle transport and for military use and were supported by a series of stations. The best-known among the Achaemenid roads—from a description by the fifth-century Greek historian Herodotus (5.52)—is the one linking Sardis and Susa.

In Italy, the first Roman *via publica*, the Appian Way, was commissioned by the censor Appius Claudius Caecus in 312 BCE: it was planned as a military road to aid Rome's campaigns in the Samnite Wars. Subsequently, this road from Rome to Capua was extended all the way to Brundisium. In the second century BCE, further roads were built in Italy: most notably, the Via Flaminia from Rome across the Apennines to the Adriatic at Fanum Fortunae and then north to Ariminum, and a continuation (Via Aemilia) northwest as far as Placentia.

So began a highway system that was to be immensely extended as Rome's empire expanded. Following the conquest of Greece, a new road was built across the Balkan peninsula. This Via Egnatia (after the proconsul Cn. Egnatius)—which had a Macedonian forerunner—was begun in the 130s BCE. It started from Dyrrhacium and Apollonia on the Adriatic and ran via Heraclea, Thessalonica, and Amphipolis, initially as far as Cypsela on the river Hebrus, then by the first century BCE as far as Byzantium (later Constantinople, modern

27. Casson (1989).

28. Vandeput (forthcoming).

Istanbul). Today a fragmentary mile-marker from which distances were measured is still visible there. Known as the *milion*, it was the Late Roman counterpart to the now-lost *miliarium aureum* or "golden milestone" which Augustus had erected in the Forum at Rome.[29] The purpose of the milestones found along many Roman highways was both practical—to mark the road's course and indicate distances—and ideological, in that they were sources of prestige accruing to the emperor or local sponsor named on them.

Canals constitute another kind of human intervention, mediated by technology. Most famous are the failed attempts by several ancient rulers—including Periander in the sixth century BCE and Nero in the first century CE[30]—to dig a canal through the Isthmus of Corinth.[31] However, a *diolkos*, or slipway, along which commodities and even ships could be conveyed between the Saronic Gulf and the Gulf of Corinth, was built, probably during the fifth century, although its date is hard to determine. The ports of Lechaeum and Cenchreae mark the narrowest point of the Isthmus, some 8 kilometers apart.

A canal played a role in the Persian Wars. A violent storm had destroyed the Persian fleet at Mount Athos in the first phase of the war (492 BCE), so King Xerxes resolved to avoid that danger when making a second attack on the Greeks. Accordingly, in 483, he had a canal cut across the isthmus of the Athos peninsula, a project that required three years to complete, with labor on a scale that clearly impressed Herodotus. This canal ran between modern Nea Roda and Tripiti, a distance of 2.2 kilometers, and was built wide enough for two triremes to pass without difficulty. For Herodotus (7.22–24), it was especially significant that Xerxes was motivated more by the desire to show off his power and to leave behind a memorial than by strategic advantage. Again, a little later it was Xerxes who, impelled by *hubris*, would order the Hellespont to be lashed three hundred times as an act of punishment for thwarting his plans:

> Bitter water, our master thus punishes you, because you did him wrong though he had done you none. Xerxes the king will pass over you, whether you want it or not; in accordance with justice no one offers you sacrifice, for you are a turbid and briny river.[32]

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29. Cass. Dio 54.8.4.

30. Diog. Laert. 1.99; Plin. *NH* 4.10, 18.18; Cass. Dio 63.16.

31. In the event, none was built here until 1893. Nowadays, with a width of only 21.3 meters at its base, the canal is too narrow for most modern ships, particularly freighters.

32. Hdt. 7.35.2, trans. A. D. Godley.

In that dramatic moment, the water is anthropomorphized, and thereby Herodotus emphasizes the role of the physical environment in these events.

Connected Locations

Brief focus on a few locations can act to add specificity to the general picture sketched here. While it is impossible to make a selection that is both economical and representative, there is nonetheless value in considering differences that emerge.

First, Delos in the Cyclades is no more than a tiny Aegean island, some 3 square kilometers in surface area, no more than 6 kilometers in length, and 1.2 kilometers in width, yet one that had historical significance well beyond its size. Though tiny and mountainous, and in fact today uninhabited, the island has several good harbors. According to the Homeric "Hymn to Apollo," it was the only place to offer sanctuary to Leto when she was pregnant by Zeus and fleeing Hera: it thus became sacred to Artemis and Apollo.

Though settled from at least the Early Bronze Age, Delos did not become a cult center of Apollo, Artemis, and Leto until the eighth century BCE. Its location in the middle of the Aegean soon boosted its significance. Following the Persian Wars, it was chosen for the treasury and meeting-place of the Delian League, the alliance of Greek city-states that eventually became the Athenian Empire. But it lost this role in 454, when the League felt that there was sufficient military threat to move the treasury to Athens.

According to Thucydides (1.8), the first inhabitants of Delos were Carians who lived as pirates before being neutralized by the Athenians. Piracy was in fact a major problem in the Aegean, claims Thucydides in his "Archaeology," so much so that early Hellenic cities were built away from the sea. Only after piracy had been stopped by King Minos were cities able to expand, fortify themselves, and prosper economically. Minos of Crete was the first king to rule by sea power or thalassocracy.[33]

During the Hellenistic period, the religious significance of Delos took on an economic aspect as well. As a free port, it grew commercially in the later second and early first centuries. It became a most significant slave market, and a major trade center generally. Its increasingly cosmopolitan character after 166 BCE, when it was made a free port under Athenian control, is visible from the large number of Eastern cults that have left an epigraphic record here. These include not only the cult of Isis—the most widely diffused

33. It is Thucydides' quasi-historical reference here that prompted the use of King Minos' name to refer to the Bronze Age civilization found on Crete.

Mediterranean cult before Christianity—but also others of Italian, Syrian, and Jewish origin. The sanctuary of Apollo on the island, too, attracted visitors from various parts of the Greek world. Thus, in the case of Delos, we find an island that over the centuries, despite its minuscule size and lack of natural resources, was a religious center and then a commercial one. This growth stemmed not least from its location in the Aegean and indeed in the entire Mediterranean.

Second, Delphi shares some roles with Delos, and is in fact the location of the second part of the Homeric "Hymn to Apollo." However, the international status gained by Delphi stemmed, not from long-distance trade, but from the fact that one of the four leading Panhellenic sanctuaries was sited here. Its geographic setting was clearly important. Located in the region of Phocis, Delphi lies all of 533–610 meters above sea level, on the southern slope of Mount Parnassus, whose main summit rises to about 2,450 meters in height. It overlooks the Pleistos Valley, opposite the Kirphis Mountains. The overall effect is that of an amphitheater, as Strabo comments (9.3.3). This breathtaking landscape is geologically unstable, as shown by landslides in both ancient times (especially 373 BCE) and modern.

From the Mycenaean period onwards, the earth goddess Gaia was worshipped at Delphi. At some point, the original cultic observance gave way to an oracle of Apollo, and it was in this capacity that Delphi gained Panhellenic significance and hosted the Pythian Games. Its distinctive status was marked as the navel of earth (*omphalos*). Though not directly on the Corinthian Gulf, it is only a short distance away. The landscape is described with reference to mythology by Pausanias, as is his custom (10.5.3–4). It was on a journey to the oracle at Delphi that Oedipus unintentionally killed his biological father, Laius. Having departed from his home in Corinth, he encountered Laius at a three-way crossroads in Phocis. The murder was the unintended consequence of an argument about whose vehicle had right of way.[34]

A reminder of Delphi's cultural centrality emerged from a distant, unexpected location in the late twentieth century. Among several inscriptions in the Greek language found in excavations of the Hellenistic city at Ai Khanum, Afghanistan, was one recording five out of the many Delphic maxims (Pausanias 10.24.1–2). Before its recent severe despoliation amid armed conflict, the site of Ai Khanum (see Map 13.1) provided a fascinating record of Greek material culture; this particular inscription was directly linked to Delphi via the cult of Apollo. Alexander the Great founded many cities during

34. Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*, 716, 730, 1399.

his expedition into Asia, and within the attendant cross-cultural encounter, Delphi—several thousand kilometers away—had a role a role to play.[35]

Third, Ostia: According to the archaeological record, the first settlement here—called Castrum—at the mouth of the River Tiber dates to the late fifth or early fourth century. From the start, it provided access between the city of Rome and the sea, in keeping with its name *ostia* ("mouth"). While serving as the original harbor for Rome (about 24 kilometers upriver), it was nonetheless subject to severe silting; consequently, large-scale engineering works were required in order to make it operational and keep it so. The silting here is a feature shared by many Mediterranean river-outlets, resulting from the fact that the tide is too low to clear the waterways of accumulated silt.

In the mid–first century CE, the emperor Claudius commissioned a new harbor called Portus, situated some 4 kilometers north of Ostia. It was linked to the Tiber via a canal, and to Rome by a road, the Via Portuensis. A further, hexagonal harbor was built on the orders of the emperor Trajan in 103. Recent British-Italian excavations have shown the unprecedented scale of the canal, which appears to have been as much as 90 meters in width, and thus much wider than other known canals.[36] These harbors served the all-important purpose of bringing cereals and other commodities to the Roman metropolis, particularly from grain-rich North Africa. The silting of the river since antiquity has been so considerable that the entire river-course has shifted.

Ostia's commercial role is apparent in its warehouses—some of them very large—and in the Piazzale delle Corporazioni (Forum of the Corporations; see Figure 3.1). It was built in the early Augustan period, but the extensive mosaic floor reveals signs of several later phases of change up to the third century. This forum was used by the commercial elite rather than by rank-and-file traders.[37] Among its mosaics are depictions of ships and lighthouses, of commodities and vessels, and also Nereids and sea creatures (Figure 1.1). Ostia's connectedness is thus overtly and proudly claimed. The port's synagogue is evidence of a Jewish population; it was here that Augustine stayed with his mother in 387 while they awaited a ship sailing south (*Confessions* 9.10.23).

Fourth and finally, Palmyra—known in antiquity as Tadmor—offers a contrast to the three physical settings just outlined. It is located at the center of a complex desert oasis (the Eqfa Spring), some 200–250 kilometers both from the River Euphrates to the east and from the Mediterranean Sea to the west.

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35. Holt (1999), 36–37 and 175.

36. Keay (2012b), 48.

37. See further, Chapter 3.

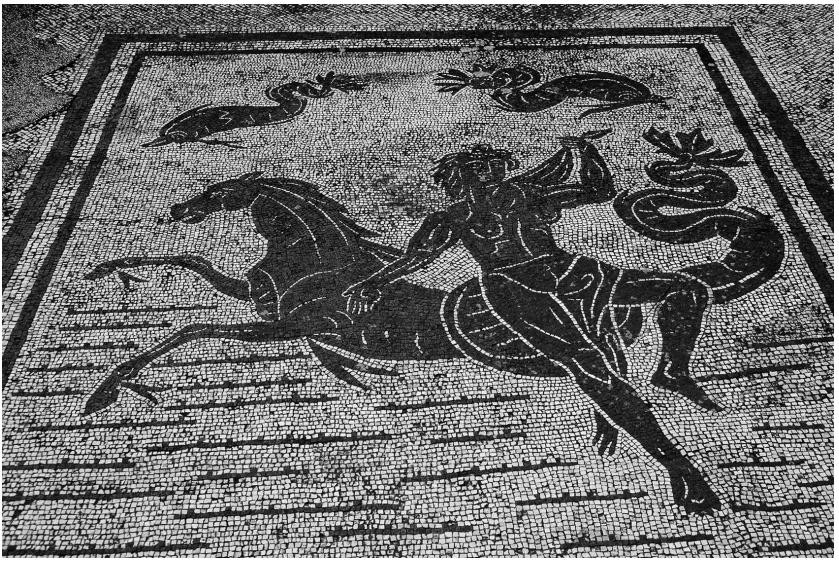

FIGURE 1.1 Floor mosaic. Piazzale delle Corporazioni, Ostia, Italy.
(Photo: Art Resource, NY, alb1462490)

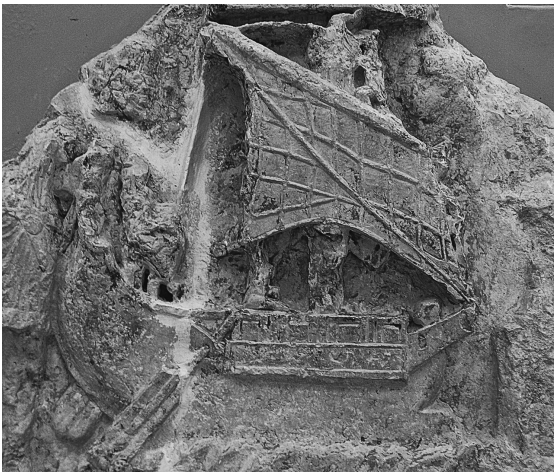

FIGURE 1.2 Relief of a Palmyrene ship. Palmyra Museum, Syria.
(Photo courtesy of Andrew M. Smith II)

Figure 1.2, a relief in the Palmyra Museum, depicts a local vessel that, thanks to its long oars, is ready for travel either at sea or on the Euphrates River. Palmyra represents an extreme case, situated far outside the "olive zone" and well inland; in fact, deep in the desert, and chronically short of water.

Nonetheless it was a thriving major city, as the extensive archaeological record makes very clear. A Palmyrene tax law dating to 137 CE is further strong evidence for the prosperity of citizens benefitting from long-distance trade in commodities.[38] Palmyra's physical environment reminds us not to make easy assumptions about the viability of human settlement in the desert.

Conclusions

The frequency with which the term "connected" occurs in this chapter may suggest overly enthusiastic pandering to contemporary information technology. There can be no denying that the contemporary concern with communications and connections, so characteristic of the early twenty-first century, necessitates a new look at ancient practices. While Max Cary's still-useful 1949 book *The Geographic Background of Greek and Roman History* was an exceptional choice of topic for its time, today geography and the environment have become major areas within ancient studies, and from multiple perspectives—not merely historical, but also literary, archaeological, and philosophical. Even so, at a time when environmental history is now a well-established discipline in the historical profession, attention to it by ancient historians has lagged.

The reasons are instructive: the Mediterranean, it seems, has featured both everywhere and nowhere in ancient studies. It has been so central that, until relatively recently, scholars have been unable to deploy the necessary critical perspectives to make sense of it. The Mediterranean has been linked to the notion of "the classical," seen—like Horace's wintry Mount Soracte, a few miles north of Rome (*Odes* 1.9)—as being frozen in historical time. The pastoral ideal articulated in Theocritus' *Idylls* and Virgil's *Eclogues* is an extreme expression of this idealized Mediterranean landscape, and an exceptionally influential one in Western tradition up to the present time.

Leaving aside the exaggerated idealization of Virgil's Arcadia, there has still been much at stake in the distinctiveness and attractiveness of the ancient Mediterranean environment. It has resonated with Romantic fantasy, an outlook that seems to be summed up in Goethe's poems and even his diary. Ancient Italy and Greece were key points on the travel itineraries of aristocratic northern Europeans in the eighteenth century. That tourist impulse was broadened to accommodate more and more enthusiasts by entrepreneurs such as Thomas Cook in nineteenth-century Britain and, since the 1970s, by mass air transport. In the process, the Mediterranean's climate and its setting have

38. Matthews (1984).

been commodified, as well as subjected to negotiations of commercial value. On the one hand, it is a product of modern transport technologies, particularly air travel. On the other hand, it is the late development of an ancient tradition that lavished praise on idealized places (*loci amoeni*). Virgil's famous praises of Italy (*laudes Italiae*) emphasize its physical beauty, free of the harsh excesses visible elsewhere, and an honorable history defined by exemplary heroes.[39] While the connection between Virgil here and modern tourism is indirect, both are responding to some of the same features of the physical environment. Of course, this enthusiasm is found even earlier in antiquity: we may recall, for example, the Hippocratic text *Airs Waters Places*, which posits the Aegean as a happy medium in contrast to the harshness of surrounding climatic zones.[40]

Of the many issues that arise in this discussion, the relationship of land to water, of roads to seaways, is often hard to gauge historically. The harsh setting of the elaborate and wealthy city of Palmyra is a sobering reminder of the need to consider the integration of land and sea routes. Palmyra essentially dominated an overland route between the River Euphrates and the eastern Mediterranean (through Aleppo especially). Despite its desert location, or because of it, Palmyra gained economic ascendancy, and even political supremacy for a short period in the third century CE. Not only did the city profit from trade routes between the Mediterranean and western Asia, but it was also affected by the people, objects, and ideas that passed through, as its art demonstrates.

The relationship between land and water becomes even more puzzling if we consider one of the few maps to survive from antiquity, the Peutinger Map, which is (to be more accurate) a medieval map clearly based on classical sources.[41] With painstaking detail, it depicts road routes with *mansiones* and *mutationes*, namely stopping- and changing-stations. Roads are even indicated where they probably did not exist; for example, along the coastline of the Indian subcontinent. Seaports are indicated as cities, but they do not apparently receive special prominence as ports. Sea-routes are completely omitted in favor of roads, and all the open water in the map is severely compressed. Indeed the entire Mediterranean is severely squashed within the map's distended proportions. The reasons for such choices are hard to fathom, yet it is at least possible that both ideological and practical factors played their part: ideological, in that the roads represented prominent reminders of imperial

39. Virg. *G.* 2.136–176.

40. Thomas (2000), especially 89–92.

41. Talbert's new critical edition (2010) argues that the surviving copy (c. 1200 CE) is substantially based on Roman material, particularly of the Tetrarchic period around 300 CE; see further Chapter 17 below.

(or local) power, and might be displayed accordingly; practical, in that such limited maps as Greeks and Romans used simply did not indicate sea routes, and hence the lack of importance accorded to ports here.

Even though the environment is a late addition to the classical scholarly agenda, its role has increasingly been recognized, particularly in contexts of economic history.[42] Modern histories have scrupulously avoided any sense of environmental determinism, and instead have emphasized human agency. This choice is in many ways a product of our time: in a post–Industrial Revolution age, global warming is a central topic of public policy. Meanwhile, it remains far from clear how much the physical environment has changed between antiquity and the present. One major scientific study claims that the "humanization" of the landscape occurred 4,000 years ago, at the same time as the present Mediterranean climate took shape, and that therefore humans were not a cause of change.[43] In any case, it is true that high-quality timber was at a premium in most ancient Mediterranean societies, and the question of possible deforestation has many ramifications for environmental history.

It might seem banal to insist on a clear sense of the landscape (and seascape) before we can take stock of ancient communications. But only in this light can we recognize the limits of our knowledge of the mechanics of ancient communications, particularly ordinary journeys. Innovative use of geographical data by Scheidel (2014) and others draws to our attention what we would like to know about ancient communications as much as what we do know. In the end, a high degree of conjecture is required in order to come to any conclusions about ancient journeys. Projects like Scheidel's are nonetheless to be welcomed in that they increase the possibilities for discovering connections between places in practice, and thus to look beyond the individuality of particular places. Such work represents a welcome broadening of human geography into a field long dominated by excavation-related topography, and to a lesser extent by the intellectual history of mapping.

A final vignette brings us full circle to the landscapes of the *Odyssey*. The Emperor Tiberius' villa at Sperlonga on the coast of Latium vividly illustrates the ongoing role of mythology in making sense of the Mediterranean landscape. This elaborate and dramatic complex comprises a large villa. In front of it, a large open court leads directly to the sea; to its left lies a highly articulated grotto. Inside this grotto are sculptural figures depicting scenes from the *Odyssey*, among them both Scylla and Polyphemus in their encounters with

42. Note, for example, Horden and Purcell (2000); McCormick (2001); Scheidel (2014).

43. Grove and Rackham (2001); contrast Thommen (2012).

FIGURE 1.3 Scylla and her victims: first-century BCE Roman sculpture known as the "Scylla group." Museo Archeologico, Sperlonga, Italy.
(Photo: Art Resource, NY, ART355438)

Odysseus and his men (Figure 1.3). There are other figures, too, apparently made around the same time (30–20 BCE) by Rhodian artists. It was in this villa that the emperor was rescued by Sejanus from a rock-fall that occurred during a dinner party. Tiberius' very presence here in southern Latium at the time might be considered characteristic of imperial mobility.[44] The choice of an Odyssean setting in so dramatic a location highlights not only Tiberius' antiquarian tastes,[45] but also the ultimately connected nature of the Mediterranean littoral. Some seven centuries after the composition of the *Odyssey*, it was still the figure of Odysseus who, in Greco-Roman cultural memory, continued to epitomize both the possibilities and the dangers of negotiating the physical environment.

44. Rock-fall: Tac. *Ann.* 4.59; cf. Suet. *Tib.* 39. For detailed discussion of the problematic Sperlonga groups, see De Grummond and Ridgway (2000). Movements of emperors: Halfmann (1986).

45. Champlin (2013).

2

Libraries and Communication in the Ancient World

Matthew Nicholls

ANCIENT LIBRARIES ARE often thought of as destinations for books, final resting points where those texts fortunate enough to be included found a permanent home, safe (or so their authors hoped) from the depredations of fire, neglect, decay, and worms. This picture is partly due to an authorial trope, common by the Roman period, in which inclusion in an imperial library featured as an ambition or boast. The late first century CE epigrammatist Martial, for example, asks for his works to be shelved in the Emperor Domitian's newly rebuilt Palatine library, in a sycophantic poem addressed to the librarian Sextus (5.5):

> Sextus, eloquent votary of Palatine Minerva,
> You who enjoy more closely the genius of the god – –
> For you are permitted to learn the cares of our lord as they are
> born, and to know our leader's secret heart –
> Could you find a place somewhere for my little books
> Where Pedo, where Marsus, and where Catullus shall be?
> By the divine song of the Capitoline War
> Place the grand work of buskined Maro.

Authors aspiring to the inclusion of their works or statues in Roman imperial libraries range from Horace under Augustus, to Josephus under the

Flavians, through to Claudian around 400 CE,[1] while the preface to the supposed Latin version of the *Ephemeris* of Dictys Cretensis aims at verisimilitude by setting out the text's complicated journey through time and space, culminating in a permanent home in one of the emperor's libraries:

> . . . shepherds who had seen [the original text] as they passed stole it from the tomb, thinking it was treasure. But when they opened it and found the linden tablets inscribed with characters unknown to them, they took this find to their master. Their master, whose name was Eupraxides, recognized the characters, and presented the books to Rutilius Rufus, who was at that time governor of the island. Since Rufus, when the books had been presented to him, thought they contained certain mysteries, he, along with Eupraxides himself, carried them to Nero. Nero, having received the tablets and having noticed that they were written in the Phoenician alphabet, ordered his Phoenician philologists to come and decipher whatever was written. When this had been done, since he realized that these were the records of an ancient man who had been at Troy, he had them translated into Greek; thus a more accurate text of the Trojan War was made known to all. Then he bestowed gifts and Roman citizenship upon Eupraxides, and sent him home. The Greek Library, according to Nero's command, acquired this history that Dictys had written, the contents of which the following text sets forth in order. . . .[2]

Both passages present acquisition by a library as a desirable, even glamorous mark of approbation for a book, the culmination of a journey. One important reason for this aspiration was that such acquisition offered the chance of being read. Ancient libraries accumulated literary texts, not, or not only, as an end in itself, but also in order to transmit the works they held to readers, both of the present and of the future. This exposure to readers is part of what Martial wants for his work, and it is as a reader of a library text that "Lucius Septimius," the *Dictys* author, presents himself. But both texts also show us that the worth that these ancient libraries had for authors, and indeed for their patrons and builders, was complicated and multivalent. Libraries were more

1. Hor. *Epist.* 2.1.214–218; Joseph. *Vit.* 363 (Titus' autograph imprimatur), with Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.9.2, and Jer. *De vir. ill.* 13.1; Claudian: *CIL* 6.1710.

2. Trans. Frazer (1966), 20–21; see ní Mheallaigh (2008).

than just a final destination for books or even a place to read them; they also acted as points of communication of several different kinds.

Martial's poem expresses the hope that his work will be shelved alongside that of famous poets of the past, specifically of Rome's late republican and early imperial periods (Marsus, Pedo, Catullus, Virgil).[3] Just as the "divine song of the Capitoline War"—a civil war epic that was quite possibly a juvenile work of Domitian himself[4]—should be shelved alongside Virgil, so, too, Martial wants his own epigrams placed alongside Augustan-era poems. He seems to hope that some of their luster would thereby shine on him. Libraries, by selecting and grouping works of literature, had the capacity to endorse or exclude, canonize and compare, as well as act as places for communication between patrons, readers, writers, and public audiences. Moreover, Martial reminds us that libraries, by gathering and preserving a range of texts in one space, not only encouraged comparison between those texts in the present day, but also allowed for their communication through time rather than over distance. Martial hopes to be commended to posterity in the company of authors already granted immortality through their work, and he hints sycophantically that Domitian, as the library's patron, would similarly gain from his association with literary genius.

The *Dictys* author shows us other perceived functions of libraries in the ancient world. He implies that he compiled his own Latin version of the text by reading the Greek translation commissioned by Nero for his library, which serves as an authenticating landmark in this extraordinary chain of transmission. We can leave aside here the question of the truthfulness of this well-known pseudepigraphon. Rather, the point—as with dubious references to libraries in the *Historia Augusta*[5]—is the author's aim of creating an impression of verisimilitude and reliability in which the reference to an imperial library plays a part, making use of such libraries' reputation for housing authentic literary treasures and for serious scholarly writers consulting them there. For both Martial and "Septimius," the library is not a dead-end repository, but an important link in a chain of transmission, comparison, and authentication between texts of the past, present, and future. As we will see, libraries played an important part in networks of literary communication throughout

3. Domitius Marsus was an epigrammatist and elegist of the late first century BCE; Albinovanus Pedo wrote epigrams, elegies, and an epic-style *Germanica* in the early first century CE.

4. Nauta (2002), 327 n. 2.

5. For example, SHA *Tac.* 8.1; *Prob.* 2.1; *Car.* 11.3; *Aurel.* 1.7, 10; 8.1; 24.7.

the ancient world, and in other sorts of communication, too—political, philanthropic, imperial.

This view of the ancient library as a point of communication fits well with current scholarly work on the subject, which is increasingly interested in ideas, not only about the stability of libraries as destinations for books, but also about the more dynamic ways in which they allowed the exchange and transmission of ideas and facilitated the mobility of people, objects, and texts. This interest reflects new ways of thinking about the roles of literacy and literature within the classical world since William Harris' landmark study (1989), broadening the scope of inquiries about the place of texts in the ancient past. Recent work—as that by Johnson and Parker (2009), for example—considers the plural ways in which different kinds of texts and reading were embedded in different social contexts, and examines the boundaries and interdependence between oral and written, public and private, literary cultures. This work is influencing how we now think about libraries in the ancient world. The old view that they were places with no "large-scale effect on the diffusion of the written word," open only to a small range of the "learned and respectable,"[6] is giving way to studies that approach them from new angles and seek to place them in their social, architectural, cultural, and urban contexts, as well as to compare them to the text collections of other times and places.[7]

Eleanor Robson's work on Assyrian and Babylonian libraries, for example, indicates that these were both compendious collections and also active points in a distributed network of readers and texts.[8] For the classical world, Yun Too (2010), writing on the "idea of the library," considers not only the physical fabric and holdings of "book-libraries," but also their capacity for political and social interactions of various sorts, and thus seeks to broaden our understanding of what a "library" might consist of. Read in conjunction with recent work on the role of literature in social and political identities, particularly in the Greek East under the Roman Empire,[9] such work allows us to reconsider the libraries of this Greco-Roman world. Though this chapter will deal mostly with institutional libraries occupying designated physical spaces, the wide range of ways in which the communicative functions of these libraries can be considered owes much to these new approaches to literary reading and writing, circulation, and performance.

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6. Harris (1989), 228–229.

7. For example, König et al. (2013).

8. Robson (2013); see also Potts (2000).

9. For example, Whitmarsh (2001); Goldhill (2001).

IN THE GRECO-ROMAN world, the earliest book collections that we know about were the initiative of sixth-century BCE kings or tyrants: Pisistratus of Athens and Polycrates of Samos.[10] Although there is little detailed information about the nature or accessibility of Pisistratus' book collection, we do know that, as well as accumulating a library, he presided over an effort to collect and refine the oral Homeric epic poems into standardized written editions—in which, not coincidentally, the city of Athens and its founder Theseus play a somewhat greater role than one might otherwise have expected.[11] If (as seems reasonable) his Homeric project was connected to the book collection, whether conceptually or practically, then we can see here a "library" linked to ideas of royal power and civic prestige in an age when Greek-speaking city-states in general, and Athens in particular, were developing a rich, bibliocentric literary culture.

Such a role for libraries was greatly amplified by the Hellenistic kingdoms, which spread Greek city culture over wider areas than previously, across an arc from Egypt to Afghanistan. These kingdoms had far greater funds at their disposal than the city-states they replaced, and perhaps a greater need to define, assert ownership of, and promote Greek culture. Greek-style cities with rectangular street grids, theaters, and gymnasia spread as far as Afghanistan, and the competing dynasties sought (as had Polycrates and Pisistratus) to establish their cultural credentials as one justification for their royal power, at least when speaking to Greek audiences. In this ambition, book collecting—patterned after the libraries of the Greek philosophical schools and particularly Aristotle's Lyceum[12]—was one important tool among many. The foundation and maintenance of libraries in city gymnasia across the Hellenistic world of the second and first centuries BCE suggest that institutional book collections were also important for education and for cities' cultural life at a local level.[13]

The library at Alexandria is of course by far the best-known example, though not the best preserved. At Pergamum, by contrast, a room commonly identified as "the library" survives, adjoining a suite of smaller spaces and opening onto a temple colonnade.[14] The collection policies of both the Alexandrian library and this Pergamene rival were famously wide-ranging and aggressively competitive, making such libraries increasingly central points in a network of literary-political interactions around the wider Greek world. Most famous

10. Ath. 1.3b.

11. Cic. *De or.* 3. 137. See Hom. *Il.* 2.558; *Od.* 11.631.

12. Strabo 13.1.54; Ath. 1.3a, 5.214d–e; Plut. *Sull.* 26.

13. Burzachechi (1963); Nicolai (1987).

14. Though see Coqueugniot (2013) who questions this identification.

of all is the story that Ptolemy III Euergetes "borrowed" the original copies of the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides from Athens[15]—an interesting testimony that Athens had some sort of official civic collection from which to lend them—and then deliberately forfeited his enormous deposit by keeping the books and sending back only copies. This sounds like a studied gesture, making the library's power to acquire books a symbol of Alexandria's eclipsing of Athens as a center of political and intellectual power. Similar is the elder Pliny's unlikely story that an embargo of papyrus exports from Egypt by the jealous Ptolemies led the rival Attalids of Pergamum to invent parchment as a writing surface.[16]

The Alexandrian library and "museum" (*Mouseion*) in particular afforded a meeting place for communication between scholars, texts, and readers, and as such was part of a network of movement and exchange of people, books, and ideas, not (or not only) a static repository. Strabo's description of the museum's physical layout includes space for discussions, walking, and reading, not unlike the remains at Pergamum.[17] One famous (jealous?) reaction is found in a fragment by a contemporary skeptical philosopher and satirist, Timon of Phlius: "In populous Egypt many cloistered bookworms are fed, arguing endlessly in the chicken-coop of the Muses."[18] But it is clear that the library and museum acted from the outset as places for scholars to meet and interact, both with each other and with each other's writings. The Alexandrian library quickly became a central point in the wider network of Mediterranean book-use and scholarship, with the Athenian exile Demetrius of Phaleron involved in its establishment and many scholars from around the Greek-speaking world attracted to it: the more important included Aristophanes of Byzantium, Callimachus and Eratosthenes of Cyrene, Aristarchus of Samos, and Zenodotus of Ephesus. The library had the desired effect of pulling in scholars from all across the Greek-speaking world, turning Alexandria within a generation from a new town into the prime center of Greek scholarship for at least two centuries.

Within the library, books in the steadily accumulating collection could be compared to each other—as happened particularly extensively in the case of variant texts of Homer—to produce critical editions, glossaries, and commentaries. In the course of this work, Alexandrian scholars invented, refined, or

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15. Gal. *Commentary on Hippoc. Epid.* III, 17(1).607 K.

16. Plin. *HN* 13.21.

17. Strabo 17.1.8.

18. Ath. 1.22d.

accelerated the adoption of numerous bibliographical and scholarly tools: glossaries, commentaries, grammars, the development of a standardized form of *koine* Greek written with accentuation, some punctuation and critical signs, the use of alphabetical order, and the classification of literature by genre, subgenre, and author (in the extensive *Pinakes* or catalog compiled by the poet, scholar, and possibly librarian Callimachus).

The library and *Mouseion* also acted as *loci* of communication between scholars and the patron Ptolemies, who participated in discussions and lectures and whose children were often tutored by the librarians. The library's reputation played a part in making the king appear learned and his kingdom prosperous and enlightened, a criterion of Hellenistic-Macedonian kingship.[19] It therefore acted as a form of communication between king and subjects, and between rival dynasties: we shall encounter this capacity of the library for public display again in the Roman period.

The library may also have played a part in managing the difficult relationship between the Alexandrian Greeks and their Jewish neighbors, if we can lend any credence to the *Letter of Aristeas*. This text of around the second century BCE claims that at least a portion of the Jewish scriptures[20] were translated from Hebrew into Greek as part of the Alexandrian library's program of acquiring translations of foreign works. The text quotes a memorandum of the librarian Demetrius in which he tells the king that the Jewish scriptures are "somewhat carelessly committed to writing and are not in their original form; for they have never had the benefit of royal attention"—an implied comparison with the works of Greek literature, particularly Homer, set into order by the scholars of the royal library and *Mouseion*. Aristeas' Demetrius goes on to tell the king that "these books, duly corrected, should find a place in your library, because this legislation, inasmuch as it is divine, is of philosophical importance and of innate integrity."[21]

Aristeas claims to have been sent by Ptolemy II to Jerusalem to act on this advice, taking gifts and requesting the loan to Alexandria of a team of seventy-two priestly translator-scholars; the result was what we call the Septuagint, named for a rounded total of its translators. The *Letter*, like the *Dictys Cretensis* and the *Historia Augusta*, is improbable in its details and in its overall scope,

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19. The early Ptolemies in particular all cultivated an image of learned patronage: Ptolemy I favored Euclid and Strato; Ptolemy II Philadelphus was a zoologist, and was reputed to have had the Pentateuch translated into Greek (see below); Ptolemy III Euergetes promoted the career of Eratosthenes; Ptolemy IV wrote a tragic play. See further, more generally, Chapter 13 below.

20. The Pentateuch: that is, the first five books of the *Tanakh*—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

21. Bartlett (1985), 20–23.

which aims at praise of Ptolemy's wisdom and reconciliation with the Jews. But if we can believe that there is at least a kernel of truth in it, it shows us that Ptolemy was famed for a catholic program of collection for his library at Alexandria, and that Demetrius as his agent was empowered to spend freely, and to borrow and accommodate scholars. He could provide a place for study that contributed directly to the holdings of the library, which itself was an agent of mobility and translation and a vector for texts. We might also consider that Manetho, an Egyptian priest at Heliopolis, wrote and dedicated to Ptolemy II Philadelphus a history of Egypt in Greek, drawing on Egyptian documentary sources; equally, that Callimachus' student Hermippus wrote a commentary on the verses of Zoroaster, implying that they were available in Greek translation from the original Iranian.[22]

The library at Alexandria was therefore part of a lively and active literary culture. It acted, not just as a royal storehouse, but also (along with the *Mouseion*) as an organizing point for scholarly activity, comparative reading, and writing. It was a place scholars were attracted to, and where they then encountered each other; also a place where the developing canon of classical literature had at least some interaction with literature of other cultures. At the same time, to be sure, Alexandria was a bottleneck restricting the dissemination of books, and a vulnerable repository, too. The second problem is evident in retrospect, but it did not escape ancient authors: they relished tales (almost certainly false, or exaggerated) of Alexandria's destruction and similar library fires in Rome,[23] and occasionally moralized on the preferability of memory and intellect to reliance on written texts.[24] Nonetheless, there is considerable evidence that, over the centuries, these libraries made important contributions to the cultural life of the ancient world.

THIS FUNCTION OF the library as a nodal point in a network of communications across an empire continued into the Roman period. Rome's emperors sometimes poached Alexandria's chief librarians to come and direct imperial libraries in Rome; Claudius even had his own Etruscan and Carthaginian histories read out there annually in an imperial display of vanity publishing.[25]

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22. Plin. *HN* 30.4. Cf. Berossus, whose Greek *Babylonica*, which drew on Babylonian source material, was written for Antiochus I Soter around 290 BCE.

23. Alexandria: Plut. *Caes.* 49; cf. Sen. *Tranq.* 9.5; Cass. Dio 42.38; further destruction of the Brucheion district in 272 CE, according to Amm. Marc. 22.16.15. Rome: Gal. *De loc. aff.* 12–13.

24. Too (2010), 51–98, 173–188.

25. Suet. *Claud.* 42.

By this time, Rome had developed a lively literary culture of its own, in which the material and intellectual heritage of the Greek literary world played a part: *Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit et artes intulit agresti Latio*.[26] Primacy in book collecting and book scholarship gradually passed to Rome throughout the first century BCE and later, as Rome first imported (by plunder and purchase) book collections from its eastern conquests and then, once established as a center of learning, began to attract scholarly readers and writers much as Alexandria had done.

Initially, Rome's libraries were the private resources of the rich, sequestered in their villas and open only to their private circles of learned friends and dependents. In the first instance, these Roman library-owners were the generals who captured entire libraries from vanquished foes in the Greek world and re-established them on Italian soil as centers of reading, discussion, and the production of new texts. The Aemilii Paulli acquired the library of the Macedonian king Perseus after his defeat at Pydna (168 BCE), and within a generation, they were acting as literary patrons, of the émigré Greek historian Polybius among others.[27] A century later, the Pontic booty of L. Licinius Lucullus, Sulla's literary executor and *triumphator* (63 BCE), formed the basis of another villa library praised by Plutarch (*Luc.* 42), not only as a magnet for expatriate Greeks, but also as a center of scholarship, explicitly compared to the *Mouseion* at Alexandria, and described as an unofficial "embassy":

> What he [Lucullus] did in the provision of books deserves serious esteem. For he collected together many books, and they were well written. His use of them was more honorable than their acquisition, since he opened up to everyone his libraries, and the colonnades around them, and the rooms for study, so that they welcomed in the Greeks without hindrance, as if to some lodging-place of the Muses. They would go to and fro there and spend their days with one another, gladly escaping from their other obligations. Often he himself would spend his leisure time there too, walking about in the colonnades with the scholars, and would help the statesmen with whatever they needed. And, all in all, his house was a home and a Greek prytaneium for those coming to Rome.

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26. Hor. *Epist.* 2.1.156.

27. Isid. *Etym.* 6.5.1; Plut. *Aem.* 28 calls the two sons, Q. Fabius Maximus Aemilianus and P. Cornelius Scipio Africanus Aemilianus, φιλογραμματοῦντες. For the latter as patron: Polyb. 31.23–24.

Although Cicero in turn amassed his own very substantial collection (through purchase rather than conquest), we know that he, too, read and wrote in Lucullus' library. His *De Finibus* mentions its containing volumes of Stoic philosophy as well as many commentaries on Aristotle;[28] moreover, fragments of the lost *Hortensius* (which Cicero set in the library) suggest that it included holdings in tragedy, comedy, and lyric poetry.[29]

For the physical appearance of a late-republican private library, we can look at the Villa of the Papyri at Herculaneum, an opulent seaside property named after the carbonized book scrolls that were discovered there in the late eighteenth century, preserved by the eruption of Vesuvius. The contents of these books suggest that the villa, or at least the book collection it housed, was used by the first-century BCE Epicurean poet and philosopher Philodemus and his circle, and that it acted as another lively hub of learned interaction.[30] The private wealth of its patron (possibly Julius Caesar's father-in-law, Lucius Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus) attracted both prestigious Greek scholars and their books; Philodemus was an influence on both Horace and Virgil. Again, we are in a world of mobility, exchange, movement, and communication, in which large book collections acted as important focuses of international scholarly activity, one of the resources—along with architectural space and comfort, food, money, intellectual company, and prestige—that a patron could deploy.

Within a few years of Philodemus' and Piso's time in Herculaneum, the Roman republic collapsed in the civil wars, which ended with the emergence of the first emperor, Augustus. The new regime amassed huge resources from the confiscated or inherited property of defeated enemies and nervous new supporters. The foundation of the Roman world's first public libraries was among the results, even if the honor of actually founding the first such library at Rome belongs to the independent-minded and literary politician Asinius Pollio. Private libraries continued to flourish into the imperial period: Athenaeus' account of Larensis' library and Martial's dispatch of his book to Stella's both show the power that private literary patrons continued to wield through their libraries.[31] However, they were joined by the public libraries of the imperial capital and, in time, by public libraries built in the empire's provinces.

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28. Cic. *Fin.* 3.7–10.

29. Grilli (1962), fr. 8 (tragedy); 10 (comedy); 11, 13–15 (history); 12 (lyric poetry).

30. Sider (1990), 540, draws attention to "countless marginalia and commentaries in the manuscripts" at Herculaneum. For an overview of the library of the villa, see Sider (2005).

31. Ath. 1.3b; Mart. 12.3.

Assessing the genuinely "public" element of these buildings is difficult; no reliable testimony exists about entry control or numbers of visitors. Their imperial patrons did not intend them to fulfil the educational and philanthropic goals that we associate with the modern public libraries of Victorian times onwards. Nonetheless, it does seem that the new public libraries of the imperial period were constructed and discussed in new ways. The language used to describe their foundation includes repeated use of the verb *publicare* and its cognates—also used by authors to indicate the handing-over of their finished work to the public[32]—thus indicating a perception that these large book collections in their purpose-built homes were now in the public realm.[33]

This quality applies particularly to the libraries founded in the reign of the first emperor, Augustus. The new regime tried hard to establish its credentials as a friend and benefactor to the public at large, presenting to it for the first time resources and facilities that had previously been the preserve of men like Lucullus or Piso. In this regard, we can place the city's libraries alongside the parkland, statue collections, paintings, and bath-houses opened up to at least nominal public ownership and use by the first emperors. We may see these resources as part of an idealized representation of the city to itself, a statement of the sorts of cultural and leisure activity that were attractive to Augustan Romans.

There are several other ways to consider these new public libraries and their book collections in the context of communication, from the obvious ways in which any library connects books with readers to more abstract communication functions. In the first place, these libraries existed to make books available to readers, "communicating" to an audience the literature they chose to accumulate. In this respect, they were the successors of the Hellenistic and private Roman republican libraries discussed above, at least some of which were assembled, not merely for royal or élite display, but also with the goal of fostering real literary and scholarly activity. This is not as uncontentious a claim as it might seem: almost as soon as books became familiar material objects in the Greek world, we hear of unlearned collection for mere social display—books bought "by the yard"—and Roman satire abounds in ignorant book collectors, the most famous being Petronius' boorish millionaire

32. Note Suet. *Iul.* 56.7; cf. Nauta (2002), 121 with n. 99.

33. *Bibliothecas Graecas Latinasque quas maximas posset publicare* (Suet. *Iul.* 44); *bibliothecas publicavit Pollio Graecas simul atque Latinas* (Isid. *Etym.* 6.5.2); *bibliotheca, quae prima in orbe ab Asinio Pollione ex manubiis publicata Romae est* (Plin. *HN* 7.115); *Asini Pollionis hoc Romae inventum, qui primus bibliothecam dicando ingenia hominum rem publicam fecit* (ibid. 35.10).

freedman Trimalchio.[34] The implication of the satire is that respectable libraries were meant to be useful and used rather than, or as well as, decorative; praise was duly bestowed on a Ptolemy or a Lucullus who achieved that goal.

This ethos seems to have informed the earliest public libraries in Augustan Rome. Horace, a subtle exegete of the Augustan literary program, talks about the books in the Palatine library being widely read and well known.[35] Ovid, who fell afoul of Augustus and wrote a series of mournful poems from exile on the Black Sea asking to be let back into Rome, described the holdings of Rome's new public libraries thus:

> Whatever men of old or more recent times conceived in their learned hearts lies open to be inspected by readers.[36]

Generally speaking, the testimony regarding these libraries presumes, as Ovid does, the active presence of readers and other sorts of visitors. These new imperial public libraries were therefore naturally attractive to authors, who wanted their books to be read both by contemporaries and by future generations; libraries, after all, have the potential to guard books and present them to posterity. The *monumentum aere perennius* and the κτῆμα ἐς αἰεί are standard classical literary tropes. Conversely, Roman writers knew well the various fates that could befall an unlucky book, whether it be destroyed by flame, damp, or the worm, not to mention used as waste paper in wrappers for mackerel (as Catullus fears) or pepper (as Horace fears), or for other even less-savory uses.[37]

Accession to one of these imperial libraries offered an apparent guarantee of preservation and status, as we saw in Martial's plea at the beginning of the chapter. Libraries, with their dedicated staff of copyists and binders, their prestigious high-quality copies, and their solid, secure buildings in important parts of town, apparently offered the best chance of achieving permanent literary survival down the ages, better certainly than the cheap popular copies that Ovid's exile poetry was doomed to depend upon—though we might note in passing that his poetry has survived, while many rivals given prestigious accommodation in Rome's libraries have not.

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34. Xen. *Mem.* 4.2.10 for the posturing book collector Euthydemus the handsome; Petronius, *Sat.* 48.

35. Hor. *Epist.* 1.3.15–20.

36. Ov. *Tr.* 3.1.63–64.

37. Catull. 95.8 and 36.1 for the luckless *Annals* of Volusius; Hor. *Epist.* 2.1.269–270. See also Farrell (2009).

LIBRARIES THEREFORE TRANSMITTED the best of the past to the present, and the corollary is that they could also transmit present works into the future, shelved in the illustrious company of authors who had definitely "made it." As the elder Pliny says in a discussion about the decoration of libraries with authors' busts, libraries are places where the immortal spirits (*immortales animae*) of past authors speak to us—in the present tense, as if they were still alive.[38] The newly discovered work by Galen, *Avoiding Distress*, gives us a real illustration of this claim, showing that the Palatine library apparently managed to keep recognized collections of books intact on its shelves for over two centuries. Learned readers could consult reliable master-copies there as late as 192 CE, says Galen (13):[39]

> . . . works that were rare and not preserved anywhere else, (and) copies of standard works that were prized because of the precision of their text, those of Callinus, Atticus, Peducaeus and even Aristarchus, including the two Homers, and the Plato of Panaetius and many others of that sort, since preserved inside in each book were the words either written or copied by the individuals after whom the books are named. There were also many autograph copies of ancient grammarians, orators, doctors and philosophers.

This ability of libraries to make connections across time—grouping authors of the present day alongside those of the past, and making implicit or explicit comparisons between them—meant that accession into an imperial library came to be regarded (like acceptance into the Ptolemaic circle at Alexandria) as a mark of both political favor and literary success. At Rome, this favor could be exercised through libraries in various ways. These ranged from direct patronage and active collection to simple interest, as when the Emperor Tiberius placed portrait busts of his own favorite poets (Euphorion, Rhianus, and Parthenius) in the libraries at Rome, an action that instantly stimulated the writing of several commentaries on them.[40] Outside Rome we can compare the pleasure expressed by the florid second-century CE Greek orator Dio Chrysostom at being honored with a statue in the public library at Corinth. Its presence, he felt, would spur the youth of the city to make even greater efforts in their studies.[41]

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38. Plin. *HN* 35.2.9.

39. See further Nicholls (2011).

40. Suet. *Tib.* 70.

41. Dio Chrys. *Or.* 37.8 (possibly the work of Favorinus in fact).

Conversely, imperial displeasure could also be exercised through libraries. Ovid was excluded under Augustus after his exile;[42] Caligula, in a moment of characteristic caprice, tried to ban the classic works of Livy and Homer from Rome's public libraries.[43] In all these stories, libraries are *loci* of imperial engagement both with literature and with a wider audience, an arena for gesture politics. The point is picked up by the authors who tell us the stories, selecting these episodes as illustrative of an emperor's attitudes. Libraries could therefore function as places where the circulation, exchange, inclusion, and exclusion of texts communicated political as well as cultural and intellectual values.

Looking at how these Roman libraries were actually used suggests that they functioned, as at Alexandria, as centers of interaction, exchange, and communication between scholarly readers. Aulus Gellius, for whom libraries are one of many agreeable settings for literary discussion, is a good source in this connection. During a lively discussion he records on a question of grammar, for example, the eventual answer is "Go and look it up in the Templum Pacis library," as if appeal to the authority of the library offered an unimpeachable final answer in such a dispute.[44] Elsewhere, we find Gellius browsing in the Library of Trajan,[45] or recording a semi-formal learned conversation set in the Domus Tiberiana library between himself, the eminent scholar Sulpicius Apollinaris, and an unnamed youngster (*adulescens*)—evidence that a rather mixed usership, not all already known to each other, could meet, sit, and talk together in these libraries.[46] For Martial, the libraries of Rome, alongside its theaters, were places that afforded opportunities for pleasurable study and inspiration.[47] Galen helps confirm this picture when he calls the Templum Pacis library "the place where all those engaged in the learned arts would gather before the fire" [in 192 CE].[48] Large book collections authenticate, enable, and provide a backdrop to living interactions in these anecdotes—altogether a fairly common function of libraries in the literary record.

This function was probably enhanced by the confining of books to libraries. There is mixed evidence for borrowing from libraries, but on the whole, it

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42. Ov. *Tr.* 3.1; Sen. *Dial.* 6.1.3. Cf. Cass. Dio 57.24.2–4; Tac. *Ann.* 4.34; Suet. *Calig.* 16.

43. Suet. *Calig.* 34.2.

44. Gell. *NA* 5.21.9.

45. Gell. *NA* 11.17.

46. Gell. *NA* 13.20.

47. Mart. 12, preface.

48. Gal. *Lib. Propr.* 2.21; cf. SHA *Tyr. Trig.* 31.10.

seems that it was usually forbidden, meaning that readers generally came to the books rather than vice versa; library books, after all, were prestigious and expensive objects. The well-known inscription from Athens listing the rules for the late first-century CE library of Pantainos there supports this impression, stating that "the library is open from the first to the sixth hours; no book may be taken out—we have sworn it."[49] Galen's new testimony suggests that the Palatine library, too, cannot have lent its books out, given their apparent survival as complete collections over two and a half centuries.

Readers were therefore drawn to public libraries, increasing the potential for the sorts of encounter described above. The number of visitors was boosted by the fact that libraries could also function as a venue for public oral displays of literary endeavor, like lectures and debates, as well as for the display of works of art. Roman library rooms themselves—unlike what we know of their Hellenistic and Republican forebears—were large.[50] Augustus' Palatine libraries were used for Senate meetings,[51] so they must have been capable of accommodating large numbers of people for literary recitals or lectures. In his *Florida*, Apuleius, speaking from the stage of the theater in Carthage, says that if his audience hears anything especially learned, they should imagine that they are encountering his work in the town's library instead, as if the town's theater audience were familiar with the library as well.[52]

Roman public libraries also seem often to have been associated with separate, purpose-built spaces for public events such as the lectures, recitations, or disputations that characterized much of the public intellectual culture promoted by the second-century CE literary revival, termed the Second Sophistic. It is probably in the Templum Pacis complex that Galen, for example, sets a formal refutation of his critics in the format of a public lecture and demonstration described by him in *On My Own Books*. This event took place, Galen tells us, "in one of the large lecture halls." So the building incorporated more than one hall suitable for lectures; the one used by Galen probably contained (or was attached to) a library with extensive medical holdings, because he began his display by setting out in front of himself a huge range of anatomical books. The Hadrianic library at Athens contained twin auditoria or lecture rooms with raked seating flanking the central book hall. This Roman-style library

49. *SEG* 21.703.

50. Archaeological evidence shows as much, as does the anecdote that Tiberius intended to place a huge statue of Apollo Temenitos in a library at Rome: Suet. *Tib*. 74.

51. Suet. *Aug*. 29; Tac. *Ann*. 2.37.

52. Apul. *Flor*. 18.

built by Hadrian at Athens sounds rather like Sidonius' descriptions of the Athenaeum, which Hadrian built at Rome as a "school for the liberal arts."[53] The excavation required there for a new subway station adjacent to Trajan's Forum is now bringing what may be this building to light—commodious lecture halls with wide, shallow-stepped seating.

LIBRARIES IN THE Roman world were therefore places of reading, and also of meeting, discussing, debating, and listening: in short, they acted as centers and catalysts for various sorts of literary communication. Is it possible to determine whether they also communicated with a wider public, beyond the confines of the literary men we meet in the sources cited so far? The sheer number of public libraries, not only in Rome (twenty-eight by the time of Constantine in the early fourth century), but also in the provinces of the empire, particularly the east, suggests that they had a public character as a familiar part of the urban landscape. Among other functions, the provincial libraries were used as points of communication in the dissemination of literature between Rome and the wider empire. Galen's *Avoiding Distress*, in which he talks about the circulation of his own books, says that one copy of each was intended to satisfy the requests of "friends back home," who "were asking for copies of my writings to be sent to them so that they could deposit them in a public library, just as others had already done with many of our books in other cities."[54] These public library copies would presumably guarantee as wide an exposure to the text as possible, and, crucially, the preservation of a reliable copy.

We can compare Galen's earlier approval of the authenticity of the Palatine library's precious texts, and note that he views his own works as part of this tradition. The process still relied on the agency of trusted friends, whom the recipient library could in turn trust to have received the original work directly from Galen; but it must aim at a wider circulation than whatever could have been achieved by circles of friendship alone. For Galen, the use of a public city library to hold his text overcomes the risk of misattributed or miscopied versions' circulating—we may recall how keen he was himself to use imperial public libraries in Rome because of the excellent provenance of their holdings—and points us to a role for the provincial public library that mirrors an important function of its Roman counterpart.

What we see is a role for the Roman library as a nodal point in a network of communication, in which geographically dispersed agents (readers and

53. Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 9.14.2 (cf. 2.9.4, 4.8, 9.9); cf. Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 14.3; Cass. Dio 73.17; SHA *Pert.* 11; *Alex. Sev.* 35; *Gord.* 3.

54. Galen, *Peri Alupias* 21.

writers) used libraries as mutually acknowledged central points of contact. Provincial libraries made use of contacts with men of letters at Rome, and in turn were trusted to house reputable copies of new works and make them available to provincial readers. In the terms of modern network theory, libraries could thus be seen as elements in a material-semiotic network of "nodes" and "ties," in which people, material objects, places, and concepts communicated across the Greco-Roman world. In such a network—one constantly renewed through the actions of its members—certain members can act as points of connection, or "hubs," between individuals, small local groups, and the wider world. Libraries, with their capacity to collect, preserve, and make texts available, were equipped to fulfill such a role. Alongside other agents, they linked local, personal "effective networks" whose members were all known to one another into wider "extended networks," capable of transmitting texts and ideas over greater distances to new audiences.[55]

Such an ancient literary network, however active and extensive, could not have included large numbers of people, in either absolute or relative terms. When we want to proceed beyond this privileged level and investigate the degree of genuine public access to library buildings or engagement there, it is hard to be precise. We can at least detect in their architecture a monumental function comparable to that of large public buildings throughout the city, designed to be seen and entered by plenty of people. We have noted that these buildings seemed to house recitals and debates, and we know that they contained high-status art works—all good reasons to attract large numbers of people into the buildings and to raise their public profile.

Moreover, public libraries were almost always located in extremely prominent parts of town, and they addressed passers-by with expensive and elaborate eye-catching façades. In Rome, libraries clustered round the monumental core of the city, occupying space on the Palatine hill, in the imperial fora, and (possibly) in lofty halls in the imperial bathhouses; they were always connected to some other large public complex. In the provinces, to take only a selection of examples, the library of Celsus in Ephesus with its ebullient facade occupies the most prominent and highly trafficked street corner in the city (Figure 2.1). The library at Timgad in Algeria covers an entire city block very

55. For an amplification of this idea, see Nicholls (2015). Network theory is well established in the fields of mathematics, sociology, and anthropology; the present volume demonstrates its increasing interest to scholars of the ancient world. For a useful "tutorial," see Ruffini (2008), 8–40; note also Malkin et al. (2009), 1–8. Although in the case of ancient libraries, space and a paucity of data preclude the proper quantitative analysis that is at the core of the method, its terminology has value for considering how they functioned.

FIGURE 2.1 Celsus Library façade, Ephesus.
(Photo courtesy of author)

near the forum in the center of town, offering passers-by an attractive colonnaded courtyard opening off a busy street. The Pantainos library in Athens sits prominently in the Agora at the junction of the Panathenaic Way and the road to the new Roman Agora, also advertising its presence with lateral colonnades and a statue display. While the number of scholarly users of these libraries was probably never more than a small proportion of the population, the libraries were still designed to be conspicuous public monuments, signifying cultural patronage and prestige to a large urban audience.[56]

LIBRARIES PERFORM COMMUNICATION functions quite distinct from the actual reading of the books: messages of imperial and local patriotism, engagement with metropolitan fashions, and communication between a city's literary élite and the bulk of its population. Here, then, is another way libraries could act as places of exchange and transfer, and for more than just books: public libraries were used in the important civic business of self-promotion and commemoration. As with virtually all Roman public buildings, libraries carried long inscriptions naming their donors. The gift of a library reflected a certain cultural aptitude and intellectual worth, as well as engagement (as Galen shows) with high-level literary networks, not to mention material generosity

56. Nicholls (2013).

and political ambition. Particularly during the period of the Second Sophistic, the cities of the Greek eastern half of the empire were governed by well-born groups of councilors, magistrates, and priests, whose grandest members mingled with Roman governors and even in some cases were admitted to the Roman Senate.[57] A fluent command of the spoken and written language was a prerogative of these largely self-perpetuating civic élites, and indeed a criterion for membership in them. A large proportion of local government depended on speech-making and ambassadorial duties,[58] so command of the discipline of Greek oratory was particularly valued and could be displayed before large civic audiences. In this sort of society, library buildings, paid for and bearing the names of men of this class, spoke confidently about their place in the empire and the place of a shared literary, cultural identity; they also helped negotiate the tensions in the relationship between local, cultural, civic, Greek, and Roman identities.

Some library buildings went to extraordinary lengths to communicate these ideas to the population of their cities. The façade of the Celsus library at Ephesus at first glance looks entirely typical of Roman-era buildings in the Greek east, with its elaborate projecting and receding screen of columns. But framing the three doors of the library are relief panels showing the consular fasces, the rods and axes that symbolized Celsus' imperial magistracy in Rome, while twin equestrian statues of his son (the donor) flank the steps on bases inscribed with Celsus' entire career in both Latin and Greek (Figure 2.2). The niches in the library's façade house statues personifying Celsus' intellectual virtues, labelled in Greek—his "Wisdom," "Virtue," "Knowledge," and "Understanding," all suitable to a library patron, even if strikingly immodest. The upper storey of the façade houses statues of Celsus and various family members with their inscribed careers, allowing the library to serve as a sort of billboard for the family's virtues and success over several generations. The building's dedicatory inscription shows that the provisions made for funding the library (with an endowment whose interest provided for staffing and book purchase) included an annual public feast on Celsus' birthday, when all his statues would also be crowned with garlands (Figure 2.3).

Here, therefore, the entire building is an exercise in mass communication, reaching out, not only through the texts it held, but also through exterior inscription in two languages, through the visual media of sculpture in the round and relief carving displayed across the front of the building, as

57. See Chapter 6 below.

58. See Chapter 15 below.

FIGURE 2.2 Celsus Library doorway, Ephesus.
(Photo courtesy of author)

well as even to the illiterate (or indifferent) through garlands and feasts. We could compare one Lucius Flavius Aemilius Tellur(ius) Gaetulicus, a near-contemporary library patron at Dyrrachium (in modern Albania), who tried to broaden the appeal of his gift by providing twelve pairs of gladiators to fight at the dedication.[59] Overall, Celsus seems to have envisaged his library as a means of perpetuating his own memory in Ephesus, and that of his family, alongside the preservation of literary texts housed there. Indeed, his own sarcophagus is buried beneath the central apse of the library, looking out into it through two small holes cut into the molding of the library's podium.

59. *CIL* 3.607; cf. Plin. *Ep.* 1.8 on the slight popular appeal of libraries compared to that of gladiatorial shows.

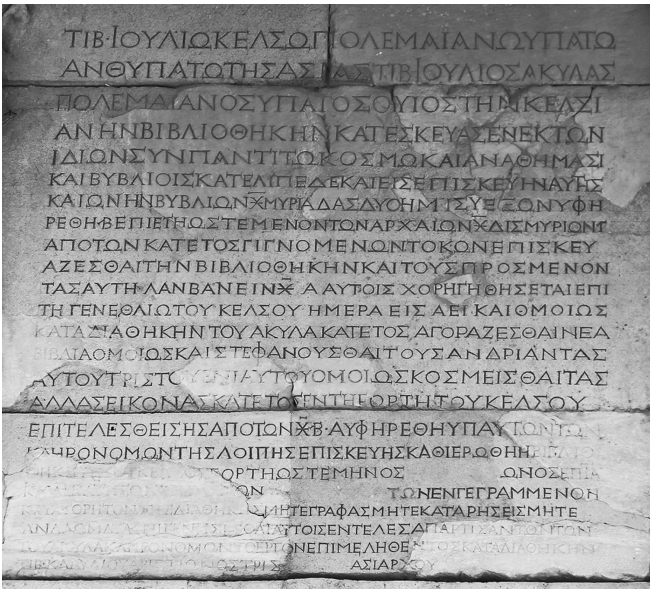

FIGURE 2.3 Celsus Library dedicatory inscription, Ephesus.
(Photo courtesy of author)

Clearly, such buildings do more than simply provide a secure storeroom for books and a place to read them. These libraries are confident displays of literary prowess, proud symbols of the acumen of both their founder-builders and of the cities where they were situated, and also statements of a shared Roman and local political-cultural identity. To judge by where firmly identified archaeological remains survive, in their architecture these provincial libraries adopted the lofty central halls, wall-niches for books, space for statues, internal colonnades, galleries, podiums, and fine decoration that seem to have characterized imperial examples at Rome. In fact, the striking early-second-century vogue for provincial library-building followed a period when the emperors Trajan and Hadrian built several libraries at Rome and elsewhere.

The frequent association between libraries and funerary monuments also echoes a Roman imperial example. In Rome, on Trajan's death in 117, his ashes were laid to rest beneath the Column (with its famous helical frieze of the Dacian campaigns) erected between his two libraries. Around the same time, Celsus was buried in his library at Ephesus, a family *heroön* was set up in the possible library at Sagalassos, and Dio Chrysostom's wife and son were buried in his library at Prusa.[60] The connection between libraries and burial

60. Plin. *Ep.* 10.81.

highlights the commemorative power of the library to transmit ideas to posterity, as we saw with the elder Pliny's *immortales animi*. Library patrons seem to have hoped, both to emulate the emperor's famous complex in Rome, and to be conveyed to posterity in the company of the authors they gathered around them, just as Martial wanted to be shelved among the ranks of great poets of the past. Libraries in the ancient world were points of communication between authors and readers, between groups of visitors, between speakers and audiences, and between emperors and subjects, the center and the provinces, local leaders and their cities. Through their collections of texts and author portraits, they could also link the past, present, and future, and even assist the transmission of their patrons' souls, or at least their reputations, into posterity.

3

Communication and Roman Long-Distance Trade

Taco Terpstra

The "Tyranny of Distance"

October 3rd, 1837, marked a momentous event in the development of communication technology.[1] On that day, papers describing a new machine were submitted to the U.S. Patent Office in Washington, D.C. The invention to be patented used electricity for conveying messages, a revolutionary step that would divide the world into a before and an after.[2] The birth of the "electromagnetic telegraph," as the apparatus was christened by the applicant, Samuel Morse, was to change long-distance communication dramatically. A miracle machine, it allowed messages to travel at nearly the speed of light. People marveled at the novel technology that to many seemed almost like magic. Implementation of the telegraph spread quickly. Attempts at laying a transatlantic cable were successful in 1866, allowing communication between the Old and New Worlds that was all but instantaneous.[3] Thus the stage was set for the interconnected world of large-scale, earth-spanning commerce, to become known as the "first global economy." Already established by the 1870s, this economy was to last until the outbreak of the First World War, which would

1. I thank Roger Bagnall, Willem Jongman, Joel Mokyr, Edward Muir, and Robert Wallace for reading and commenting on earlier versions of this chapter.

2. See Morris (2013), 218–237, on the change in speed and reach of communication with the advent of electronic media.

3. On the history of the telegraph and its impact on contemporary society, see Coe (1993); Lubrano (1997).

bring it to a sudden halt. But the Great War, the Great Depression, and then the Second World War were to slow economic globalization only temporarily. Picking up again after 1950, it would continue to develop hand in hand with ever-improving information technology.[4]

But the world that existed before, the preindustrial world, had to make do with altogether less efficient modes of communication. Light or smoke signals were a fast means of sending simple messages, which could be a useful way of raising the alarm in times of war. However, messages of any length or complexity had to be either committed to writing or painstakingly memorized by a courier. The human or inanimate medium in which the message was contained then had to be physically conveyed to the intended recipient. Communication within walking distance in the confined area of a village or city was easy, but beyond that scale, problems arose quickly. In the absence of not only electricity but also internal combustion engines, travel was cumbersome, slow, and costly. To describe the debilitating effect that these constraints had on human contact between geographically remote areas, the Australian historian Geoffrey Blainey coined the evocative phrase "the tyranny of distance."[5]

Just how much this "tyranny" affected the speed of information in the Roman Empire is evident from Egyptian documents dated by the reigns of emperors. In a masterful study of the data, Richard Duncan-Jones calculated the mean "cognition time," the time necessary for the various parts of Egypt to realize that a new ruler had assumed the purple in Rome. During the first two centuries CE, this took no fewer than fifty-seven days on average.[6] The *Theodosian Code*, published in 438 CE, suggests even slower transmission times in the Late Empire. The Code contains double-dated edicts, providing us with firm data on how much time elapsed before an edict reached its destination from its starting-point. Here the median number of days is a surprising 134, considerably more than the Egyptian "cognition time," despite the fact that the listed distances are generally shorter than the one between Rome and Egypt.[7]

What effects such slow information could have is illustrated forcefully by a story told by Flavius Josephus.[8] The emperor Gaius, desiring to be worshipped

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4. Eckes (2011), 25–38.

5. Blainey (1966). On the battle against distance, see also Braudel (1972), 355–394; Bairoch (1988), 11–12.

6. Duncan-Jones (1990), 9.

7. Duncan-Jones (1990), 21. For a comparable endeavor for the seventeenth-century Mediterranean, see Braudel (1972), 360–363.

8. Joseph. *BJ* 2.203; *AJ* 18.304–309.

as a god towards the end of his reign, ordered a statue of himself placed in the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. However, Publius Petronius, the governor of Syria, knowing that this step would lead to popular unrest, begged the emperor to revoke the order. Enraged at the perceived insubordination, Gaius sent a letter to Antioch ordering Petronius to commit suicide. But the ship carrying the letter was held up at sea for three months. By the time it reached Antioch, Petronius had already received news twenty-seven days earlier that Gaius had been assassinated. Josephus may have embellished or even fabricated this story (the two versions he tells are not entirely congruent) to demonstrate how God would protect those who sided with the Jewish people. But the element of letters being waylaid, and news being delivered that had long since been rendered outdated, sounds completely believable. With communication relying on human carriers, draft animals, and sailing ships, information transfer was subject to unpredictable events like gales, shipwreck, and ill-fortune on the road, to name but a few frequently reported ones.[9] A three-month delay was doubtless exceptional, but it was "an 'exception' frequently repeated."[10]

Nor was that all. From the time of Augustus, Roman government officials could count on a public communication infrastructure.[11] But private citizens never had recourse to such a system, whether under the Republic or the Empire. In the correspondence that Cicero and Atticus maintained between Rome and Greece, letters were entrusted to mutual friends, or at least to people both men thought to be reliable intermediaries. But from Cicero's frequent remarks about sending and receiving mail, it is clear that such couriers were not always available, a problem that led to delays and gaps in communication. In a letter from 61 BCE, for instance, Cicero apologized: "Three letters from you have now come to hand . . . . In them you challenged a reply, but I have been rather slow in making one because I can't find a trustworthy carrier."[12] The difference between large, important cities and places of lesser significance also played a role, the latter being disadvantaged by their more peripheral position. In 67 BCE, Cicero wrote to Atticus reproachfully: "Letters from you reach me all too seldom, though travelers to Rome are much easier for you to come by than travelers to Athens for me. . . ."[13]

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9. For example, Paul in *Acts* 27; Petron. *Sat*. 76; Suet. *Iul*. 4; Luke 10.29–37; *P.Fayum* 108; Apul. *Met*. 4.23; *CIL* 3.2544.

10. Braudel (1972), 357.

11. Kolb (2000).

12. Cic. *Att*. 13.1 trans. D. R. Shackleton Bailey.

13. Cic. *Att*. 5.1, trans. Shackleton Bailey.

Roman merchants involved in long-distance trade had it easier if they dealt with shippers, captains, and itinerant traders on a daily basis as part of their profession. But there can be no doubt that they found it hard to relay messages for the same reasons that Cicero and (post mortem) the emperor Gaius encountered. And yet they managed, if only because they had to. Without information, business could not function. Merchants needed to know at least the basic facts about economic opportunities overseas, or no market would emerge. But for developed markets, even the basic facts were not enough. There was, first of all, the problem of "information asymmetry," the phenomenon that one party in a deal was likely to know more than the other; the seller of goods versus the buyer, for instance.[14] This is a problem even when communication is frictionless, but it becomes paralyzing if the less-informed party judges that no balanced decision is possible because the distance is too great and information too scarce. Furthermore, to transact a deal across any space spanning more than one day's travel required planning. Decisions had to be postponed until information came in, or they had to be made in a way that allowed for contingencies and multiple outcomes. The less information was available, the more contingencies had to be allowed for, and the more unknowns taken into account. Too many unknowns, and the market would collapse.

Written Communication

The nature of long-distance business required regular communication, at least part of which must have taken a written form. Yet Roman evidence of this is scant. Loss of evidence rather than nonexistence in antiquity surely explains this rarity. Medieval trade has left us large amounts of commercial correspondence. To operate long-distance Mediterranean trade routes, Roman merchants needed to send written messages just as much as their medieval successors did. Since the physical constraints on communication in the Middle Ages were the same as under the Roman Empire, medieval letters can provide us with a sense of what we have lost in the Roman sources. An example will clarify the point.

Early in the fourteenth century, John Trape, a furrier in London, sent a letter to Giacomino di Recco, a merchant in Genoa.[15] Trape renewed an offer

14. Akerlof (1970). On information asymmetry, see also Kessler and Temin (2007), 319–321.

15. Lopez and Raymond (2001), no. 186.

to sell his wares, one that had been turned down before because di Recco lacked funds:

> Dear friend: I beg you, as well as I rely upon you, in regard to the 800 furs of powdered miniver and to the 1,000 furs of black budge which you were to have ordered from me on the thirtieth now past – and at that time you did not want to do so because your money was not available as you wished – that you please order them from me now through the bearer of this letter. And the same bearer will make out a good receipt for the money above mentioned.

For all its brevity, this letter gives us much information on medieval commerce. It shows where a particular long-distance trade route ran, what was exchanged on it, and when it was in operation. It also allows us insight into the mechanism of everyday business. The letter alludes not just to the seller and his prospective buyer but also to a nameless third party, apparently sent over from England to Genoa. This person evidently served as more than a messenger, having the authority to accept the hoped-for order of furs and to write an exonerating receipt for payment. Trape's letter thus had considerable legal force, informal though it may appear. This aspect is underscored by the fact that two identical copies exist, one of which was found in the London Public Record Office.[16] Duplication of business correspondence served the same purpose as notarization, meaning that personal letters like this one could be used as legal proof.

While we have a sizeable body of letters from members of the Roman élite—men like Cicero, Fronto, and Pliny the Younger—Roman letters comparable to Trape's are almost nonexistent. There is certainly evidence for non-élite, long-distance information transfer. The tablets from the military camp at Vindolanda in northern England attest to communication within a medium-to-large geographical range. They show how writing was central to supplying and running an army unit on the frontier.[17] In addition, papyri contain soldiers' letters sent to Egypt from places a considerable distance away like Misenum, Portus, Rome, and Bostra (in the province of Arabia).[18] Papyri also provide evidence for civilian correspondence over long distances, such as a

16. Lopez and Raymond (2001), 378, n. 3; Lopez (1950).

17. Bowman (2003), 40–42.

18. White (1986), nos. 103–105.

letter sent from Rome by a sailor in the imperial grain fleet to his brother in Egypt.[19] But letters from professional traders are extremely rare.

Indirect evidence for business communication over long distances is present in our sources, but is easily overlooked. Take a well-known description of an overseas transaction, a case discussed by the second-century CE jurist Scaevola.[20] In Berytus, Syria, the merchant Callimachus took out a bottomry loan in order to transport goods he had bought locally to Brundisium in Italy. His counterpart in the contract, a slave called Stichus (acting on behalf of his master Lucius Titius), stipulated that, on reaching Brundisium, Callimachus was to act within a narrow timeframe. After selling the cargo, he was either to purchase a new load and return to Berytus no later than September 13th or, on missing that deadline, was to repay the loan immediately. The reason behind the leave-by clause is not made explicit, but we can be all but certain that it was intended to force Callimachus to avoid the dangerous winter sailing season.

The legal import of the deadline was risk apportionment: if Callimachus set sail before September 13th, the risk of loss of cargo was borne by his lender, but if he left after that date, the risk would be his own. Division of risk thus hinged on a precise deadline being met or missed. This arrangement presupposes that there was a way for Stichus in Berytus to know the exact date by which the ship and its cargo would leave Brundisium. But how? The "tyranny of distance" prevented easy verification. The obvious way would be for Stichus to send someone along to check up on what Callimachus might be doing. And, sure enough, the *Digest* passage mentions that the return cargo was accompanied by a fellow slave of Stichus, named Eros; he sailed from Brundisium to Berytus, where he was presumably to report on what had happened during the voyage. But Eros would be useless as a conveyer of information in precisely the event for which the leave-by clause was most relevant, namely shipwreck. If the ship went to the bottom, Eros would go down with it, and so would the evidence on when the ship had left port. Yet the outcome that the ship would be lost, and that borrower and lender would contest the departure date but would be unable to substantiate their rival claims, does not seem to have been a concern for the contracting parties.

There are several ways to explain their lack of concern. They may have worked within a network that was acknowledged as a reliable conduit for private business letters. Another possibility is that they could obtain excerpts of a customs log showing the dates of ships leaving Brundisium. It is also imaginable that the captain prior to setting sail drafted a statement that was filed

19. Hunt and Edgar (1932), no. 113.

20. *Dig.* 45.1.122.1, with Sirks (2002), 142–149.

in the archive of a business associate, to be consulted when needed. We can further imagine a statement that was not left behind at the place of departure, but sent to Berytus on a separate vessel. It is impossible to say which expedient Callimachus and Stichus relied upon. But deciding on a solution is not what matters here. What does is the realization that traders engaged in information transfer that was fundamental to their business.

Evidence for such information transfer can be glimpsed sporadically. An important but rarely cited letter written on a wax tablet concerns the transport of goods by ship.[21] Though found in a villa outside Pompeii, the tablet probably refers to a shipment destined for Puteoli, the major harbor on the other side of the Bay of Naples:

> Theophilus to brother Aphrodisius, blessing. From the ship the *Octa* you will receive six medium-sized amphorae of wine, and seventy-seven of vinegar; sixteen Sicilian jars of honey, and ten of m(. . . ?), one amphora of grape syrup, one amphora of s(. . . ?), . . .

Because the tablet is heavily damaged, crucial information is missing, an unfortunate loss given the document's value as evidence for Roman maritime trade and transport. Even if it is a reasonable assumption that Aphrodisius was to receive the cargo in Puteoli, we still have no clue about the harbor from which the shipment was made. The status of the two men is also unclear (slaves? free non-citizens?), as is the exact date of the transaction (pre-79 CE of course). But damage notwithstanding, the tablet provides valuable evidence on the communication practices used in Roman shipping.

The tablet resembles what would later be known as a "bill of lading," a type of document serving several functions. It certified what quantity of goods went on board in what condition, and it identified the intended recipient to the ship's captain. Bills of lading were in widespread use from the fourteenth century onward.[22] Here is an example drafted in Valencia on March 17th, 1396, for a shipment to Genoa:[23]

> Gentlemen: I am transmitting to you, in the name of God and of salvation, by the ship captained by En Lois Frexinet, who is the bearer of the present, 27 large sacks of wool, of which 23 are white and 3 black, and one of which is one part white and two parts black; and they are marked with my mark. . . .

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21. *TPSulp*. 80, with Terpstra (2013), 90–92.

22. Aikens et al. (2006), 1–12; Bensa (1925).

23. Lopez and Raymond (2001), no. 125.

If the Roman tablet quoted above was similar to this medieval bill, it would have been carried by the captain of the vessel and presented to Aphrodisius as the rightful recipient of the goods.[24] But its language rather suggests that it was sent ahead of time, intended to reach Aphrodisius before the cargo did. In that event, we can also imagine that the letter was one of two copies, one carried aboard, the other sent separately, a common enough practice with medieval bills of lading.[25] Roman evidence, too, shows the copying of receipts to ensure that goods were not tampered with en route.[26] The practice of sending out messages in advance to announce the dispatch of maritime cargo can be found in the ancient sources as well. Writing around 64 CE, Seneca describes the expected arrival of the Alexandrian grain fleet in Puteoli: "Suddenly there came into view today the 'Alexandrian' ships—I mean those which are usually sent ahead to announce the coming of the fleet; they are called 'mail-boats' (*tabellarias*)."[27] Although the organization of the imperial grain fleet was a special case, Theophilus' letter to Aphrodisius suggests that announcing the arrival of goods in writing occurred outside that setting, too.

Letters discussing business affairs are also found on papyri, although most relate to the management of agricultural estates upcountry in Egypt.[28] There are exceptions, however, like the one quoted below, dating to August 4th, 41 CE.[29] It has attained some notoriety because of a warning against "the Jews," which probably refers to recent political clashes between Alexandrian Jews and Greeks rather than to any Jewish usurious practices. Much of what is alluded to in the letter remains obscure, but a few points are reasonably certain. Sarapion, a merchant, wrote to Herakleides, an agent of his who was operating in the Alexandrian markets. The latter had apparently run into financial trouble and had written to his principal, asking for advice. Sarapion replied:

> I sent two other letters to you, one through Nedymos, one through Kronios the swordsman. Finally, then, I received your letter from the Arab and was upset upon reading it. Follow Ptollarion all the time;

24. Rougé (1966), 368, already posited the existence of Roman bills of lading, but offered little evidence.

25. Bensa (1925), 7; Aikens et al. (2006), 1–2.

26. See the papyrus text quoted by Kessler and Temin (2007), 324.

27. Sen. *Ep*. 77.1, trans. R. M. Gummere. On (*naves*) *tabellariae*, see Kolb (2000), 200–201; Rougé (1966), 266.

28. For example, Hunt and Edgar (1932), nos. 139–141; Olsson (1925), nos. 1–6.

29. White (1986), no. 87, with extensive commentary by Olsson (1925), 93–95.

> perhaps he can resolve your difficulty. Tell him "It is one thing for everyone else, another for me; I am (only) a slave; I have sold my merchandise to you for a talent too little; I know not what my patron will do to me; we have many creditors; do not drive us out (of business)." Ask him daily. Perhaps he may take pity on you. If not, like everyone else, see to it that you too (keep) yourself away from the Jews. It would be better, if you are able, through following him to make friends with him. Or, see whether it is possible by Diodoros to get the tablet signed through the wife of the commander. If you should do your part, you are not to be blamed. . . . Deliver to Alexandria, at the marketplace of Augustus. . . .

We can only guess at the scale and nature of the business conducted by Sarapion and Herakleides. Were they petty merchants engaged in modest retail, or were they running a substantial enterprise involving long-distance shipping into and out of the massive harbor at Alexandria? Apart from Greeks, their world was populated by Arabs (Nabataeans?) and Jews.[30] The fact that they operated within the cosmopolitan environment of Alexandria with its various ethnic communities would suggest that their affairs were fairly sizeable. But whatever the scale of their business, the role of written communication for their mercantile activities is abundantly clear. Letters went back and forth between principal and agent, and there were related documents, too, ones that needed signing.

Other evidence for business correspondence is provided by an inscription from Puteoli, dating to 174 CE. It contains the text of a letter written by the members of a trading colony from the Syrian city of Tyre, and sent to Tyre's city council. The letter-writers, who were permanently resident in Puteoli, had been leasing a communal building for which they could apparently no longer afford to pay the rent. They requested that the city council restore the preexisting situation in which a second Tyrian trading colony in Rome had paid them a subsidy for the purpose. The pertinent lines of this long inscription read:[31]

> To the chief magistrates, council, and people of their sovereign native city, from the Tyrians resident in Puteoli, greeting . . . . There is many a (trading) station in Puteoli, as most of you know, and ours excels the

30. On Nabataeans operating in Egypt, see Terpstra (2015).

31. *OGI* 595, trans. (with modifications) Lewis and Reinhold (1990), 110. See further Terpstra (2013), 70–84.

> others both in adornment and in size. In the past this was cared for by the Tyrians resident in Puteoli, who were numerous and wealthy; but now this care has devolved on us, who are few in number, and . . . we do not have the means to pay the station's annual rent . . . . We therefore beg you to provide for the station's continued existence . . . . And we remind you that the station here—unlike the one in the capital, Rome—derives no income either from shipowners or from merchants. . . .

Given that this letter was permanently inscribed in stone, it must have been an unusual piece of writing prompted by unusual events. Nonetheless, it shows us that the Tyrian trading colony stayed in regular touch with its mother city. The Tyrians overseas took it for granted that, back home, their city council was aware of the previous financial arrangement with the Roman station, as well as of the fact that there were many competing foreign stations in Puteoli. More generally, the mere existence in Italy of trading colonies of people from a Syrian city shows a remarkable degree of coordination of mercantile activities over long distances. The letter makes clear how Tyre and its two Italian trading colonies were interconnected, and how the overseas stations had a financial relationship that was in part controlled by their mother city. Apparently the financial relationship needed adjustment on occasion, a dynamic that invited negotiation and internal powerplay. These intricate mercantile and political ties can only have been maintained through regular correspondence.

There is another reason why this inscription is informative about Roman business communication. It goes on to mention how a letter (possibly the one cited, possibly an accompanying one) was read before the Tyrian city council. The Greek word used for this letter is *pittakion*, a writing tablet. This choice of word shows that tablets were employed as a medium for business letters, a fact confirmed by the wax tablet resembling a bill of lading discussed previously. Seneca's reference to (*naves*) *tabellariae* further suggests that wax tablets were regularly used in long-distance shipping. There were other writing materials, too, of course. Papyrus was important in Roman Egypt, but was more widely available in the Roman world; the depictions of scrolls in Pompeian wall paintings show as much, as does the find of scrolls from the Villa of the Papyri in Herculaneum. But a tablet is also mentioned in the letter from Sarapion to Herakleides (Greek *tabla*, derived from the Latin *tabula*), showing how papyrus was not the exclusive medium used in business, even in the province where it was produced.

Use of tablets provides at least a partial explanation for why we have so few merchants' letters from Roman times, while we have relatively many from the Middle Ages. Obviously, the ravages of time are the main culprit in the Roman

case. The centuries separating us from antiquity have obliterated the majority of Rome's written memory; medieval sources have been exposed to the destructive forces of time for a millennium less. But the chances of the ancient evidence surviving were made even slimmer by the peculiarly Greco-Roman medium of wax tablets, intended for reuse and turned into blank slates again when their messages became obsolete.[32] Such tablets were in use still in the Middle Ages, but were not entrusted with personal correspondence or sealed documentation. Such writing was done on paper, once this new medium of writing was introduced into Europe in the eleventh century.[33] While many medieval documents were deliberately destroyed, a sizeable number were discarded or stored and forgotten, for later centuries to find. Most Roman letters written on wax tablets were erased in the course of daily business and did not survive at all.

Oral Communication

It might seem odd to include a section on oral communication in this chapter. The nature of such communication would suggest that it produced no tangible evidence, leaving historians empty-handed. However, oral communication has produced evidence, albeit of an indirect nature. It is worth discussing here because news spread orally was doubtless an important source of information for Roman traders, perhaps as important for daily business as whatever was written down. We can think of couriers relaying memorized messages, although to transmit information in that way was expensive and no doubt practiced on any regular basis only by the Roman government and military. Rather, we should be thinking here of rumor and gossip.

When uncertainty increases, the number of rumors tends to increase, too, an effect well known to modern psychology and sociology. In much of the earlier scholarship on the subject, rumoring was seen as a damaging and "irrational" process, spreading or perpetuating misinformation and distorted truths. In the more current approach, rumoring is seen quite differently and is defined as "a recurrent form of communication through which people attempt to construct a meaningful or working interpretation of a threatening or ambiguous situation by pooling their intellectual resources."[34] This definition emphasizes that, in human behavioral practice, rumoring is a collective act of

32. On "everyday writing," see Bagnall (2011); for the role of wax tablets, Terpstra (2014a).

33. Lalou (1992).

34. Miller (2005), 508.

social groups or interaction networks, within which only what is considered to be important to the community is passed along. Empirical studies show that when rumors are not repeated in a one-on-one linear fashion (as was done in older experiments) but communally, they tend to be reproduced with remarkable accuracy.[35] In part, this accuracy results from social anxiety: people are unlikely to pass on a rumor if they do not have reasonable confidence in its veracity. They know that, if they raise false hope or cause unjustified fear, they face the prospect of repercussions within their social group once full information becomes available.[36]

The phenomenon of the number of rumors increasing in the absence of easily verifiable data implies that, in the world of Roman long-distance trade—with its many uncertainties and its slow information flows—rumor was an important aspect of daily communication. Not only will rumors have been ubiquitous, they will likely also have been fast-spreading. Passed on by word of mouth, they almost certainly outpaced official edicts, which took 134 days on average to reach their destination in Late Antiquity. Indeed, in Latin literature *Fama* (Rumor) can be found personified, described as a terrifying winged giant and most of all a swift-footed creature, as in *Aeneid* Book Four: "Rumor did not take long to go through the great cities of Libya. Of all the ills there are, Rumor is the swiftest. She thrives on movement and gathers strength as she goes."[37] Note, incidentally, how *Fama* is called an ill here, not because she spread a false rumor, but because she ensured that the shameful truth (Dido had succumbed to her love for Aeneas) could not be hidden.

Virgil was not alone in emphasizing *Fama*'s speed. In a real-world setting, Cicero made several instructive observations about how the speed of rumors compared favorably to the transmission time of written messages. When his brother Quintus was appointed governor of the province of Asia in 61 BCE, Cicero in Rome wrote proudly to Atticus in Epirus: "You will have heard that Asia has fallen to my dearest of brothers—I don't doubt that rumor brought you the news faster than any of us could do by letter."[38] Two years later, on hearing that his brother's governorship had been prolonged, he made a similar remark to him in Asia: "I don't doubt that this letter will be outpaced by many messengers, indeed by Rumor herself with her well-known speed, and

35. Miller (2005), 512–515.

36. DiFonzo and Bordia (2002), 4.

37. Virg. *Aen.* 4.173–175, trans. D. West.

38. Cic. *Att.* 15.1, trans. Shackleton Bailey.

that you will hear from others beforehand that our loss and your labor have been extended for a third year."[39]

Communication of this kind was not just quick, but also tenacious. In 56 BCE, Cicero wrote to Quintus, by then stationed in Sardinia as Pompey's legate: "I am waiting for a letter from you with the greatest impatience. I know that the sea has been closed to shipping up till now, but they say that certain persons arrived in Ostia bringing glowing accounts of you and your great reputation in the province."[40] This remark shows how talk about Quintus' actions somehow managed to reach the Italian mainland, even outside the regular summer sailing season.

The news that Cicero received through hearsay gave an indication of how his brother was doing professionally, information that was of obvious interest to him. In the context of trading, we may infer that oral reports were likely in large part to concern people's business standing. That kind of rumor was important to trading groups and was thus the kind that would have been passed on. Such information could be extremely useful. Someone looking to sell would be ill-advised to do business with a potential buyer overseas who, according to rumor, was always shirking his debt obligations. On balance, such information was more likely to be accurate than not, forming a better guide in business than we might perhaps think. The realization that rumors about business standing, creditworthiness, and honesty circulated within trading communities also helped counter corrupt or negligent behavior. It made all individuals in any given group aware of the value of a good reputation, thus providing a powerful incentive to behave honestly and honor obligations. The self-regulating effect of this mechanism has been convincingly demonstrated by Avner Greif in a study of the "Maghribi" traders, a group of Jewish merchants operating in the medieval Mediterranean and Levant. Greif's analysis of the Maghribis' business correspondence shows how members of their trading coalition were preoccupied with reputation—both their own and others'—and how reputational damage could lead to ostracism from the group, which constituted the ultimate punishment for misbehavior.[41]

The importance of a solid reputation in Roman business can be seen in legal documents containing information on a banking venture run by three generations of freedmen, the Sulpicii, in the harbor of Puteoli. Just like the Sulpicii themselves, their clientele belonged to a freedman milieu, and

39. *QFr.* 1.1, trans. Shackleton Bailey.

40. *QFr.* 9.5, trans. Shackleton Bailey.

41. Greif (2006), 58–90. On the Maghribis, see also Terpstra (2013), 95–100.

many seem to have been involved in trade and shipping.[42] In 49 CE, a certain Julius Patulcius Fortunatus sued his creditors for making incorrect statements about him. Fortunatus' grievance concerned conflicting claims about debt; from the extant texts, it appears that the Sulpicii had been claiming that a loan was still outstanding, while Fortunatus was of the opinion that the money had been paid. Such talk of unpaid debt was obviously detrimental to Fortunatus' credit standing. Challenging the Sulpicii bankers directly, he demanded that they swear under oath that their statements were truthful, in the apparent hope (unsuccessful, it seems) of forcing them to cease making the claim.[43]

The physical environment in which traders chose to operate could increase the chances of information being passed on verbally. Whether intentionally or not, the effect of traders clustering together in the same building or urban space was that oral information could spread more easily. The best known example of such clustering is the "Piazzale delle Corporazioni" at Ostia.[44] This "piazzale" is an unroofed space enclosed by a colonnade on three sides and by a wall on the fourth, which separates it from Ostia's theater (Figure 3.1). The colonnade is divided into sixty-one small rooms, many of which have mosaics surviving in front of them (see Figure 1.1, Chapter 1). These mosaics show depictions of maritime scenes—ships and lighthouses appear frequently—while their texts refer to groups of traders and shippers from various parts of the Roman Empire, most of all from Africa. Although the images do not depict how the "piazzale" was used by its occupants, we can be confident that the foreign shippers and merchants who congregated there did so in a professional capacity. Both the physical structure and the social setting of the "piazzale" were conducive to informal communication. It was frequented by people in similar or complementary professions and trades, many of them coming from the same geographical area. In addition, the Ostian public would not have wandered in and out; the architecture dissuaded such visits. Finally, the "piazzale" had an intimate atmosphere: inward looking, on a human scale, and closed off from the outside world. "Such a space lent itself to the casual communication between merchants."[45]

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42. Terpstra (2013), 15–23, 63–64.

43. *TPsulp.* 28, 29, with discussion by Wolf (2001), 102–107; Terpstra (2013), 24–25.

44. On the "piazzale," see Terpstra (2013), 100–117; (2014b).

45. Temin (2013), 112. On the "piazzale" as a space facilitating information-sharing, see also Terpstra (2013), 114; Kessler and Temin (2007), 329.

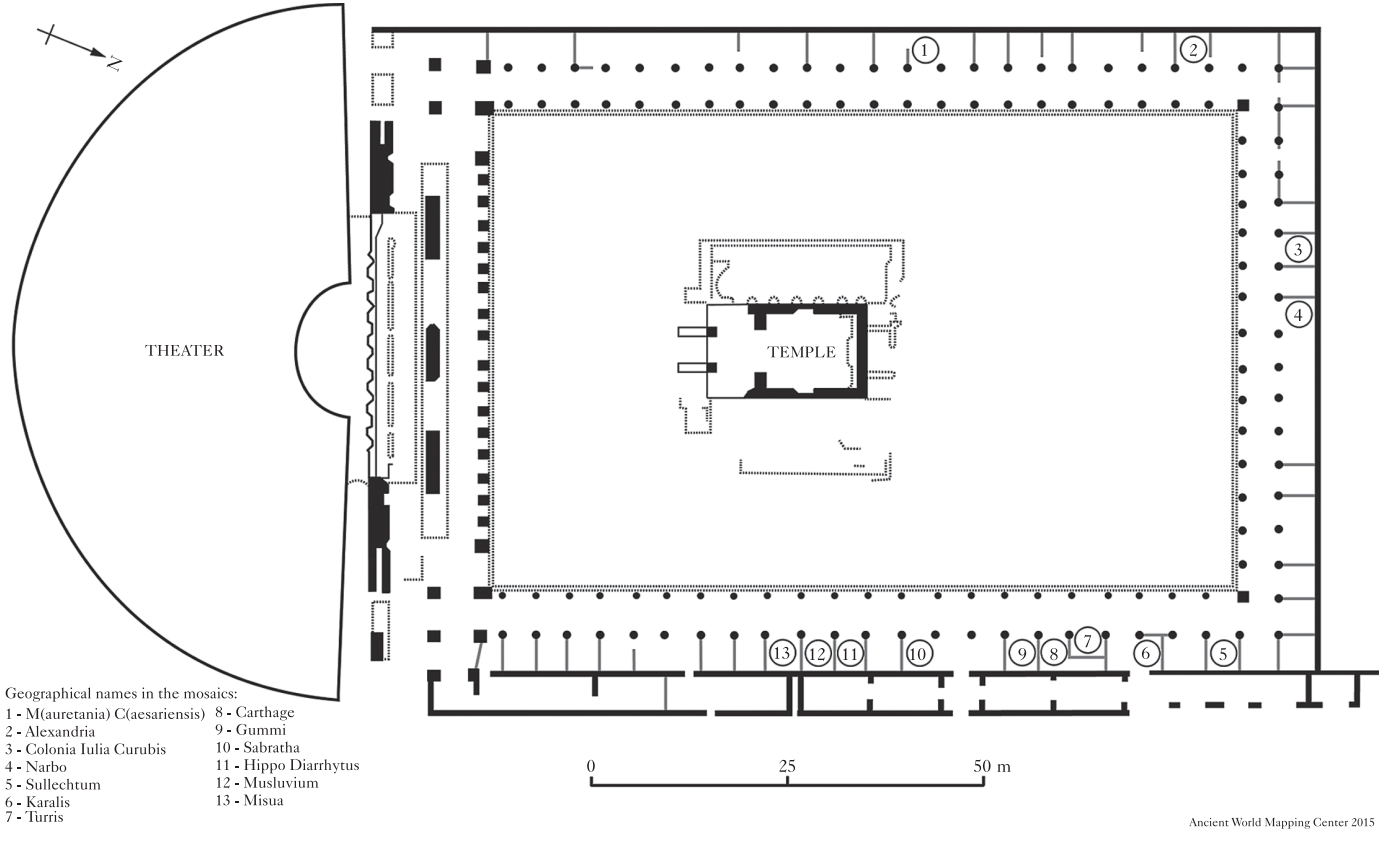

FIGURE 3.1 Plan of the Piazzale delle Corporazioni, Ostia, Italy.
(Courtesy of Ancient World Mapping Center)

The mosaics make the "piazzale" at Ostia unique; to date, no structure quite like it has been discovered anywhere in the Roman world.[46] But the phenomenon of groups of foreign merchants clustering together in the cities where they took up residence did occur elsewhere. As we have seen, the inscription from Puteoli about the Tyrian trading station demonstrates how there, traders organized along ethnic lines and occupied communal structures, a situation similar to that in the "piazzale" at Ostia. Although we do not know if the Puteolan trading stations were found together in the same urban quarter, we do have evidence from other cities where this was indeed the case. In Rome, for instance, the Sacra Via was populated by trading stations of foreign merchants from Asia Minor, grouped together along a stretch of road about 60 meters in length.[47] Outside Italy, a similar phenomenon can be observed in Lugdunum (Lyons) in Gaul, situated at the confluence of the Rhône and Saône rivers. Inscriptions found there refer to the "canabae," an urban quarter where foreign merchants dealing in wine had settled and did business.[48] Such clustering of trading communities in cities important for trade ensured that oral messages, rumors, and gossip could spread easily along the nodes of mercantile networks, facilitating what Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell have labelled "connectivity."[49]

Conclusion

Scholarship on Roman long-distance trade has debated primarily the question of its scale and importance for the overall economy. This macroeconomic focus has been fruitful, but its dominance has left microeconomic questions unanswered or even unformulated. Such questions deal with practical matters that are fundamental for understanding the Roman economy, no matter where one stands in the macroeconomic debate. The role of communication in long-distance trade is an example of a question that has suffered from neglect. To a degree, the neglect is understandable. Evidence is scant, making a treatment of the subject difficult. But a dearth of evidence does not mean that we are exonerated from incorporating this important topic into our thinking. The sources that we do have, comparative evidence, and indeed common

46. The closest parallel is the "quadriporticus" in Pompeii: Terpstra (2014b).

47. Terpstra (2013), 137–147.

48. Waltzing vol. 2 (1896), 178–182; Christol (2000).

49. Horden and Purcell (2000), esp. 123–172. On port networks and Mediterranean "connectivity," see also Wilson et al. (2012).

sense all suggest that communication was a crucial aspect of Roman long-distance commerce.

Altogether, we possess enough data to construct an idea of what such communication might have looked like, and what sources of information were available to merchants. Written communication was vital for much of daily business, certainly for the more complex transactions that traders engaged in. Despite its obvious drawbacks, oral communication also will have played an important role because of its speed and general usefulness. The "tyranny of distance" caused by the absence of modern information technology will have been a powerful force to contend with, but still it was sufficiently overcome for long-distance trade to function.

As a final note, because of the limitations of our sources, we must be wary of myopia. Loss of evidence, most of all everyday business letters, means that scholarship often turns to the literary sources, but at the risk of elevating the unusual, the anecdotal, or the colorful to the norm. An example is the passage from Apuleius' *Golden Ass* where a small cheese-trader hears of good-quality cheese being available at an attractive price in a neighboring marketplace. He bolts over, only to find that all this cheese has been snapped up by a larger competitor. The story has been taken to show that "[w]ith slow, irregular and periodically discontinuous transport and communication it was simply very difficult, on a regional basis, on the continental scale of the Roman Empire quite impossible, to match demand and supply across individual marketplaces in an even, steady and predictable way."[50] Apart from the fact that premodern communication and transportation were not the main issue in Apuleius' story (it could well take place today), the reality is that "[m]ost participants in most markets simply do today what they did yesterday."[51] I suspect that if we could study a body of ordinary Roman business letters on long-distance trade, we would see a mercantile world characterized by consistency and regularity, despite premodern problems of transportation and information transfer.

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50. Bang (2008), 137 discussing Apuleius, *Met.* 1.5.

51. Temin (2013), 37.

4

Military Communication

THE EXAMPLE OF THE CLASSICAL BATTLEFIELD

F. S. Naiden

FEARED AND CONDEMNED as an act of destruction, ancient war was also an act of communication.[1] Communication especially affected battles in which ancient Greek armies sought to make the enemy quit the field—to "turn him," a success marked by the erection of a turning point, a *tropaion*, at the spot whence he fled. An enemy might surrender or withdraw, yet maintain communications. An enemy that "turned" likely lost communications.

In verses written about throwing away his shield, Archilochus apparently alluded to this feature of Greek warfare:

> Ἀσπίδι μὲν Σαίων τις ἀγάλλεται, ἣν παρὰ θάμνῳ
> ἔντος ἀμώμητον κἄλλιπον οὐκ ἐθέλων.
> Αὐτὸς δ' ἐξέφυγον θανάτου τέλος· ἀσπὶς ἐκείνη
> ἐρρέτω· ἐξαῦθις κτήσομαι οὐ κακίω.[2]
>
> Some Thracian is now glad to have the perfectly good shield I unwillingly left by a bush. I fled for my life. What do I care about that shield? To hell with it. I can get another no worse.

Archilochus may have lost his shield in single combat, or while serving in a loose formation. More likely, he lost it while serving in a phalanx. In

1. Brief remarks to this effect: Lee (2010), 1–2.

2. *PLG* no. 5. The Homeric precedent, but without mention of shields: *Il.* 11.401–402.

that case, he gave up not only his shield, but also his place in line. This was a twofold loss—a loss of communication and a loss of cohesion, occurring together.

Many Greek writers refer to maintaining communication and cohesion, and also to the consequences of losing these two advantages. Troops keeping these advantages were orderly, *tetagmenoi*; the troops that lost these advantages fell apart. For troops in a pitched battle, this contrast is obvious, but Greek writers say the same about troops in other circumstances. Xenophon says that those who attacked by surprise were *suntetagmenoi*, and their foes were *asuntaktoi*.[3] Plato says the same of troops that fought in a pitched battle, but achieved surprise by a mock retreat. Greeks advanced and retreated willy-nilly, like the shield-less Archilochus,

> . . . except the Spartans. People say that at Plataea, when they faced the wicker shields of the enemy, they refused to stand and fight, and retreated. When the formations of the Persians were broken up, they turned . . . and fought. That's how they won the battle.[4]

When the moment came to turn, the Spartans were still organized, so they could hear or see orders for an about-face. "The formations of the Persians," however, "were broken up." Disorganized, they were vulnerable.[5]

Plato does not describe the response of the Persians, but Xenophon and Thucydides both describe the state of communications in fleeing armies. Men might see the enemy on their flank and point or shout. Then they and their comrades would run.[6] So would outnumbered men, or those who saw their own lines broken.[7] Sometimes soldiers in battle got no news at all. In Xenophon's words, a man could see more at night than he could in the midst of a battle.[8] That was one more reason to panic. All leading armies did. Thucydides reports four instances of Athenian panic (Map 4.1): in Chalcidice in 429, in Aetolia in 426, at Delium in 424/423, and at Epipolae (in Sicily) in 413.[9] Some of these units were isolated and overwhelmed by missile troops,

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3. Xen. *Hell.* 7.1.16; so also 5.1.12, and Thuc. 5.9.2, where the enemy is to be attacked when scattered.

4. Pl. *Lach.* 191c. Mock retreats in handbooks: Asclepiod. 10.14; Ael. *Tact.* 27.4; Arr. *Tact.* 23.3.

5. As also happened at Thermopylae: Hdt. 7.21.3.

6. A general statement to this effect: Xen. *Hell.* 7.5.25.

7. Thuc. 4.44.2 (Corinthians), 6.70.2 (Syracusans); Xen. *Hell.* 7.5.24 (Spartans).

8. Xen. *An.* 4.6.12.

9. Thuc. 2.79.6; 3.98.1; 4.96.6; 7.43.7.

MAP 4.1 Regions and sites mentioned in the text

but a large force broke at Delium. Another leading army, Boeotia's, fled this way at Nemea. Spartans fled, too, in northern Greece in 382, when Teleutias went to the rescue of some peltasts.[10]

Greek writers also notice the irony of communication's going awry, not because of panic, but from overconfidence. At Cunaxa, Cyrus could not control his boisterous élite of 600 men. They quit him in pursuit of the enemy.[11] When a counterattack began, Cyrus found himself virtually alone, and soon perished, a victim of a peculiar communications breakdown. At Olynthus in 382, when Teleutias went to the rescue of the peltasts, he was overzealous, so he went too fast. Losing touch with his troops, he could not rally them in the face of a counterattack. He died while leading a mere handful.[12] As the peltasts fled, they passed the main body of the Peloponnesian infantry—10,000 men, including several thousand Spartans. This whole force caught the contagion and fled, the worst defeat of any Peloponnesian force prior to the battle of Leuctra, eleven years later.[13]

Perhaps because Thucydides and Xenophon had been military officers, and perhaps because many or most of their original readers had been soldiers, these writers did not analyze the relationship between communication and cohesion. This chapter will try to fill the gap. It will have more to say about the battlefield, where communication and cohesion mattered most, than about the camp or the march. It will also say more about motives for communication—to encourage or discourage, to inform or command—than about any instruments used in battle, such as trumpets, flutes, or fire signals.[14] It will center on the two parties to communication during battle: hoplites and officers.[15] The sources say much less about communications among light troops.[16]

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10. Nemea: Xen. *Hell.* 4.2.21. Theban defeat but no mention of flight: Thuc. 1.108.3. Teleutias: Xen. *Hell.* 5.3.3–6.

11. Xen. *An.* 1.8.25.

12. As in note 10. Other examples of over-eager Greeks: Xen. *Hell.* 6.4.15 (Gorgopas), 7.1.31 (Archidamus).

13. Several thousand, to judge from the few cases in which we know how many Spartans there were in a Peloponnesian force: 10,000 vs. 28,700 allies at Plataea (Hdt. 9.28–29.1; 1,500 vs. 10,000 at Tanagra (Thuc. 1.107.2–5); 6,000 vs. 7,500 at Nemea (Xen. *Hell.* 4.2.16–17); 2,200 versus 7,800 at Leuctra (Xen. *Hell.* 6.4.12, 17).

14. Signals: Krentz: (1991), preceded by Kromayer and Veith (1928), 80–81. A summary treatment: de Souza (2008), 674–682.

15. Soldiers' experience, if not talk: the "March Hares" of Wheeler (2011), with refs. Officers' orders: Kromayer and Veith (1928), 107–108, preceded by Droysen (1888), 64–67, and Köchly and Rüstow (1852), 171–174. Some remarks on generalship (rather than communications): Wheeler (2007).

16. For instance, there are only two mentions of commanders of archers: *IG* i^3 138.5–7; Thuc. 3.98.

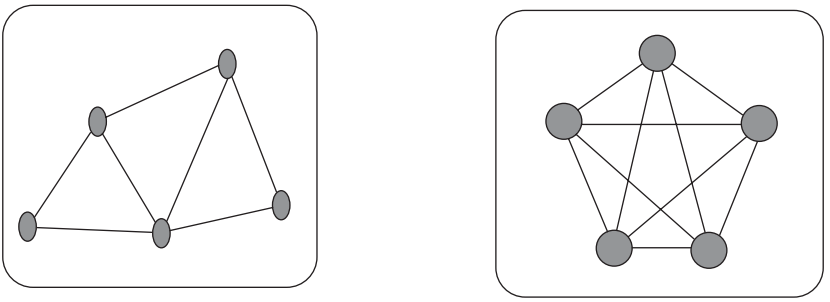

FIGURE 4.1 *Left*, network consisting of nodes, but with only partial connections among the nodes. *Right*, network with full connections. The first corresponds to relationships among soldiers in loosely organized units, like raiding parties; the second to relationships among hoplites, especially well-drilled hoplites such as Spartans or mercenaries.
(Courtesy of author)

Soldiers communicate horizontally, through a network (Figure 4.1). In this arrangement, each man is at a node, and communicates freely with those nearest him. Officers communicate vertically, through an arrangement consisting of a hub and spokes. The commander is at the hub, or center. His subordinates are at the spokes. Or the commander may be at the hub, and the officers may be at nodes connected to it, as also shown in Figure 4.2.[17] Sometimes the network holds; sometimes it breaks up, and officers' messages, coming from above, cannot halt the process. The officers may have enough control to gain victory, or only enough to keep a retreat from becoming a rout.

Soldier Talk

Soldier talk appears in one of Xenophon's passages about Greek military customs. Just before the start of the battle of Cunaxa, the password "Zeus and Victory" goes from one end of the Greek line to the other, and then back again—a phrase repeated 20,000 times. The password puzzles the army's commander, the Persian Cyrus, and Xenophon makes his first appearance in the *Anabasis* when stepping forward to explain it.[18] The password lets every

17. A contrast leading to clashes between the two, and thus to problems of control discussed by Galloway (2004), 118–145. For Galloway, protocols are established before the fact, and changed after the fact. The battlefield does not always reflect these two assumptions.

18. Xen. *An.* 1.8.12.

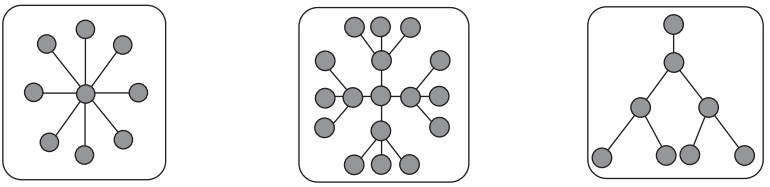

FIGURE 4.2 *Left*, hub and spoke. *Center*, extended hub and spoke. *Right*, asymmetrical hub and spoke. These three topologies are also known as *star, extended star,* and *tree*. The first applies to small, ancient military units, like the Spartan enomoties, and the second and the third to large units, like the army of the Peloponnesian alliance (*center*) and the army of the Spartans only (*right*).
(Courtesy of author)

man, including front line officers, communicate with the others. It shows that the men are in order and that the line is unbroken, and that each man knows when to speak and when to keep silent, when to follow an example and when to set one. And it shows that the men have one god and goddess that day, and one wish. Soldier talk can either amplify this unity of voice and spirit, or undermine it.

Some talk inspired acts of courage. In Xenophon, men spurred one another to climb a hill and attack.[19] Other talk expressed rivalry among detachments. When some soldiers in Xenophon's Ten Thousand beat others to a stronghold, they boasted. The Spartans mocked their Mantinean allies, saying that they feared peltasts the way children fear bogeymen. Herodotus gives an example of one detachment evaluating the rivalry between two others. Without interference from their commander, Pausanias, the Spartan troops decided that the Athenians had earned the place of honor on the left, and that the Tegeates had not—and they said so with a shout coming from 10,000 men.[20]

Soldier talk also addressed the enemy. Greek slingshot pellets, besides being inscribed with the names of armies, commanders, or the like, bore taunts such as "Catch!" "Swallow!" "A tidbit," and "Take that!"[21] Soldiers also sent messages via their cloaks and shields. The red cloak and the lambda insignia worn by the Spartan hoplites (with lambda for "Lacedaimon") sent a message of contempt: "You will break first." (And the enemy often did, even before contact.[22]) Without the lambda, the Spartans did not fare so well. On

19. Xen. *An.* 4.7.12, *Hell.* 4.4.17, *An.* 4.2.11. More of the same: *Hell.* 1.2.16.

20. Hdt. 9.26.

21. Anochin and Rolle (1998).

22. Xen. *Hell.* 4.3.8. Greek armor sending such a message to Persians: Polyaen. 2.16.

one occasion, troops under Pasimachus did not happen to have shields of their own, so they picked up shields of their Sicyonian allies. These shields, emblazoned with the letter sigma, for "Sicyon," failed to intimidate the enemy, who stood fast.[23]

Soldier talk also included time for listening. At Cunaxa, the Greeks who had relayed the password waited quietly for spoken orders that preceded the trumpet-call to charge.[24] Nor did orders come only before a charge. As shown by the passages in Plato and Herodotus describing Spartan mock retreats, orders might come at some opportune point in the battle, when the front lines were disengaged.[25]

Of course, the noise of battle might make hearing difficult. The Spartan helmet, the *pilos*, left the ears uncovered, and some classical versions of the common Corinthian helmet, including Attic and Chalcidian examples, had cut-outs for the ears, but the Spartans dealt with the noise of battle in another way, too: they devised maneuvers in which soldiers did not need to hear orders. Instead, they needed only to follow their leaders.[26] As Xenophon says, explaining these maneuvers:

> Most people think that Laconian tactics are very complicated. The opposite is true. In the Laconian formation, the head of the file is an officer, so each file can act on its own. It's easy to see that no one can make a mistake so long as he can pick out his leader. Some lead, some follow. . . . There's nothing hard about it at all.[27]

This method of maintaining cohesion required soldiers to drill.[28] Although Jason of Pherae said that most citizen soldiers did not drill (his reason for preferring mercenaries), those who performed mock retreats surely did. So did those who knew how to step aside and let chariots pass through.[29] Conon

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23. Xen. *Hell.* 4.4.11.

24. Enemy shouting: Xen. *Hell.* 4.34.3. Cunaxa: *An.* 1.12.16–7; so also *Hell.* 3.2.16.

25. Lulls in battle are an unstudied subject, but easier to envision with Krentz (1985), imagining loose-order fighting, than if hoplite battles are imagined as close-order struggles characterized by *othismos*, or "shoving;" for emphasis on this feature of Greek combat, see van Wees (2004), 87–88, preceded by Hanson (2000), 203, 212. Closer to Krentz: Cawkwell (1989).

26. Cut-outs for the ears: Snodgrass (1967), 69–70, 93–94; Connolly (1998), 60–63.

27. Xen. *Lac.* 11.5–6. Spartan drilling: Shipley (1992), 225.

28. Drill only in wartime: Van Wees (2004), 90. A contrary view: Cawkwell (1972), 262.

29. Xen. *Hell.* 1.8.20.

drilled his men; and the Thebans must have done so before launching their trireme-like attack at Leuctra.[30] Iphicrates must have drilled his peltasts before they executed an about-face at Lechaeum and successfully attacked Spartan hoplites.[31] Not all drilling was equally extensive or effective: Spartan hoplites were one thing, but the henchmen of the would-be tyrant Tyndarides were another.[32] Yet drilling was not rare. At Sparta and elsewhere, it made troops orderly.

Orderly troops were less likely to panic. Thucydides gives one of many negative illustrations. Jostling among the Athenians at Amphipolis means that they will not stand and fight, so the author's *beau ideal*, Brasidas, attacks them.[33] At Epipolae, the Athenians advanced in noisy disorder, then botched their retreat and fled in disorder. Meanwhile, their victorious opponents did neither.[34] If the commander takes the lead in such hubbub, so much the worse: the Spartan Thibron failed to maintain formation when marauding in the Maeander valley, so he went down with his soon-encircled men.[35] Or the commander might have bad luck. The peltasts at Olynthus in 382, under the well-regarded Teleutias, chased the enemy cavalry until everyone reached a ravine, and the horsemen had no choice but to turn and fight. The sight of the mass of horses turned the tide, and the peltasts ran.

Soldiers were volatile because the impulse to fight and the impulse to flee were related. The fear that inspired the one inspired the other, and fearful men might give way to either. How were the officers to control the first impulse, yet repress the second? A few men trying and sometimes failing to calm thousands—this is our next topic.

Officer Talk

Not all armies formed up like the Ten Thousand at Cunaxa. When the Athenians appeared before Syracuse, some of the Syracusans were late reaching the battle line. They went where they found the most other soldiers, not where they had been assigned to go. Hermocrates, the general who describes

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30. Conon: *Hell. Oxy.* 15.1.32. Theban "trireme": Xen. *Hell.* 7.5.3, with Buckler (1985). See also the assumption that military reviews are common at Aen. Tact. 17.1–2.

31. Xen. *Hell.* 4.1.15.

32. Diod. Sic. 11.86.4.

33. Thuc. 5.10.

34. Thuc. 7.43.7.

35. Xen. *Hell.* 4.8.18.

this hubbub, says that some Syracusan soldiers had no commanders.[36] Had Xerxes seen the sight, he would have nodded, for he thought that "every (Greek) soldier is free to follow his wish," rather than be subject to a superior.[37]

To prevent disorder, officers might let loose a flood of messages telling subordinates where to go and what to do. On this score, Thucydides lauded the Spartans:

> Save for a very few, the entire Spartan army are commanders of other commanders. Many people are involved in executing any task.[38]

In the same passage, Thucydides explained how these officers transmitted orders:

> When the king is in command, he directs everything. He gives orders to the polemarchs, and the polemarchs give them to commanders of the companies, and these men give them to the commanders of fifties. The last named give them to the commanders of the sworn bands, and the commanders of the sworn bands give them to the bands. So, if they want anything done, their commands are transmitted in a regular way and are swiftly carried out.

Thucydides exaggerated Spartan command and control. On one occasion, when Brasidas introduced a new formation to his men—the *plasion*, or hollow square—he had to give orders in person rather than relay them.[39] On two occasions, officers refused to relay orders, but only once were they punished for this disobedience.[40] Still, the Spartans had more ranks of officers—six in all—than their opponents. (With only three ranks of officers, the Athenians did half as well.[41]) This army set the standard for saturation. No source says

36. Thuc. 6.69, 6.72.

37. Hdt. 7.103.

38. Thuc. 5.66.2.

39. Thuc. 4.125; no such trouble at 6.67.1, 7.78.2, among the Athenians at Syracuse.

40. At Plataea: Hdt. 9.53–55, where the disobedient officer, Amompharetus, had missed a pre-battle council of war at which he might have been told such an order would be necessary—and thus might have obeyed it. Amompharetus' speaking of his "pebble," however, does not demonstrate voting at this council meeting. A different view: Lendon (2005), 71. At Mantinea: Thuc. 5.71–72, with punishment at 73.1; and Krentz (2007), 156.

41. The six: basileus, polemarch, *lochagos*, *pentekostēr*, enomotarch, file leader (Xen. *Lac.* 11.5). The fourth Athenian rank, if there was one, would have command of some unit smaller than *lochoi*, doubted by Rhodes (1971), 685. Kromayer and Veith (1928), 49 n. 3, accept such units.

that they had the problem Dion did with his Sicilian mercenaries, who could not hear their commander's orders.[42]

The Spartans also provided officers for their Peloponnesian neighbors. At Nemea, these *xenagoi* drew up neighboring troops and relayed orders from the commander-in-chief.[43] Some of them took control of allied forces well before a battle.[44] At the Isthmus of Corinth in 430, they put allied forces to work building fortifications.[45] The *xenagoi* would have known these forces well enough to lead them in combat. None of Sparta's rivals provided officers for neighboring contingents. Nor did other states provide commanders and officers for forces from more remote places—officers like Gylippus and Brasidas. If these lone officers could not saturate a force with their messages, Spartan-style, they could influence it.

So could another Spartan practice, playing flute music as troops advanced.[46] The purpose of this music was to keep men from advancing too quickly for their officers to be able to control them. No other Greek army used music for this purpose. This was one reason that they sometimes advanced too fast for their own good.[47]

Spartan and other officers also communicated by symbolic gestures, the most important of which was leading from the front.[48] Xenophon provides examples of others: punishing slackers at bridge-building, then joining the builders and setting an example, or pushing a malingerer out of line and taking his shield, and inducing others to ridicule him.[49] These gestures said, "Stick together." Positioning an officer at the rear of every file said the same thing, but with menace.[50] In Sparta, another way to menace troops was corporal punishment, a power communicated by the officer's cane, or *baktēriē*.[51]

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42. Plut. *Dion* 30.5–6.

43. Xen. *Hell.* 4.2.19, 5.1.33. So also Thuc. 2.72.2, 3.110.2, 5.2.3, 5.2.19; commander of mercenaries: 4.3.17.

44. Xen. *Hell.* 3.5.7, 5.1.33.

45. Thuc. 2.75.3.

46. Thuc. 5.70.

47. Note Thuc. 6.97.3–4, where the attacking Syracusans run 25 stadia and fall into disorder.

48. Xen. *Hell.* 5.9.4.

49. Xen. *An.* 2.2.13, 3.4.49. So also Agesilaus at Plut. *Lac. apophth.* 210f.

50. Xen. *Mem.* 3.9; Asclepiod. 14.6.

51. Spartan punishment: Plut. *Arist.* 23.2, against allied soldiers; Xen. *Hell.* 6.2.19, against a subordinate officer. General statement: Xen. *An.* 2.6.10. *Baktēriai*: Thuc. 8.84.2; Xen. *An.* 2.3.11; Frontin. *Str.* 4.9.

Although corporal punishment was largely forbidden in Athens, officers elsewhere surely could beat soldiers, just as magistrates in charge of parades or of gymnasia could beat laggards or assailants.[52] Officers who arrived late to battle faced fines, a reason to prod if not beat their men.[53]

A more subtle method was to manipulate soldiers. They were likely to run if outflanked or abandoned, but to stand fast if given a false impression of the length and strength of their own line. Clearchus, leading the Ten Thousand, let the Greeks admire their own forces by marching them two abreast along the Tigris and sometimes calling a halt, giving the men an impression of how long it took to bring the whole force to a standstill.[54]

Officers could also manipulate troops by falsifying reports or even by staging misleading sacrifices. When Agesilaus learned of the defeat of a Spartan naval force led by Pisander,

> . . . at first he took it hard. Then he considered that most of his army . . . was not obliged to follow him if they foresaw trouble. He changed front and said that Pisander was reported dead, but had won the battle. He made a sacrifice of cattle because of the good news, and sent pieces of meat to many people.[55]

Xenophon adds that the ruse succeeded. In a skirmish fought soon afterwards, "Agesilaus's men won, thanks to the report that the Spartans had won the sea battle." Much less common than tricking one's own men was tricking the enemy. Before Mantinea, Epaminondas went through the motions of avoiding a battle. His opponents were deceived, so he was able to put them at a mental disadvantage when he proceeded to attack.[56]

Lies and tricks, though, might make the men cynical. Xenophon, for one, found he had to invite men to watch a sacrifice, lest they believe he was acting like Agesilaus.[57] He concluded that frankness was more effective than

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52. Athenian restraints: Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 61.2; Lys. 13.67; and Xen. *Hell.* 1.1.15, allowing an exception, at least down through Alcibiades' day, for summary execution of those communicating with the enemy. See Bettalli (2002). Paraders beaten: *LSAM* 9.29 (Ilium, 2nd cent. BCE); *LSCG* 65.41–43 (Andania, 91 BCE). Beatings in gymnasia: *EKM* 1 Beroia 16.9–10 (250–200 BCE).

53. Fines levied on the officers who arrived late for Plataea: Hdt. 9.77.

54. Xen. *An.* 2.4.46.

55. Xen. *Hell.* 4.3.13–14. A survey: Naiden (2012), 175–181.

56. Xen. *Hell.* 7.5.22. Cf. Hdt. 6.78 (by Cleomenes).

57. Xen. *An.* 6.4.13.

manipulation. Xenophon also made himself approachable. Men might come to his tent with any complaint or suggestion. Teleutias did likewise. Referring to his previous command, he told his men,

> Now just as my door was, as you know, open to you before, so that anyone who had some request might visit me, so, too, will it be open to you now.[58]

With approachability went modesty. Gylippus apologized to the Syracusans for bad tactics in his first battle leading them against the Athenians.[59] Like fighting at the front, this style of leadership said, "I am with you."

Frankness, approachability, and modesty before and after battle had their counterparts in combat when the commander put himself where he could communicate best. If he had few orders to give, he might communicate through the gesture of taking the lead, as Epaminondas did at Leuctra and Second Mantinea. Or he might position himself somewhat to the right, where his army might attempt to win the battle by enveloping the enemy. Cleombrotus did that at Leuctra, according to Plutarch, and Agis did it at First Mantinea, according to Thucydides.[60] Xenophon says this was the Spartan habit.[61] In this configuration, the commander took part in a wheeling maneuver, and might give orders just before contact, as Agis perhaps did, or during a lull, as happened at the battles of Nemea and Coronea. Or the commander could put himself at the rear. Had Pagondas not been at the rear at some point at Delium, he could not have surveyed the infantry battle, seen that the Boeotians were losing part of it, and sent orders to his cavalry to quit their position, cross the field by circumventing a mountain, and come to the infantry's aid.[62] The advantage of being at the rear was to direct reserves, as Pagondas did. Mostly, however, Greek reserves did not need any direction. They had received orders before the battle started. The commander of the reserves decided when to move forward, not the commander of the army.[63]

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58. Xenophon: *An.* 4.3.10. Teleutias: Xen. *Hell.* 5.1.14; his previous command: 4.4.19–4.8.25.

59. Thuc. 7.5.

60. Epaminondas: Diod. Sic. 15.56.2; 15.86.4; Xen. *Hell.* 7.5.24. Cleombrotus: Plut. *Pel.* 23.2. Agis: Thuc. 5.72.

61. Xen. *Lac.* 13.6–7.

62. Thuc. 4.96.5–6.

63. Note Thuc. 6.67 (Athenian reserve at Syracuse); Diod. Sic. 15.85.7 (Elean cavalry reserve at Mantinea). Similar are forces used in ambushes: Pritchett (1975), 178. A different view: Wheeler (2007), 215.

If communicating meant listening to the troops, as Xenophon said, it also meant listening to the talk of officers or senior enlisted men. Officers volunteered information at Coronea and shouted suggestions before First Mantinea and at Nemea.[64] At the battle of Kromnos in 365, an elder (probably an officer) asked the troops if they wanted to keep fighting.[65] Three of these incidents occurred during lulls in battle. These same lulls allowed armies to re-form after attacks. After the shock of battle, the commander re-established his lines of communication, and so did his subordinates. While the men regrouped, the officers reconsidered their situation, and exchanged information (or, at times, talked like soldiers among themselves).[66]

Soldier talk echoed the discourse of the assembly, a body sometimes restricted to hoplites, whereas officers' talk echoed the discourse of the magistrates chosen by the assembly. The officers, in fact, were among these magistrates. Commonly, they had civilian duties as well as military ones. The military duties were distinctive because of the officers' great power of life and death over their men. When soldiers talked themselves into panicking, they were casting off this power, and when their officers gave them battle orders that they obeyed, they were acceding to it. On several important occasions, officers used this power to memorable or surprising effect.

Communication and Maneuver

Some historians have doubted that classical armies received any orders once they engaged their opponents.[67] If they maneuvered, as the Spartans did at Plataea, they had received orders for this purpose beforehand. At most, the officers decided when to execute the order.[68] The largest part of these armies,

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64. Coronea: Xen. *Hell.* 4.3.17–18. Mantinea, but just before combat: Thuc. 5.65.2. Nemea: 4.2.22.

65. Xen. *Hell.* 7.4.25, where the army consists only of Spartiates, making it more likely that the "elder" was a common soldier, or an enomotarch, rather than a higher-ranking officer. "Elders" as officers at First Mantinea: Thuc. 5.72.3.

66. As when they slander rivals, as at Xen. *Hell.* 1.6.4–5.

67. Lack of battlefield orders: Hanson (1989), 385. So also van Wees (2004), 112, based on Thuc. 5.71–72; Ducrey (1999), 68; and earlier, Adcock (1957), 6. A different view: Hodkinson (2006), 134, acknowledging battle maneuvers; so also Humble (2006), 228. A generation before, Anderson (1970), 145, had no doubts about Spartan maneuvers; nor did Lazenby (1985), 138–143.

68. Leaving aside orders (signals) to charge or withdraw, as in Krentz (1991).

the hoplite infantry, was too cumbersome to execute orders given during combat. They were poorly trained and heavily burdened.[69]

About troops that have engaged, these historians are right. Yet all the troops in an army did not engage at once. One company or *lochos* of several hundred might engage, but the company next to it might not. Cavalry might engage and infantry might not. The lulls that allowed officers to rally their commands also allowed them to give orders—and not just orders to launch mock retreats. Where communication was good, armies could accomplish much more, both in attack and in defense.

Let us begin with major battles reported by ex-officers—in other words, by Thucydides or Xenophon rather than Herodotus, who says little about battle-orders at Marathon, Thermopylae, and Plataea.[70] After the two sides confronted one another, but before the battle began, the commander could order a change in the depth of the formation.[71] Later, but before the infantry made contact, a commander might exploit the tendency for hoplites to drift to the right by issuing an order to march in that direction and outflank the enemy. Thucydides reports this maneuver at First Mantinea, and Plutarch reports it after a cavalry engagement at Leuctra.[72] Next, the army might wheel. Some units would engage the enemy, but others would maneuver, as happened at First Mantinea and Nemea. At First Mantinea, part of a Spartan force of supposedly 3,500 charged, and routed the Athenians.[73] The rest of the force, on the right, executed a maneuver:

> At the same time, the right wing of the Spartans and the Tegeates wheeled around the Athenians. Danger now faced the Athenians on two sides. On one side, they were encircled. On the other, they had been worsted.[74]

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69. How heavily burdened is controversial, with estimates of the weight of infantry equipment running from 17 lbs. for light troops to 70 lbs. for hoplites: Schwartz (2009), 95, with references. The one surviving shield weighs from 13 to 17 lbs.: Blyth (1992), 12.

70. Other than the orders cited above, and orders (or signals) to charge, Herodotus mentions not one combat order in his work.

71. Xen. *Hell.* 6.5.19.

72. Thuc. 5.71.1; Plut. *Pel.* 23.2.

73. Thuc. 5.72.4.

74. Thuc. 5.73.1.

The Spartan line was shaped like a backwards L. After the Athenians broke, the Spartans remained "in formation," for otherwise they would not have been able to obey a subsequent order to advance across the field.[75]

This maneuver was a complex affair. While some men fought amid shouting and bloodshed, others moved silently to their positions. The officers had to orchestrate many moving parts. Then they had to pause, assess the situation, and order the attack from the flank. Their commander, Agis, may have given them instructions, or he may not. Another passage in Thucydides, referring to fear of encirclement by Spartans, suggests that Agis and his commanders were familiar with such a maneuver. Even if they did not plan to use it, they were able to resort to it.[76]

A generation later, at Nemea, the same maneuver was surely planned. In this battle, the Spartans started out in front of the Athenians, but also to their right. Xenophon narrates:

> They led the way against the enemy. The part of the line that outflanked the enemy wheeled. After contact, all the Spartan allies were defeated by their opponents . . . whereas the Spartans defeated the Athenians that they faced and killed many by encircling them.[77]

First, the Spartans advanced. Then they maneuvered, turning their line into another backwards L. The lower part engaged the enemy, but the upper part, "the part of the line that outflanked the enemy," maneuvered and then hit the enemy from the side. No army of 6,000 could have done this without orders, still less remain "in formation."[78] The question is how many of those orders came from officers on the scene, and how many came from a council of war before the battle. We do not know; we do know that the maneuver succeeded without the pre-battle blunder noticed by Thucydides at First Mantinea.

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75. Thuc. 5.73.2.

76. Thuc. 3.107.4. The contrary view: Anderson (1970), 183–184. Elsewhere on the Mantinea battlefield, coordination between Agis and his officers was worse (Thuc. 5.71–72).

77. Xen. *Hell.* 4.2.21. Speculation on the particulars: Anderson, loc. cit.; Hutchinson (2000), 258–259. Countermarches were more likely than a semicircular sweep.

78. Xen. *Hell.* 4.2.21, *suntetagmenoi*. A similar view: Anderson (1970), 145, saying that "more than half [the Spartans] will have thus extended beyond the Athenian left."

The proficiency of the Spartans is a familiar story.[79] The Boeotians were proficient, too. At Delium, Pagondas maneuvered using cavalry instead of infantry. If Plutarch is right about the Theban Sacred Band at Leuctra, the Boeotians could use infantry, too, albeit a smaller force than that of the Spartans. At Leuctra, Plutarch says, the Sacred Band received an order to march through a gap in the enemy line and target the Spartan king, Cleombrotus. Pelopidas gave this order when he saw the Spartans marching to the flank. Plutarch says this order coincided with Epaminondas' charge against the Spartans, which took place after the cavalry engagement already mentioned. If this account is right, both maneuvers occurred during a lull in the battle.[80] Pelopidas gave a similar order at Tegyra. He ordered a cavalry charge, then charged with his infantry. Plutarch says that Pelopidas ". . . entered among them, and then turned against those that still resisted," meaning, not that he made a personal sally, but that he ordered an assault.[81] Instead of targeting the king, he targeted the toughest opponents.

Plutarch, of course, wishes to flatter his subject, Pelopidas, so his accounts are more suspect than those of Thucydides and Xenophon. Yet he is not inventing any command motifs. The breakdown at Leuctra resembled the one at Olynthus, and the attempt to burst through the enemy at Tegyra resembled a similar attempt at Nemea. For that matter, the deep formation that Plutarch reports at Leuctra resembled the deep formation at Delium. The Theban repertoire of maneuvers was not just the stuff of a laudatory biography. It has warrant in Thucydides and Diodorus. In spite of the din (and dust) of battle, lines of communication were open.

Taken as a whole, the sources place a high value on this kind of openness. In the leading battles of the classical period—in other words, the battles narrated in enough detail so that the sources report multiple acts of communication—the winners communicate more often than the losers. This contrast appears in the following table of acts of communication during or immediately preceding combat at Thermopylae, Plataea, First Mantinea, Coronea, Nemea, and Second Mantinea. The table excludes two basic orders: first, to form a battle line, and second, to charge with the main body; it also excludes battles at which only these two orders are reported, like Marathon. In addition, the table excludes unacknowledged orders, like those by which the Spartan subordinate officers turned the enemy's flank at First Mantinea and Nemea, and it excludes the

79. As in Adcock (1957), 8, and Lazenby (1985), 138–143; and, by implication, Hunt (2007), 130.

80. Plut. *Pel.* 23.2.

81. Plut. *Pel.* 17.4.

problematic battle of Leuctra. Only express, very probable orders are taken into account:

	Winners	Losers
Thermopylae and Plataea (Hdt., Plut., Diod. Sic.)[82]	7	0
First Mantinea (Thuc., Diod. Sic.)[83]	4	0
Nemea and Coronea (Xen.)[84]	4	0
Second Mantinea (Xen.)[85]	3	1

The one loser giving an order was an Eleian cavalry commander who brought his unit into combat late in the battle of Second Mantinea. Otherwise, only winners gave orders. These sources surely exaggerate the difference between winners and losers, but just as surely they have not fabricated it. To some degree, communication (and organization) were rewarded.

All the winners in this table are Spartan or Boeotian. What could other Greeks do? They ambushed their foes or attacked them from behind. Under Demosthenes in Acarnania, the Athenians ambushed the Peloponnesians, and on Sphacteria, they attacked from behind with helot volunteers.[86] These maneuvers required orders given beforehand by commanders, and further orders given by subordinates at the appropriate moment. Orders of these kinds were less ambitious than the orders that the Spartans and Boeotians were capable of.

The most severe test of vertical communications, however, was not any kind of attack, but a retreat once troops had been "turned." Could officers

82. Thermopylae: Hdt. 7.211 (mock retreats); Diod. Sic. 11.8.2 (relays), 11.9.4 (regroup). Plataea: Pl. *Lach*. 191c (mock retreats); Hdt. 9.46–47 (switch of contingents, also at Plut. *Arist*. 16.1–8), 9.53–55 (Amompharetus), 9.60 (plea for help).

83. Thuc. 5.71.3 (to *Skiritai*), 5.72.1 (to *lochagoi*), 5.73.2 (to cross field); Diod. Sic. 12.79.6 (to let the enemy pass).

84. Nemea: Xen. *Hell*. 4.2.19 (move to right), 4.2.22 (to let the enemy pass). Coronea: 4.3.18 (phalanx drawn up); Polyaen. 2.1.19; Frontin. *Str*. 2.6.6; Plut. *Ages*. 18.2 (to let the enemy pass, contradicted by Xen. *Hell*. 4.3.19, an order to attack).

85. Xen. *Hell*. 7.5.21 (form up and march away), 7.5.22 (ground arms, form wedge, take up arms), 7.5.24 (cavalry wedge, force to hills); Diod. Sic. 15.85.7 (commit reserves, an order given by an Eleian).

86. Demosthenes' orders: Thuc. 3.107.4. Subsequent attack: 3.108.1. Orders and attack on Sphacteria: Thuc. 4.36.1–3. A similar view: Echeverría Rey (2011), 62–66. A different view, noting Demosthenes' dependence on local intelligence: Roisman (1993), 73.

keep men like Archilochus, who was willing to throw away his shield, from dispersing?

Communication Under Duress

Once "turned," Greek hoplites often fled in panic. Yet sometimes officers gave orders that kept units intact. In such situations, every sign and shout said, "Run!" but the officers, by dint of encouragement, threats, and pleas, maintained formation while falling back.

Brasidas' campaign in Thrace witnessed two examples of orderly retreats. In Lyncestis in 423, this Spartan commander told his force of mercenaries and helots that they could retreat in orderly fashion, once they had formed their hollow square:

> Once you withstand their attacks, you may proceed to withdraw, maintaining rank and file. You will reach safety all the quicker.[87]

Events bore him out. When attacked, the troops stood fast, and each time there was a lull they retreated in order.

In the second example, Athenians did the retreating. In the battle before Amphipolis, where Brasidas saw Athenian heads bobbing, part of the Athenian force fled, and so did the Athenian commander, Cleon. The rest of the force, on the right, withdrew to a hill, and regrouped there, no doubt under the leadership of their officers. Perhaps these were *lochagoi*, who proved able to act independently in Xenophon.[88] Clearidas and the main Spartan force attacked twice, but failed to dislodge the Athenians, who held out—until a shower of javelins from peltasts scattered them.[89] The sequence of events differs from Thermopylae in the end, but not much otherwise: hundreds of outnumbered hoplites, driven from their position, did not break. The officers gave their orders, and the men, resisting panic, obeyed. Much the same happened to the Spartans on Sphacteria. Driven from their position in the middle of the island, they did not break. Instead, they fell back, reached the end of the island, and reformed. Only the attack from the rear caused them to surrender. Their commander, Styphon, was still alive, having replaced dead

87. Thuc. 4.126.6.

88. Xen. *Hell.* 1.2.3.

89. Thuc. 5.10.5. A smaller example, with Athenian cavalry: Xen. *Hell.* 4.3.7–8.

and wounded superiors.[90] If this surrender was unparalleled, the retreat was another echo of Thermopylae. As before, outnumbered hoplites fell back but did not break.

Similar to a retreat was a withdrawal through enemy lines. At Coronea, the Thebans had prevailed on their side of the battlefield, far from the Spartans, but as they returned to their original position, they found that the enemy blocked their way. They were not falling back, as at Amphipolis and Sphacteria, but because the Spartans had won the battle, they were retreating. Agesilaus confronted them, so they had to try to break through. They "massed themselves," a maneuver that would require orders from the officers. Then they punctured the Spartan line. Since Agesilaus was in front, attacking in person, they wounded him. The king had "to be carried towards the phalanx"; in other words, back into the broken line.[91] This episode foreshadowed the Theban breakthrough at Leuctra. Xenophon says nothing of any Theban casualties, but to judge from other such maneuvers, some officers were killed or wounded, as happened at Sphacteria. Successful retreats or withdrawals were only somewhat less lethal than unsuccessful ones. Many, if not most, casualties occurred during routs, as Ardant du Picq guessed in his influential work on infantry performance.[92]

Also similar to a retreat was a march under fire. For this purpose, troops formed a square, as Brasidas' men did. During the march of the Ten Thousand through upper Mesopotamia, the Greeks formed a square in response to Persian archers; Xenophon led the troops at the back of the square on a foray, and then led them back in good order. Although that attack failed, another attack the next day succeeded.[93] Since it was difficult to control a square of men, the generals appointed more subordinate officers, and that way they were able to switch from a square to a column. The generals had no trouble getting more officers, and the troops had no trouble obeying them.[94] The troops and officers were mostly Peloponnesians, but not mostly Spartans. A few years later, Agesilaus used a square when harassed on his march through Thessaly. He

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90. Orderly withdrawal: Thuc. 4.35.1. Styphon: Thuc. 4.38.2. Cf. Xen. *Hell.* 4.44.1–2, where Corinthians retreat, apparently in order, and then regroup, but their commander dies, and Xenophon does not mention any replacement.

91. Xen. *Hell.* 4.3.20. Alternatively, the Spartans allowed them to pass, as at First Mantinea (Polyaen. 2.1.19; Frontin. *Str.* 2.6.6; Plut. *Ages.* 18.2). Yet even in this case, the Thebans would have probably "massed themselves," *suspeirathentes*.

92. Xen. *An.* 3.1.12; Ardant du Picq (1914), 1–2.

93. Xen. *An.* 3.3.6–7, 3.4.1–32.

94. Xen. *An.* 3.4.19–23.

was able to order cavalry at the front of the square to ride to the back, and form up in the face of the enemy.[95] These troops were mostly Peloponnesians, too.

Retreats have received little notice. The story of Sphacteria, for example, is usually how the Spartans surrendered, not how they withdrew in an orderly fashion. For some Athenians, the story of Delium was how a few individuals, like Socrates, refused to give way.[96] Yet, for the subject of battlefield communications, the orderly withdrawal is a notable phenomenon. Enough officers, enough drill, enough pride, and retreating troops could cohere. It did not happen only at Thermopylae, or only under royal leadership, or only in the face of foreign invasion, or only among Spartans. One might simplify Xenophon's *Anabasis* and say that the chief Greek military writer wrote a book about it.

When we conceive of the events described in this chapter as acts of communication, we find ourselves asking whether the hub and spoke by which the officers controlled their men could survive amid the network that carried messages of panic and fear among the troops. During an orderly retreat, the hub and spoke survived. During a panic, it collapsed. During an attack, it survived, but also inspired panic among the enemy.[97] Or, if we conceive of these events not as communications, but instead as incidents affecting the collective "nervous system" shared by any army, we find ourselves asking whether the impulse to flee, and the related impulse to fight prematurely, were more or less assuaged by rote reactions such as following a leader, by moments of silence and relative calm, and, of course, by messages from the "nerve center," which was the officers.

This nerve center made an inviting target. Positioned in front of his unit or beside it, the subordinate officer was conspicuous, and his contribution to victories like Nemea showed that he was well worth killing. The commander-in-chief was conspicuous thanks to his entourage, and again well worth killing. Pasimachus, Teleutias, Lysander—these were not the only names on the casualty list.[98] The death of Brasidas helped end the Archidamian War, and the death of Gylippus might have prolonged the Decelean War.

In another respect, the commander and the subordinate officers differed. The commander made his chief contribution through pre-battle orders; his

95. Xen. *Hell.* 4.3.4–6.

96. Pl. *Symp.* 221a–c.

97. The opposite view: Hanson (1989), 96–104, where the officers' task is to time the charge that gives release from fear and tension.

98. In Thucydides alone, 22 generals died in 83 engagements, as calculated by Paul (1987), 308.

subordinates made theirs by carrying out those orders and giving some of their own. For the commander's communication to be effective, he needed to perform symbolic gestures, use discipline moderately, drill incessantly, and keep his tent open, as Xenophon advised. In large measure, his effectiveness depended on the army's morale. For his subordinates' communication to be effective, they needed to make themselves seen and heard, no matter the risk. In large measure, their effectiveness depended on their personal courage. The commander (and his council) planned victory, and his subordinates prevented defeat.

Contrary to all reports by ancient historians, neither commanders nor subordinate officers gave orations before big battles. No commander could address more than 5,000 men at a time.[99] No doubt subordinates gave speeches of some sort, but they must have been short and practical; no historian deemed these worth recording.[100] Communication during and just before battle involved a rhetoric of gestures and stances, even a rhetoric of dress, but not oratorical rhetoric.

Military Communication and Civic Culture

The Spartans surpassed their opponents in saturating their forces with messages from above; they surpassed them in supplying officers of their own to command neighbors and allies; and they surpassed them in maintaining quiet where quiet was required. Two other advantages were psychological. Spartan officers were more likely to sacrifice their lives in attempts to maintain order, and Spartan soldiers were less likely to break and run—even less likely than their own allies, Olynthus being an exception.[101]

Yet this record is not the whole story. The Thebans learned the technique of mock retreats, and surpassed their Spartan opponents in the use of reserves.[102] They made one other advance that struck at the weakest point in the Spartans' communications. Troops under Spartan command tended to perform poorly once the commander was killed. Sphacteria, Haliartus, Olynthus, Leuctra: all these defeats included the death of the commander. The effect of these deaths

99. Keegan (1987), 54.

100. Also skeptical, but no mention of a numerical limit: Hansen (1993), 169, allowing for addresses made to one unit at a time. Skeptical, but no mention of subordinates: Goldsworthy (1996), 147. Less skeptical, but again no mention: Anson (2010) with further bibliography.

101. Deaths of Spartan officers bulk large among those reported by Tuplin (1983), 40 n. 12.

102. Mock retreat: Arr. *Anab*. 1.8.4.

was partly psychological, but partly organizational, for as Diodorus says, there would be no-one to give the Spartans orders.[103] If Plutarch is indeed right about Leuctra, Epaminondas' subordinate Pelopidas must have been aware of this weakness, for he aimed the Thebans' best unit at this vulnerable spot. Even if Plutarch is wrong about Leuctra, Epaminondas aimed the rest of the Boeotians at the Spartans, comparing them to the head of a snake. He thought that once the others saw the Spartans break, they would break, too.[104] Like the death of a commander, the retreat of crack troops would induce panic. Against the Spartans' superior technique, the Thebans pitted a new concept. Less orchestrated than their rivals, they were more flexible.

Other communities lacked both Spartan technique and Theban flexibility. Athens lacked officers. Each Athenian trireme probably carried more officers—trierarch, helmsman, lookout, and chiefs of rowers and marines—than a *taxis* or regiment in the Athenian army. As the retreat at Amphipolis showed, Athenian officers did not lack courage or skill. Under Iphicrates, the Athenians performed well in engagements lacking a turning point. This commander avoided the pitched battles with Sparta that Xenophon accuses Epaminondas of seeking.[105] The same was sometimes true of Athenian performance under the general Demosthenes, who sprang surprises on the enemy, not only in Acarnania, but also at Megara and Epidaurus.[106] But the Athenians were more likely to break in major battles, and Xenophon contrasted the infantry unfavorably with the cavalry.[107] The one time when they outflanked an enemy, at Delium, they were confused by their success.[108] By the same token, Xenophon contrasts the Athenian army with the Athenian navy. The navy's discipline was better—so good that it rated comparison with the discipline of the army of Sparta.[109]

An important element in Spartan communications, the numerous officers, reflected this city's tendency to make every sort of business the community's

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103. Diod. Sic. 15.56.2. Similar view: Xen. *An.* 6.4.13–14.

104. Polyaen. 2.3.15. Xen. *Hell.* 6.4.12 combines the thoughts of Plutarch and Polyaenus: an attack on the king, as in Plutarch, but by Epaminondas, as in Polyaenus.

105. Xen. *Hell.* 7.5.18.

106. Thuc. 3.11–12 (again Acarnania), 4.67–68 (capture of the long walls at Megara), 5.83 (capture of a fort at Epidaurus).

107. Xen. *Mem.* 3.5.2 (Athenian infantry) vs. 3.5.18–19 (cavalry).

108. Thuc. 4.96.3, where the Athenians cannot have planned the encirclement. Other examples of unplanned encirclement: Thuc. 4.43.4, 5.72.3.

109. Xen. *Hell.* 7.1.8.

business—to obtain cohesion at the expense of privacy. An important Theban tactic, aiming formations at Spartan commanders, reflected a political difference between Thebes and Sparta. A federal and democratic state, Boeotia did not have a monarch or a permanent commander-in-chief of its army. In striking at the Spartan king, the Boeotians were striking at an institution that they rejected, and also at the leader in a league of states, the Peloponnesian alliance, that was hostile to federalism. For both *poleis*, styles and aims of communication reflected social values or political structures. Common to the two *poleis* was the value of free speech (*parrhesia*). This value manifested itself not only during the lulls in which officers spoke up, but during councils of war, where officers advised commanders, or those sharing command consulted one another. In regard to *parrhesia*, the sources present a contrast, not between one *polis* and another, but between Greeks and Persians. Persian kings punished generals for speaking freely.[110]

The relationship between military communication and Greek civic culture did not last long. This relationship depended on mostly hoplite assemblies and on military magistrates. During the Hellenistic period, when federations and kingdoms did most of the fighting, these assemblies and magistrates declined. After the Roman subjugation of Greece, they survived in name only. While they lasted, they introduced a new problem into Greek society, one that would rise again with the reestablishment of civic cultures in modern times. Why should soldiers obey dangerous orders? Not because some sovereign said so. Since the soldiers were citizens, they were the sovereign. Not because they were paid to obey. Mostly, they were not. They had to talk themselves into it. One way was to swear an oath upon enlistment.[111] Another way was the peculiar discourse used in camp, on the march, and in battle. Both ways are still in use. All the business of destruction depends upon them.

110. Punishment: Curt. 3.2.10–19. Punishment suggested: Hdt. 7.235–237. Possible punishment disavowed: Hdt. 7.101.

111. Including not just the ephebic oath at Athens and presumably elsewhere, but perhaps an oath sworn by members of a unit such as the Spartan *enomotia*. The danger of reconstructing the former oath from the so-called oath at Plataea: Rhodes and Osborne (2007), no. 88, with discussion of the difficulties in the sources.

PART TWO

Modes

5

Monuments of the Hittite and Neo-Assyrian Empires During the Late Bronze and Iron Ages

James F. Osborne

THE MANY HUNDREDS of monuments discovered across the ancient Near East since exploration began there possess a strong hold on the scholarly and public imagination. Part of the reason for this is monuments' tendency to communicate to us in the present the nature of society in the past, although our ability to interpret accurately the original function and intent of monuments is by no means guaranteed. This chapter discusses a select number of monuments through the general framework of communications, that is, how scholars have interpreted these objects that communicated particular kinds of information to past audiences.

For reasons of quantity, this chapter does not undertake a comprehensive survey of Near Eastern monuments from a strictly defined region or period. Indeed, as we will see, the period of "use" of a monument continues well beyond the time it was constructed, in many cases even to the present, such that conventional chronological frameworks rapidly lose their relevance. I offer here a selective discussion of monumental art from a restricted number of times and places, chosen primarily by virtue of these contexts' ability to highlight aspects of my theoretical understanding of how monuments operate in society and how scholars can best approach them intellectually.

The material included in this chapter ranges from western Anatolia through the Levant and Mesopotamia to the Zagros Mountains of western Iran, and from roughly 1500 to 600 (all dates are BCE), or the Near East's Late

Bronze and Iron Ages. Although an array of urban statuary and landscape monuments will appear, the focus will be on landscape monuments of the Hittite Empire of Anatolia (ca. 1400–1200), and the Neo-Assyrian Empire of northern Mesopotamia (934–605; see Map 5.1). As for the focus on sculptures, it is true that monumental statuary and architecture are frequently found side by side in scholarly literature, especially in surveys of Near Eastern artistic remains.[1] Nevertheless, the inclusion of monumental buildings in this study would further adulterate a contribution of necessarily restricted scope, so the present analysis is limited to monumental sculpture alone.

It is monuments' most intriguing and counterintuitive quality that, although often designed and built to endure for long periods of time, their meaning can change rapidly—sometimes even overnight—depending on their physical, social, and political contexts.[2] To make matters still more complicated, it is possible, even likely, that at any given time a monument will have not one but many meanings, what Henri Lefebvre referred to as a "horizon" of meanings.[3] It is therefore of the utmost importance to appreciate how a monument fits into the network of meanings that constitutes society. Writing about monumental buildings, Henri Lefebvre says that if the meaning of a monument is to be found anywhere, it is not located within the monument itself. Rather, the meaning lies in the interaction between monuments and the individuals experiencing them, the activities that take place there and those that are not permitted, the ongoing interactions between thing and person.[4] Elsewhere, I have suggested that a productive framework for understanding monumentality is a relational approach that recognizes the ongoing dialogue between monuments and their social matrix, as well as between monuments and the people engaging with these objects.[5]

This chapter is thus divided into two parts. The first describes some of the ways that monuments were designed and implemented for communicative ends, frequently to convey messages of political authority, especially as sanctioned or legitimated by divine favor—in short, the *production* of monuments. This ideological message is perhaps the analytical object most frequently sought by scholars.[6] But the principle of relationality instructs us that the

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1. For example, Frankfort (1996); Moortgat (1969).

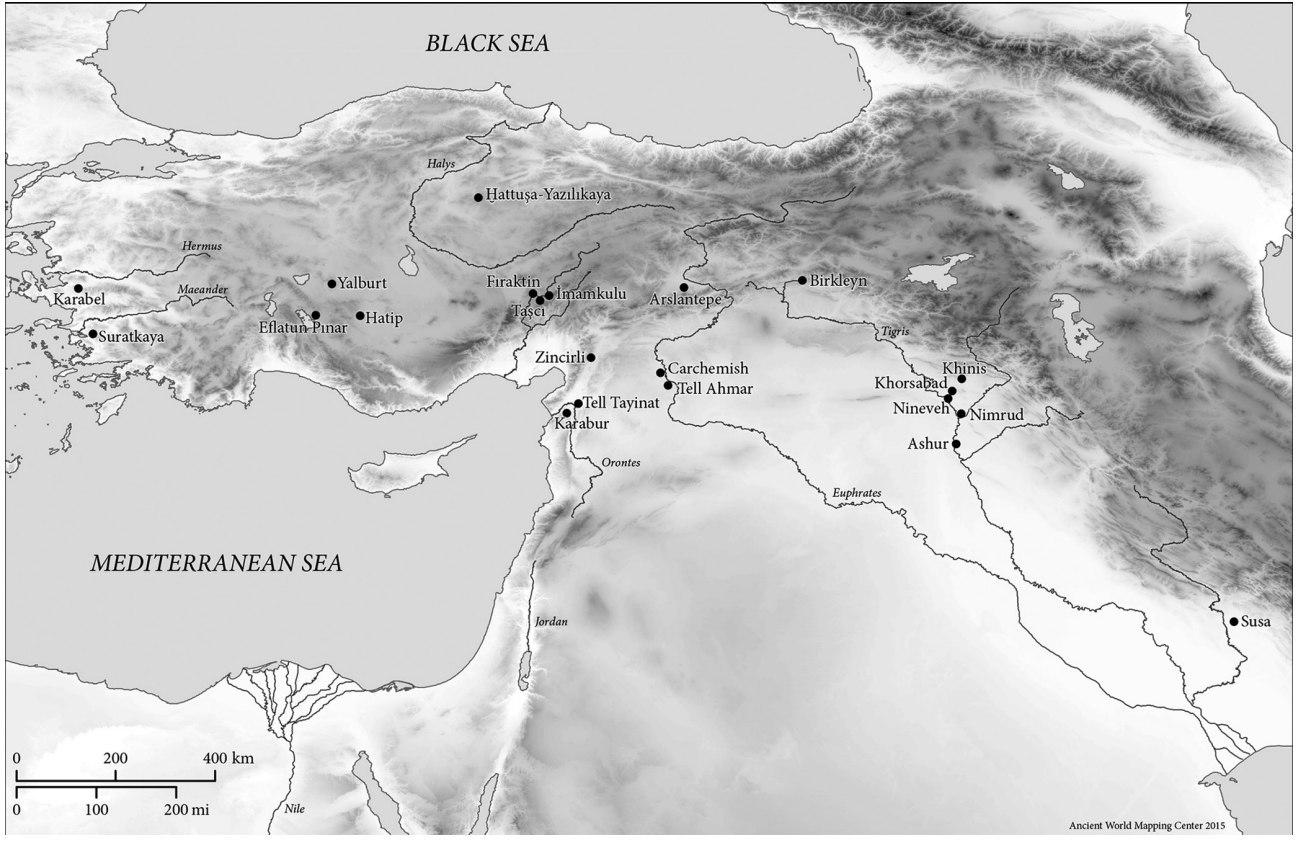
2. As argued convincingly for both ancient and modern Chinese contexts by Wu (1995), (2005).

3. Lefebvre (1991), 222.

4. Lefebvre (1991), 224.

5. Osborne (2014b).

6. See, for example, many of the papers collected in Osborne (2014a); Burger and Rosenswig (2012); Thomas and Meyers (2012).



MAP 5.1 Sites mentioned in the text (Map compiled by the author and produced by the Ancient World Mapping Center)

way monuments are used, appropriated, and modified, whether intentionally or otherwise, requires us also to consider the *reception* of monuments. Such an attempt forms the second part of the chapter. As objects in an ongoing social dialogue, monuments are never just messages communicated by their creators, but always messages in a ceaseless game of "broken telephone"—accidentally altered or deliberately subverted at each point along the line.

The Production of Monuments

In a programmatic article in 1903, the art historian Alois Riegl described how certain objects or locales, such as the birthplace or grave of an individual later recognized as historically or culturally significant, became monuments long after their creation. Calling these monuments "unintentional," Riegl distinguished them from standard monuments: large, permanent objects that are deliberately built for commemorative ends. Although Riegl's distinction is valid, the ancient Near East was full of monuments that were deliberately designed as such, consciously constructed objects intended to communicate a particular message. To be sure, our vision of Near Eastern monumentality is distorted by a century and a half of scholarly fascination with these objects at the expense of more quotidian items. Nevertheless, it remains the case that monuments were a common component of ancient Near Eastern life. There are countless instances of monuments' being erected by royalty and other élites able to do so. Here I analyze some of the ways that monuments were deployed to communicate the message of their creators, focusing primarily on the Hittites and the Assyrians.

The Hittite Empire was based out of their capital city Ḫattuša located north of the Kızılırmak River on the Anatolian plateau. Although their language was Indo-European, the Hittites used the Mesopotamian cuneiform writing system for most of their written documents.[7] One significant exception, however, is the hieroglyphic inscriptions written in Luwian.[8] These appear on urban and landscape monuments during the New Kingdom period, the late fifteenth to early twelfth centuries, especially in the second half of the thirteenth century during the reigns of Hattusili III, Tudhaliya IV, and Šuppiluliuma II, the last king of the Hittite Empire.[9] The landscape monuments consist of figures

7. Bryce (1998) provides the historical background.

8. Yakubovich (2011).

9. See Ehringhaus (2005) and Kohlmeyer (1983) for comprehensive surveys.

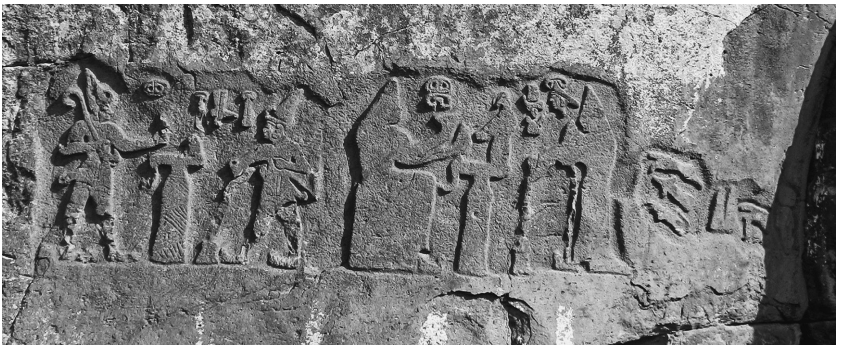


FIGURE 5.1 Hittite rock relief at Fıraktın in the southeastern Anatolian plateau. The scene on the left shows Hattusili III (r. mid–13th century BCE) making a libation offering to the Storm God; the scene on the right shows Puduhepa, wife of Hattusili III, making a libation offering to the goddess Hepat. The individuals are identified by the Hieroglyphic Luwian signs above the figures. The continued inscription to the right of the relief further describes Puduhepa as "daughter of the Land of Kizzuwatna, beloved by the deity."

(Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

carved in low relief on rock outcrops or low cliff faces across the mountainous plateau of central Anatolia (e.g., Fıraktin, Hatip, İmamkulu, Karabel; Figure 5.1). Occasionally, inscriptions are found in isolation (e.g., Suratkaya), but typically they accompany the reliefs, which depict ruling and divine figures in profile. A second, less common, form of Hittite monument consists of sacred pools constructed on top of productive natural springs (e.g., Yalburt, Eflatun Pınar; Figure 5.2). Yazılıkaya, an open-air rock-cut sanctuary located just over a kilometer northeast of the Hittite capital of Ḫattuša, may also have been the site of a spring in antiquity.[10] In that case, this most famous of all Hittite monuments—depicting Hurrian gods and goddesses adopted by the Hittites in well-preserved array—may combine aspects of both major types of Hittite landscape monuments.[11]

The function of these monuments—what, exactly, they were designed to communicate—is the subject of debate. The most straightforward interpretation is that they were installed to portray the extent of Hittite territorial suzerainty as the empire expanded across the plateau from its heartland capital at Hattuša to peripheral areas in the east and west.[12] But as the quantity of known

10. Harmanşah (2011), 635.

11. Alexander (1986); Bittel (1967); Seeher (2011).

12. Ehringhaus (2005), 119–120; Kohlmeyer (1983), 103; Seeher (2009).

FIGURE 5.2 Hittite sacred pool at the spring of Eflatun Pınar (Plato Spring) in the western Anatolian plateau (14th–13th century BCE). The reliefs of the north façade reach a height of 6 meters and consist of standing mountain gods, two large, seated figures underneath winged sun disks, and other figures. A large, winged sun disk stretches across the entire scene.

(Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

monuments increases with additional discoveries, it becomes increasingly clear that many of them were built, not by Hittite rulers, but by local kings (Karabel, Hatip), princes (Suratkaya), or simply high-ranking officials (Taşcı A). As Claudia Glatz has argued, these monuments thus represent a struggle for power between central Hittite rulers and local dynasts. Rather than commemorate the successful stamp of Hittite power over territory, they assert—but do not vindicate—claims to territorial dominance that may not necessarily exist, emphasized particularly by their tendency to appear on important routes of communication.[13]

This interpretation, a case study of Elizabeth DeMarrais, Luis Jaime Castillo, and Timothy Earle's argument that monuments materialize ideology, has been more systematically developed through the use of costly signaling theory (CST), a branch of communication theory developed in biology but also applied to evolutionary anthropology.[14] According to CST, informative signals are communicated whenever such communication benefits both sender and recipient and the information being conveyed is not otherwise available to the recipient. In the case of politically inspired monuments, for example, rival rulers would benefit from knowing about each other's wealth and resources.

13. Glatz (2009), 136.

14. DeMarrais et al. (1996). CST and biology: Maynard-Smith and Harper (2003). Anthropology: Bliege Bird and Smith (2005). See further Chapter 14 below.

Furthermore, "cost [the investment of valuable resources, including labor, in monument construction] is the guarantor of the honesty of the information, allowing it to be trusted even by an audience that should otherwise be skeptical of the signal's content."[15] It follows that Hittite monuments are thus to be understood as a medium through which rivals negotiated ongoing territorial disputes. The very existence of a large number of monuments with diverse authors indicates an unsettled political situation in which communications of strength via monument-building was required.[16] Glatz has also applied CST to iconographically similar rock reliefs in the western Zagros Mountains that date to the Ur III and Old Babylonian periods (late third and early second millennium), when an unprecedented degree of centralization and territorial expansion occurred in southern Mesopotamian polities.[17] CST implies that the raison d'être of landscape monuments was to communicate political strength, yet, as Glatz and Aimée Plourde themselves acknowledge, the communication of political messages is only one of many possible functions of Hittite landscape monuments.[18] Noting the frequently attested phrase "Divine Road of the Earth" [(DINGIR) KAŠKAL.KUR] in an inscription by Šuppiluliuma II in a stone chamber adjacent to a sacred pool in Ḫattuša,[19] Ömür Harmanşah argues that sacred pool complexes built around natural springs, including landscape monuments in nonurban contexts such as Eflatun Pınar, Yalburt, and possibly Yazılıkaya,[20] were "considered liminal spaces, entrances to the underworld, places where ritual communication with the dead ancestors could be established."[21] If this is the case, then we have a different order of communication entirely, one in which a political message may have been only one of the builders' priorities, if at all. The lengthy military inscription of Tudhaliya IV at the Yalburt pool, for example, needs to be understood in the light of the monument's possible chthonic associations.[22] Likewise, the rock reliefs' ability to communicate political signals of labor and material resources is compromised by the fact that many of them are not prominent, but rather require significant

15. Glatz and Plourde (2011), 35.

16. Glatz and Plourde (2011).

17. Börker-Klähn (1982); Debevoise (1942). The extent to which the Hittites were aware of the earlier Zagros exemplars is unclear.

18. Glatz (2014a); Glatz and Plourde (2011), 35.

19. Hawkins (1995).

20. Eflatun Pınar: Börker-Klähn (1975); Bachmann and Özenir (2004).

21. Harmanşah (2011), 636.

22. Hawkins (1992).

energy even to be located. The primary intended audience for at least some of the reliefs may have been the divine order, not humans. Furthermore, the reliefs' striking natural settings, especially their association with springs and their high elevations, appear to be religiously charged.[23] As most scholars acknowledge, and as suggested above, these monuments possess a cluster of meanings, at once mundane and divine, both statements communicating earthly power and attempts to communicate with powers beyond the earthly sphere.

The tradition of constructing landscape monuments did not end with the collapse of the Hittite Empire. On the contrary, construction continued across the northern arc of the Fertile Crescent during the Iron Age, from the late second millennium well into the first millennium, especially under the rulers of the Neo-Assyrian empire (ca. 934–605), who created the largest and most widespread corpus. Although their capital cities—Ashur, Nimrud, Khorsabad, and Nineveh—were located on or near the Tigris River in northeastern Iraq, the Assyrians built dozens of monuments in the peripheral regions of eastern Anatolia, northern Syria, and the Levant.[24] To the Hittite rulers' rock reliefs and occasional pool complex, the Assyrians added large, freestanding stelae inscribed with lengthy royal annalistic inscriptions. All of these monuments, whether reliefs or stelae, depict an Assyrian ruler accompanied by divine emblems. In total, about fifty Assyrian monuments in the periphery exist today. Historical records refer to another fifty or so.[25]

Assyrian peripheral monuments defy straightforward interpretation, partially because their production spanned three centuries and varying political contexts. One motive for many of them was to mark the territorial expansion of the Assyrian empire following annual military campaigns to neighboring regions.[26] For the reigns of Ashurnasirpal II (883–859), Shalmaneser III (858–824), Tiglath-pileser III (744–727), and Sargon II (721–705), mapping the geographical locations of peripheral monuments through time indicates approximate Assyrian territorial control, and may suggest which outlying areas were viewed as the most important.[27] As Ann Shafer has summarized,

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23. Ullmann (2010); Stokkel (2005), but cf. Glatz (2014b), 129.

24. Shafer (1988).

25. Shafer (2007), 133.

26. Shafer (2007), 134–136.

27. Left aside here are the complicated issues surrounding Assyrian territory and territoriality, especially the degree to which conquered lands were incorporated, and in what ways: see Postgate (1992); Liverani (1988); Parker (2001), (2013). For an overview of territoriality in early complex societies, see Osborne and VanValkenburgh (2013).

"over the three centuries of their production . . . the royal peripheral monuments acted as a consistent and effective tool for creating a powerful Assyrian presence on the periphery."[28]

Later in the history of the empire, the function of peripheral monuments expanded from communicating boundaries to negotiating relationships between Assyria and its subjects. Three Assyrian stelae that are not strictly about territories and boundaries illustrate especially well how these monuments promulgated royal ideology. Two are from the city of Til Barsip (modern Tell Ahmar), capital of the conquered city-state of Bit-Adini, and one is from the site of Zincirli, capital of the conquered city-state of Sam'al.[29] All three were erected by the Assyrian ruler Esarhaddon (680–669) shortly after he conquered Egypt in 671. They depict him standing above the kneeling figures of the recently captured crown prince of Egypt and the Sidonian king Abdi-Milkutti, who had rebelled against Assyria unsuccessfully in 677. At 3.5 meters in height, plus a meter-high base, these monuments were clearly designed to impress the viewer with the might of the Assyrian king, and with the inevitable futility of resistance.

Nonetheless, the Zincirli and Til Barsip stelae differ from one another in subtle iconographic ways. Among the many small discrepancies, the defeated kneeling rebels are significantly smaller on the Zincirli stele than on the Til Barsip stelae—their heads reach the height of Esarhaddon's knees and waist, respectively—and thus they strain their heads more as they look up. Furthermore, on the Zincirli example, Esarhaddon holds leashes attached to rings in the captives' lips. These leashes are absent on the Til Barsip examples (although these stelae are also more weathered). Barbara Porter interprets these differences politically: Zincirli, located in a remote valley at the base of the Amanus Mountains, was conquered late, and had frequently participated in anti-Assyrian coalitions; Til Barsip, on the Euphrates, was conquered early, and was converted into a major Assyrian administrative center, Kar-Shalmaneser, with concomitant blending of local and Assyrian politics and culture. The stelae at these two sites thus represent interactions with two different western audiences, one already conditioned to be receptive to Assyrian dominance, and one more prone to rebellion. In this light, it is clear that, while all peripheral monuments did indeed function to celebrate royal Assyrian authority, they were

28. Shafer (2007), 136.

29. Til Barsip: Thureau-Dangin and Dunand (1936), 151, 155. Zincirli: Luschan (1893), 10.

consciously designed to communicate subtly different messages to specific audiences.[30]

Assyrian landscape monuments, like their Hittite predecessors, were often located in remote locations that could be difficult to access. Some, like the several rock reliefs of divine figures in the small outdoor shrine at Karabur high in hills east of Antakya, have no inscription or distinguishing iconographic feature permitting a date or an unambiguous interpretation beyond ritual in the broadest sense.[31] But references to landscape monuments in Assyrian texts and iconographic representations indicate that these monuments were both the subjects and the recipients of rituals involving animal sacrifice that clearly related to divinely sanctioned kingship.[32] One example is the huge relief carved by Sennacherib (704–681) at Khinis, showing the king with Ashur and his wife Mulissu, the national gods of Assyria (Figure 5.3).[33] This relief and its accompanying text, the so-called Bavian Inscription, stand at the head of the Khinis canal, Sennacherib's most ambitious hydraulic engineering project.[34] A massive aqueduct provided water for agricultural and urban activity in the Assyrian heartland.[35] That the monument and its text proclaim the might and accomplishments of the king is self-evident, but the iconography is unusual among Assyrian rock reliefs in that it depicts, not just the king and divine symbols, but the king facing anthropomorphic figures of the deities. Sennacherib represents the gods in the same way as himself, possibly an act of self-deification.[36]

Perhaps the most striking Assyrian peripheral landscape monument is the series of reliefs and inscriptions carved into the rock at Birkleyn in eastern Turkey, at the source of the Dibni Çay, a tributary of the upper Tigris River. The visually striking gorge at this location harbors a number of caves, under which the Dibni Çay flows through a 900-meter tunnel carved into the limestone formation in the rocky landscape. Today the location is referred to as the "Source of the Tigris" or "Tigris Tunnel" (Figure 5.4a). In the Iron Age, it was visited by the Assyrian rulers Tiglath-pileser I (1114–1076) and Shalmaneser

30. Porter (2000a), 175–176.

31. Taşyürek (1975).

32. Shafer (2007), 141–144.

33. Jacobsen and Lloyd (1935), 44–49; Börker-Klähn (1982), 206–208.

34. Jacobsen and Lloyd (1935), 36–39; Bagg (2000), 347–354.

35. Jacobsen and Lloyd (1935); Ur (2005).

36. Ornan (2007).

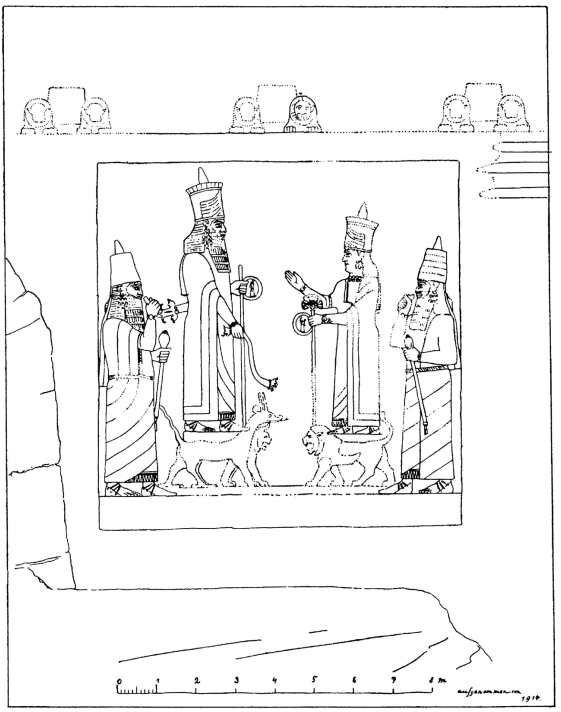


FIGURE 5.3 Large rock reliefs above the canal head at Khinis, carved by the Neo-Assyrian ruler Sennacherib (r. 704–681 BCE) and showing him with the Assyrian national deities Ashur and Mulissu.
(After Bachmann [1927], Abb. 8)

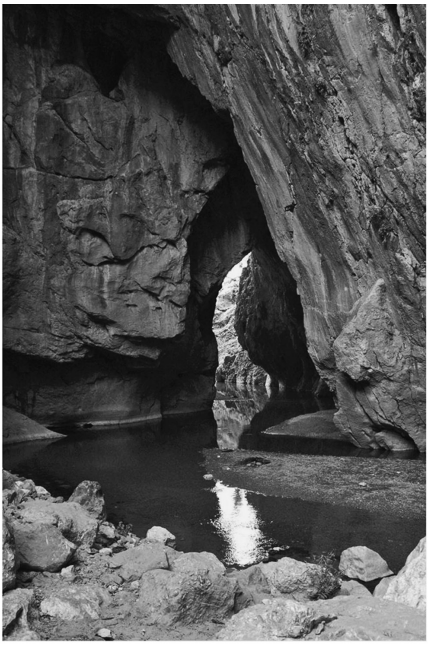
III (858–824), both of whom had their images and inscriptions carved into the rock.[37] Although the location is "peripheral" from the perspective of the Assyrians, the Source of the Tigris monuments were by no means installed in a cultural vacuum. On the contrary, this landscape was a highly contested zone during the preceding Late Bronze Age.[38]

Hurrian, Urartian, and Syro-Anatolian kingdoms all had material interests in the resources located in this region of Turkey and had important centers located throughout. Upūmu, capital of the Hurrian kingdom of Šubria, was probably located just twenty kilometers from Birkleyn.[39] By situating the monument near a subterranean water course, the Assyrians were playing on the

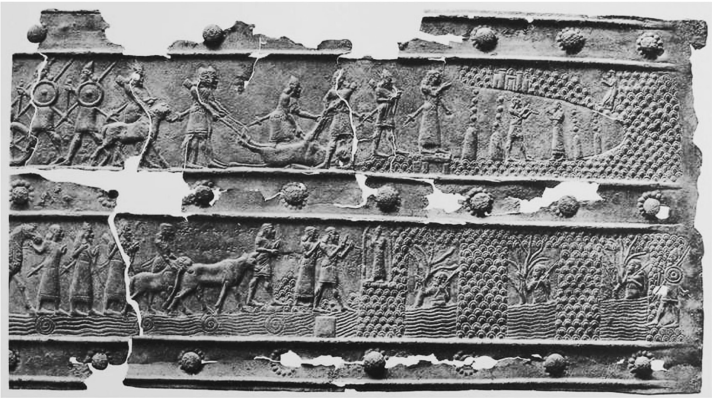
37. Schachner (2006), (2009); Shafer (2007); Russel (1986); Waltham (1976); Harmanşah (2007).

38. Harmanşah (2007), 189.

39. Kessler (1995), 57.



a)



b)

FIGURE 5.4A Neo-Assyrian reliefs at Birkleyn: (*a*) the cave system of the Dibni Çay, the so-called Source of the Tigris; (*b*) representations of Shalmaneser III's (r. 858–824 BCE) actions at Birkleyn on the bronze gates of Balawat, a city in the Assyrian heartland: the tunnel and flowing river are shown, as well as the carving of reliefs, the caves, and preparations for ritual activities outside the caves.

(a: Photo courtesy of Andreas Schachner; b: King [1915], Plate LIX)

Hittite practice of placing monuments at watery locations with chthonic associations. The Source of the Tigris monuments thus represents the Assyrian adoption and manipulation of local landscape practices to communicate their own rhetoric of kingship, replete with rituals taking place at the monuments

themselves.[40] Furthermore, the act of creating these monuments at Birkelyn was commemorated in the inscription on the Black Obelisk, a monument erected by Shalmaneser III in the Assyrian capital city of Nimrud, and portrayed on the famous gates at Tell Balawat (ancient Imgur-Enlil), another city in the Assyrian heartland.[41] Band 10 of the *repoussé* door panels at Balawat shows the installation of the Source of the Tigris monuments in some detail, illustrating with great accuracy the caves, the flowing river, the tunnel, the reliefs, and an accompanying sacrificial ritual (Figure 5.4b).[42] As Harmanşah writes, "while the acts of inscription at the Birkleyn site distributed the Assyrian king's symbolic body into this frontier landscape, a liminal place, the representational monuments at the Assyrian urban core reincorporated the commemorative frontier performances of the remote landscapes of the north into the narratives of the state."[43]

Despite the many monuments erected by the Assyrians, their art is best remembered for the hundreds of orthostats decorated in low relief that lined the walls of their palaces.[44] These immense and complex relief programs have been the subject of analysis since Austen Henry Layard first brought them to light in the mid–nineteenth century. The most complete and familiar reliefs come from Ashurnasirpal II's Northwest Palace at Nimrud, Sargon II's palace at Khorsabad, Sennacherib's Southwest Palace at Nineveh, and Ashurbanipal's North Palace, also at Nineveh;[45] the original palatial contexts of other collections of reliefs are less understood.[46] Each corpus has its own particular emphases, such as the magical and ritual scenes of Ashurnasirpal, the long rows of courtiers and tribute bearers of Sargon, the large-scale landscapes and technological marvels—such as the quarrying and installation of colossal bull statues—of Sennacherib, and the lion hunt scenes of Ashurbanipal. All of the kings prominently displayed victorious battles and scenes of sieges. Over the course of time, narrative imagery increases, culminating in the elaborate and visually complex scene

40. Harmanşah (2007).

41. Nimrud: Grayson (1996), 65.

42. King (1915), pl. LIX.

43. Harmanşah (2007), 195.

44. Collins (2009).

45. Nimrud: Meuszyński (1981); Paley and Sobolewski (1987), (1992); Russell (1998). Khorsabad: Loud (1936); Albenda (1986). Southwest Palace at Nineveh: Barnett et al. (1998). North Palace at Nineveh: Barnett (1976).

46. See, for example, Barnett and Falkner (1962).

of the Battle of Til-Tuba, in which Ashurbanipal's chase, capture, and decapitation of the defeated Elamite king Teumman amidst the chaos of battle are illustrated in great detail.

Nevertheless, the aesthetic style of the reliefs remained largely consistent over the 250 years that the reliefs were carved. The primary communicative goal had not changed: the glorification of the king as the divinely sanctioned embodiment of ideal kingship.[47] The throne room of Ashurnasirpal's palace at Nimrud expresses this message conspicuously. Irene Winter's famous analysis of this room (1981) has shown that, not just the content of the reliefs, but also their placement on the walls and incorporation of the layout of the room, articulated unmistakably the rhetoric of the king as custodian of the natural order. For example, a scene showing the king and the sacred tree faced the viewer as he or she entered the room, and again as he or she turned to face the throne.

Assyrian palace reliefs also communicated more subtle messages beyond simply the overwhelming power and authority of the king. Because the intended audience of the reliefs was not only Assyrians but also visiting dignitaries and tribute bearers from regions that Assyria had turned into vassal states or conquered outright, the artisans were careful to depict foreigners distinctly, whether through clothing and physical appearance or through gesture and posture. By illustrating foreigners' body language in a manner that violated Assyrian norms, the artists presented their violent fates as logical and inevitable, thereby encouraging to visitors the wisdom of conformity.[48] In addition, the master artists who crafted the reliefs in collaboration with court scholars encoded messages in the non-narrative, emblematic elements of the reliefs. Though only a coterie may have understood these messages, they conveyed some of the philosophical views of Assyrian intellectuals, such as a fundamental kinship between animals and humans, expressed visually in their similar portrayals of anatomy; another is the association of scholars and craftsmen with mythical beings represented by *Mischwesen*, or figures mixing human and animal features.[49] Such messages of foreigners' alterity or mythological "codes" among the court's elite scholars may be highly esoteric communications, but they were nevertheless as real a component of Assyrian palace reliefs as their straightforward attempt to legitimize the king.

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47. Collins (2009), 17.

48. Cifarelli (1998).

49. Ataç (2010).

The Reception of Monuments

The above discussion of Hittite and Neo-Assyrian landscape monuments and palace reliefs has concentrated on intent, what the producers of these objects wanted to communicate to a specific audience. As we have seen, identifying intended meaning is never as simplistic a process as the analyst might wish, for in every instance multiple communicative motivations can be isolated. But monuments' multivocality is compounded exponentially by their varied reception over time and across cultures, a process exacerbated by their tendency to be constructed out of permanent materials. For example, at the time of their discovery Assyrian palace reliefs played a significant role in the culture of Victorian England, from the light they shed on the biblical narrative of Sennacherib's invasion of Judah and the siege of the Judahite city of Lachish, to the part their acquisition played in the imperial interests of the day.[50]

One fascinating difference between production and reception lies in the physical treatment of monuments. For a number of reasons, monuments in the ancient Near East were often vandalized or destroyed outright.[51] Following the sack of Nineveh in 612 by the Medes and the Babylonians, for example, the faces of the Assyrian kings Sennacherib and Ashurbanipal were chiseled out of the reliefs from the city's Southwest and North Palaces; only four examples of Sennacherib's figure were left unmolested (Figure 5.5). In some instances, the conquerors shot arrows directly at the reliefs.[52] Sennacherib had destroyed Babylon several decades prior to the fall of Nineveh, and the effacement of his image was an act of retribution. The removal of the king's name from the surrounding text, however, suggests another, deeper motive. Depictions of the king were images, Akkadian *ṣalmu*, that were taken to be the king himself, more than simply representations of the individual in the Western sense of portraiture.[53] The conquerors wished to put the king's identity to death, and by removing the visual evidence of Assyrian power, the conquerors were removing the Assyrian Empire itself.

The contemporary Syro-Anatolian culture—conquered by the expanding Neo-Assyrian Empire during the ninth and eighth centuries—conducted a related practice.[54] Colossal royal statues that once stood in

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50. Invasion: *2 Kings*. chapters 18–19. Imperialism: Larsen (1996).

51. May (2012a).

52. May (2012b), 188–189.

53. Bahrani (2003), 123–127, 151–152.

54. Orthmann (1971); Gilibert (2011); Ussishkin (1989).

FIGURE 5.5 The famous Garden scene from the North Palace of Nineveh, showing the king Ashurbanipal (r. 668–630 BCE) and his wife Aššuršarrat lounging; the head of the defeated Elamite ruler Teumman dangles in a tree nearby. Note the obliteration of Ashurbanipal's face and right hand, as well as damage to Aššuršarrat's face, done following the sack of Nineveh in 612.

(British Museum, ME124920, AN32865001. Image courtesy of the British Museum)

the gateways of their cities must also have had human-like significance, for they are often found buried or entombed in stone constructions above ground as one might treat a deceased person; the entombed statue at the Lion's Gate at Malatya is a prominent example.[55] Unfortunately, we have little information about the historical circumstances that prompted such burials. Other royal statues have been found smashed, as at Tell Tayinat and Carchemish.[56] Some may have been decommissioned and buried after a change in dynasty, and others may have been destroyed by the conquering Assyrians. Whatever the circumstances, these Syro-Anatolian royal monuments met with a fate very different from what was intended when they were erected.

Abduction and geographical transfer is another example of how the meaning of monuments depends on time and place. This practice was common in the ancient Near East, and was used particularly as a tool for political power by expanding states over newly conquered territories.[57] The palace reliefs of the Assyrians depict divine statues being paraded back into the imperial capitals, as in a scene from the reign of Tiglath-pileser III found in the Southwest Palace

55. Osborne (2014c). Malatya: Delaporte (1940).

56. Tell Tayinat: Gelb (1939), 39. Carchemish: Woolley (1952), 192–199.

57. Schaudig (2012); Holloway (2002), 123–144; Cogan (1974), 22–34; Johnson (2011); Bahrani (2003), 174–184.

FIGURE 5.6 The 1901 discovery of the Hammurabi stele by French excavators Gustave Jéquier and Jacques de Moran at the Elamite city of Susa, several hundred kilometers from its original home in the Mesopotamian city of Sippar.
(After Harper and Amiet [1992], Figure 45, with permission of Musée du Louvre)

at Nimrud,[58] and Syro-Anatolian statuary was discovered in Nebuchadnezzar II's Northern Palace in Babylon.

The most dramatic instance of statuary plunder is the large cache of Mesopotamian monuments discovered by French excavators at the Elamite site of Susa in southwestern Iran. The Elamite King Shutruk-Nahhunte I took them to the city in 1158.[59] Included were the Victory Stele of Naram-Sin (r. 2254–2218) and the Code of Hammurabi (r. 1792–1750), two of the most important pieces of Mesopotamian statuary from any period (Figure 5.6). That they had been transported to Susa over 300 kilometers from the Mesopotamian site of Sippar is remarkable enough. Consider also that Naram-Sin's Victory Stele must have been on display at Sippar for over a millennium before Shutruk-Nahhunte found it. (Unfortunately, shortcomings in the early excavations at Sippar and Susa have made it impossible to reconstruct both the monuments' original locations in Sippar and their precise findspots in Susa.) Scholars debate whether Shutruk-Nahhunte handled the Victory Stele reverently and protectively, with damage being caused by one or more other, unknown agents, or whether he considered it captured booty; but the fact that Naram-Sin's name

58. Barnett and Falkner (1962), pl. XCII.

59. Harper and Amiet (1992).

was not removed from the stele would suggest the former.[60] Either way, this monument, like the Code of Hammurabi and the other pieces absconded to Susa, had a long history of social memory far removed from Naram-Sin's original intent.

Although many archaeologists have explored the concept of memory, only recently has it been applied as a theoretical tool by archaeologists working on monuments of ancient Anatolia.[61] Felipe Rojas and Valeria Sergueenkova note that several monuments created by the Hittites were reused and reinterpreted in the Greek, Roman, and Byzantine periods in a variety of ways. Perhaps the most compelling example is the "throne" at Kızıldağ, a dizzying rocky outcrop atop a hill overlooking the Konya plain, and inscribed in Hieroglyphic Luwian by the "Great King" Hartapus. This striking monument is made all the more remarkable by the presence of five pairs of engraved footprints on the throne's platform, accompanied by the Greek inscription "The priest Craterus, [son] of Hermocrates, jumped." Apparently, this royal monument was converted to a site for sacred rituals during the Hellenistic or early Roman period, including rituals that may have endangered the life of the cultic performer.[62]

Harmanşah has larger disciplinary objectives, seeking to reorient archaeologists' positivist treatment of landscape monuments to an archaeology of place, by which he means

> a locality that is made meaningful for particular local communities. Places are deeply historical sites of cultural significance, memory, and belonging, while they are constituted and maintained by a spectrum of locally specific practices, past events, stratified material assemblages that are residues of those events, as well as bodily interactions with the physical environment.[63]

The methodological consequence of this stance is no longer to prioritize a monument's original time of construction, but rather to see monuments as continually made and unmade, characterized by episodic cycles of incorporation by local communities. As Harmanşah's evocative chapter-title describes it, "Rock reliefs are never finished." A prime example is the İvriz spring, which

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60. Other agents: Harper and Amiet (1992), 161, 166, with Westenholz (2012), 98. Booty: Bahrani (2003), 164. No *damnatio memoriae*: Feldman (2009), 44.

61. See Alcock (2002) and Bradley (2002); Harmanşah (2014b, 2015a, 2015b).

62. Rojas and Sergueenkova (2014).

63. Harmanşah (2015a), 18.

was the venue for a monumental relief of Warpalawa, king of Tabal, in the eighth century BCE, but by the seventeenth century CE had become a place of healing and pilgrimage.[64] Cases such as these are reminders of monuments' tendency to be reused, reinscribed, and reinterpreted through time, accruing layers of meaning whose disentangling often can be frustratingly speculative.

Conclusion

This chapter has by no means exhausted the questions of how monuments were intended to communicate messages and how those messages were received and subsequently manipulated. It has not treated Riegl's "unintentional" monuments, nor has it considered the problem of scale: just how large does something have to be before we can consider it a "monument"? Given the close iconographic association between Neo-Assyrian cylinder seals and the palace reliefs, for example, we might consider the seals every bit as monumental as the reliefs, despite the great difference in size.[65] In that case, a discussion of Near Eastern monumental communication must expand considerably.

Whatever borders we set for our inquiry, we should remember the principle of relationality—monuments' ongoing dialogue with the people viewing and experiencing them, and their place in society's network of symbols and material culture. In this way we are able to appreciate the multiple and overlapping meanings that the Hittite and Neo-Assyrian sculptors communicated to their audience, whether that message was territorial holdings, royal power, divinely sanctioned authority, or participation in esoteric court intellectual life. Although the monumental statuary of the Near East during the Late Bronze and Iron Age was a rich and complex phenomenon, an appreciation of the reception of these monuments, together with their production—matters of ultimate effect as well as of immediate intent—offers a productive point of entry into this enduring part of the distant past.

64. Harmanşah (2015a), 136–141, 152–153.

65. Winter (2000).

6

Communicating with Images in the Roman Empire

Jennifer Trimble

A DRIVING ASSUMPTION in scholarship on Roman art is that visual images did not simply reflect ideas, preoccupations, or practices of other parts of life, but were themselves important parts of people's lives and collective ways of being and doing. Images expressed values, constructed identity, transmitted political ideas, shaped religious experience, reaffirmed social belonging, and more. In all these ways, Roman images clearly communicated. *How* they did so, and *what* they communicated, are more difficult questions, but answering them is essential for understanding visual culture in the Roman world. This chapter addresses these questions in four parts. First, I briefly review some communicative aspects of Roman art; second, I draw on James Carey's definition of transmission vs. ritual models of communication to help clarify what is at stake. Third, building on these ideas, I describe a phenomenon of image communication characteristic of the first centuries CE. The Roman Empire's enormous size, diversity, and connectivity fostered creative developments in image communication: the fourth section explores them with reference to specific examples.

How Did Roman Images Communicate?

A great deal of research since the 1970s has focused on the ways in which Roman images communicated. Iconography is fundamental. Key indicators of meaning can be found in the depiction of posture, gesture, clothing, attributes held, and the relationships between figures in space. Size mattered; whether

an image was colossal, life-size, or miniature could tell viewers who was represented and for what purpose. Material itself communicated, as in the use of bronze, marble, gilding, or an unusual stone. Style had meaning: archaizing forms gave the correct connotations to religious themes; classicizing arrangements of figures in space were employed to express the dignity of Roman state ceremonial; depictions of battle and work consistently employed other styles.[1]

For imagery to communicate in this way, viewers had to be able to recognize and understand these uses of iconography, style, and context. In fact, the consistency and frequency of these patterns in Roman art suggest that levels of visual literacy were quite high. Especially in the empire's cities, many people lived and worked in a landscape of images, in which visual culture was woven into daily life; visual literacy was acquired early and reinforced often. At the same time, there was clearly a range of visual literacies, and different images seem to have been made accordingly. Some artworks required viewers to have erudite cultural knowledge; they were not intended for a broad viewing audience. In contrast, public monuments were designed for a much wider range of viewers.[2] They typically employed familiar and immediately recognizable visual ideas, even when they also included the nuances of a specific political program. This range allowed them to communicate at different levels of visual literacy.

For example, the Arch of Trajan at Beneventum marked the start of the Via Traiana, newly built as a shorter alternative to the Via Appia between Beneventum and Brundisium (Figure 6.1; Map 6.1). Most viewers, whether local residents or long-distance travelers, surely recognized the form of the arch, the official nature of the inscription (even if they could not read it), standard symbols like the winged Victories in the spandrels, and the repeated and visually emphasized figure of Trajan. Fewer viewers may have understood every last iconographic detail of the relief inside the bay that depicted the *alimenta*, Trajan's program of subsidies for poor children in Italy (Figure 6.2).[3] The key point here is that a full grasp of the Arch's iconography was not required of viewers; the monument communicated at multiple levels of visual literacy at

1. On style as communication, see Hölscher (2004). On the relative value of different materials in the case of honorific statuary, Lahusen (1983).

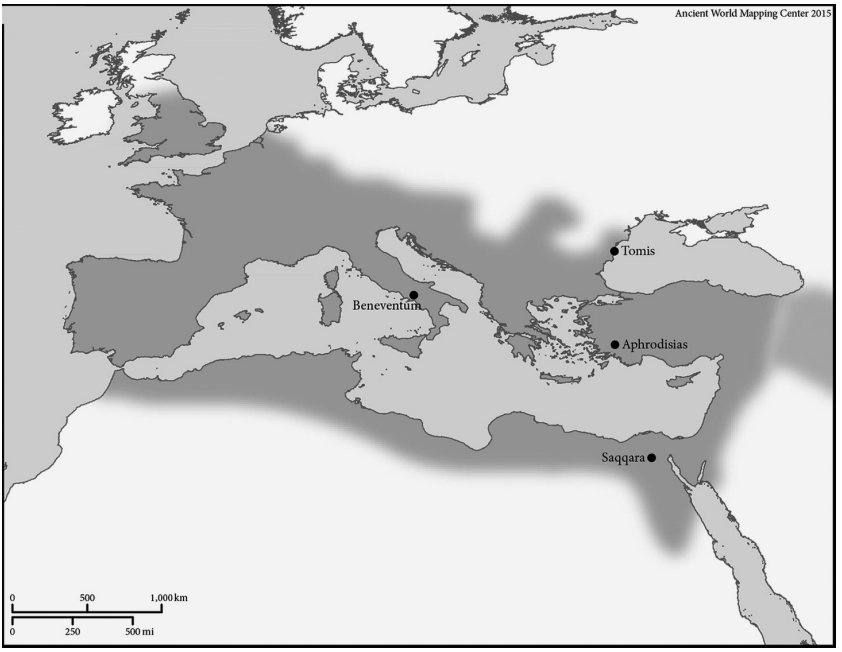
2. On official iconography configured for a broad viewing audience, Hölscher (1984). By contrast, the Portland Vase—intricately carved out of cameo glass and with famously unclear iconography—seems to be a case of élite art that required its viewers to display far more sophisticated knowledge. On erudite viewing, see Squire (2009), 239–355.

3. On the Arch, Kleiner (1992), 224–229, with previous bibliography at 264. Rotili (1972) offers the most numerous and detailed photographs. On levels of (textual) literacy in the Roman world, Harris (1989), nuanced by Mary Beard and others in Humphrey (1991).

FIGURE 6.1 Arch of Trajan at Beneventum, dedicated in 114 CE.
(Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

once. At all levels, it was physically massive and impressive; it reinforced people's understanding of imperial power through its dramatic control over space, architecture, and imagery. The Arch permanently reshaped space and visual experience for all future travelers moving along this roadway.

This example raises an important possibility. Image communication is not just about the iconographic content or intended meaning of an image; it extends to viewing experiences like awe and intimidation. This point raises the question of *what* images communicated. Communication implies some message, effect, or change. What happened or changed for people in relation to images they saw? In response to this question, the scholarship on Roman images has tended to take two directions, focusing either on the content of the message, as described above, or on effects of presence. The latter is a more phenomenological approach and can involve analyzing the physical



MAP 6.1 Extent of the Roman Empire in the first centuries CE

FIGURE 6.2 *Alimenta* relief from the internal passage of the Arch of Trajan at Beneventum.

(Photo by George W. Houston, with permission of Ancient World Image Bank, New York: Institute for the Study of the Ancient World. http://www.flickr.com/photos/isawnyu/ 5613580338, used under terms of a Creative Commons Attribution license)

setting, the ritual or social context, or the sensory experience of encountering an image. One way to sum up these two approaches is that they are respectively concerned with what images *mean* vs. what images *do*. Many studies, of course, take both approaches.

Transmission vs. Ritual Models of Communication

A concept from communication theory helps clarify what is at stake in this distinction. In a classic article of 1975, James Carey articulated the differences between what he termed a "transmission" vs. a "ritual" view of communication.[4] Carey defined the transmission model of communication as concerned primarily with a message transmitted from a sender to an audience. Research questions take shape accordingly: What was the message that was communicated? By what means and mechanisms was it transmitted? Was it successfully transmitted? Carey pointed out two problems with this approach. First, it ignores a great deal—including the makeup and interests of the audience, the social and cultural context, or any function of communication besides getting a message across. Second, the transmission model is strongly linked to control over people and across space and time; Carey connected it to European exploration and imperialism in the early modern period. The transmission model carries ideas about improving other people—not only imperialistic improvement, but also economic and religious, as in the example of missionaries.

In the study of Roman images, not coincidentally, a transmission model of communication has been most productive for the study of imperial ideology and visual programs—precisely the kinds of image-use that are most bound up with power and control. So, for example, state art under Augustus can be understood as taking shape in response to the possibilities and constraints faced by the first *princeps* and his need to persuasively communicate messages about peace after many decades of civil war, the restoration of the Republic, and the legitimacy of his own monarchic power.[5] Thinking in terms of transmission has offered scholars a powerful way to analyze the visual transmissions of Augustus and his successors across the Roman Empire, including the highly ideological depiction of imperial virtues and power in state reliefs, imperial portraiture, coins, and other media.

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4. Carey (1975), cited here from Carey (2009), 11–28.

5. Still fundamental on this visual situation is Zanker (1988).

In other ways, however, the transmission model of communication has been limiting. A major critique has been a lack of attention paid to the audiences and their interests and situation. For example, images made and seen in the Roman provinces used to be judged by the aesthetic standards of the center and evaluated in terms of the spread of Roman cultural practices such as Latin inscriptions, Roman pottery forms, and styles of housing. This spread was seen to be good, improving subjugated peoples and cultures through the civilizing benefits of Roman values and a superior lifestyle. The problem is, of course, that this model of "Romanization" adopts the perspective of the rulers and privileges imperial interests and control. To rectify this bias, more recent work has instead explored the interests and experiences of the conquered peoples. The same images are now interpreted as hybrid forms, valuable for the ways in which they document local responses to imperial conquest.[6]

As an alternative to transmission, Carey identified what he termed the "ritual model" of communication. Ritual communication strengthens a community by creating or affirming the existing social order and a collective understanding of the world. In Carey's words, "a ritual view of communication is directed not toward the extension of messages in space but toward the maintenance of society in time; not the act of imparting information but the representation of shared beliefs."[7] Carey's fundamental example was the religious ceremony, but he also saw ritual communication in a society's art, media, and stories. The ritual model shifts the focus from an individual act of communication toward collective, repeated expressions. It highlights the embedded nature of any communication within a particular social, cultural, economic, and political context. A ritual model of communication accordingly stimulates very different research questions than does a transmission model, and it produces different results.

Thinking about images in this way has also been productive in Roman art history, although the field has developed separately from communication theory and does not employ the same terminology. The most theoretically explicit discussion of what this means for the analysis of images is Jaś Elsner's analysis of sacred viewing.[8] He underlines the crucial importance of ritual ordering and movement, which prepares the viewer, contextualizes the sacred image, and culminates in a viewing constructed as a direct encounter with the divine. For a ritual model of communication, the iconographic content or meaning

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6. For selected references, see nn. 14 and 15 below.

7. Carey (2009), 15.

8. Elsner (1995), esp. 21–48, 88–124; (2007), esp. 1–28. See also the exploration of epiphany and divine presence in Platt (2011).

of a given image is not necessarily its most important aspect. What matter far more are effects of presence and the image's sensory and affective impact on the viewer. Those are constructed outside the image as well as by the image itself, in a variety of cultural, ritual, and situational ways.

In a ritual communication approach, images can be analyzed for the ways in which they made visible the symbolic order (social or political as well as religious), recreated the world for their viewers, reaffirmed collective values, or fostered community. To return to the Arch of Trajan at Beneventum, on one hand, the iconography of the *alimenta* relief (Figure 6.2) transmitted messages about Trajan's welfare program for the children of Italy. At the left, officials distribute food from a low table in the center of the image to children and their fathers at the right. Behind are four female personifications wearing city crowns; at the back on the left, we see the *fasces* of the lictors who accompanied high Roman officials. On the other hand, this relief and the other images on the Arch exemplify ritual communication as well. Over and over again on the Arch, Trajan is seen performing the ritual actions of a good Roman emperor: caring for his people, sacrificing to the gods, ensuring Roman military victory, and so on.[9] This imagery explained the Roman emperor to his subjects in allegorical terms. It also legitimized imperial power by visually affirming collective values.

This example points to the complex ways in which transmission and ritual models of communication can interact. Carey's idealism about ritual communication has been tempered by more recent studies showing how it can strengthen existing structures of authority and forms of dominance.[10] To take another Roman example, in a triumphal procession, paintings of key battles and scenes from the campaign were paraded past the eyes of thousands of viewers, sometimes alongside looted treasures, exotic animals, and high-ranking captives.[11] All this spectacular visual material transmitted messages about what had happened—who the enemies were, what battles had been fought—but it also ritually confirmed Roman power and social relations, collectively binding the spectators into Roman military expansion while weaving the victorious armies back into the fabric of society.

To sum this up, thinking in terms of transmission and ritual models of communication clarifies some of the ideas currently in play in the study of Roman images; it also broadens our sense of what communicating with

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9. These allegorical representations of the emperor's good deeds are described by Fittschen (1972). For a critique of how they relate to the historical themes of the imagery, Gauer (1974).

10. Developments since Carey's first formulation of these ideas are traced in Sella (2007).

11. Beard (2007).

images can do.[12] Such thinking also addresses the problem of conscious vs. unconscious communication. Not everyone involved had to be fully aware of the intentions and mechanisms of image communication for it to work in these ways. Images communicated people's understanding of their world. They also helped construct reality and position people and groups within the world.

New Developments in Image Communication in the First Centuries CE

These ideas help to explain a phenomenon of image communication characteristic of the first centuries CE. The Roman Empire in this period was vast, diverse, and interconnected to an unparalleled degree. By the second century, it extended from Britain to Egypt, from the Straits of Gibraltar to the Black Sea (Map 6.1 and Map 17.1); it encompassed a huge number and range of peoples, polities, languages, and cultural traditions forcibly brought under imperial control. At the same time, the Roman unification of the Mediterranean resulted in greatly increased movement and interactions of people, goods, and ideas.[13] These factors of size, diversity, and connectivity had profound effects on image communication, with creative responses and new developments that have not been fully appreciated as such. In this section, I accordingly lay out the following argument: This period saw an increased proliferation and stability of image use. That visual stability was employed to express complex interactions of place and empire. An important outcome was the creation and affirmation of communities, including new kinds of communities within the empire.

This argument builds on recent work on hybridity and identity in Roman art, but also departs from it. Especially from the 1990s onward, these postcolonial perspectives have productively overturned longstanding colonialist identifications with the interests of the Roman state; they have nuanced our understanding of how cultural interactions work in visual imagery, and they have prioritized local communities' interests and responses to Roman

12. This particular strand of communication theory—on ritual vs. transmission models of communication—by no means represents the full range of either communications theory or ideas about what images communicate and how they do so. It is beyond my scope here to go further, but it should be noted that theoretical work in both communications and art history has grappled with related questions. See, for example, Craig (1999); several of the approaches he discusses are also central to studies of visual imagery.

13. See Chapter 1 above.

conquest.[14] At the same time, some limitations have also emerged for the study of visual imagery. Most of the recent work has examined the period of conquest or shortly after; much less has been done on subsequent visual developments during the imperial period. Concepts of hybridity and identity can remain primarily descriptive and lacking in explanatory power. Hybridity in particular can carry assumptions that there were "pure" cultural traditions that went into the hybrid.[15] This is too static and essentialist a view; rather, in the Roman world, we see long-standing visual traditions in play that were often "hybrid" long before they took on new force and meaning in Roman situations. Finally, an exclusive focus on local responses can lose sight of the larger empire as a shaping structure in people's lives. From this perspective, globalization theory offers helpful ways to keep both the local and the larger scale in play at the same time. While this chapter does not explicitly engage with globalization theory, it benefits from recent archaeological explorations that do.[16]

First, a marked phenomenon of the first centuries CE was the proliferation and stability of image use. The forms and styles employed were sometimes centuries old, but how they were employed was new. This phenomenon is especially striking in light of the very different visual traditions in different parts of the empire. The centuries-old Greek ways of representing the human body had no counterpart in the regions along the Danube river before the Roman period, while Egypt had its own highly developed visual culture, to cite just two of many examples. One of the regime's ideological responses to this diversity was to flood the empire with centrally authorized, replicated portraits of the emperor, in statues, busts, coins, gems, and other media.[17] Visual sameness and repetition in great numbers were fundamental to these transmissions.

This phenomenon of stable image use was by no means restricted to imperial art and ideology; nor did it develop in just one watershed period. Rather, it developed also at lower levels of society and independently of official

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14. The scholarship in this area has been primarily Anglophone and focused on the western empire. A valuable starting-point for different approaches to these issues is Mattingly (1997a); see also Woolf (1998). Derks (1998) offers a methodologically innovative way forward. Jane Webster has been the primary advocate for the value of creolization (closely related to hybridity) in studying Roman art: see, for example, Webster (2003).

15. See the critique by Jiménez (2011). On problems with the concept of identity, Pitts (2007).

16. See Pitts (2008); specific applications to Roman material include Sweetman (2007). For a more abstract and politically committed argument, Hingley (2005).

17. See, for example, Boschung (1993).

interventions, evolving over time. It included the increase and wide distribution of mass-produced objects and imagery around the Mediterranean, which is best understood for the trade in objects made of marble and other decorative stones.[18] Major quarries as well as smaller local ones produced standardized architectural elements, furniture in widely used and repeated shapes, sarcophagi and other funerary monuments, and replicated statuary. These were shipped around the empire, often unfinished and requiring further work at independent workshops at their destinations. All this activity tied the circulation of imagery into economic networks and large-scale consumption. In other media, we see the mass replication of political, mythological, and other imagery on mold-made pottery, lamps, and so on. In brief, the same images were replicated over and over again. A *koine* culture was created, a corpus of widely used forms, styles, and iconography. This visual culture depended on a widespread knowledge of those forms and also fostered it.

Second, this image stability was employed to express complex and varied interplays of empire and place. In the terminology of globalization theory, this is an ancient form of "glocalization," meaning an intersection or simultaneous presence of the local and the global.[19] In ancient terms, we see distinctly local inflections of visual ideas taken from the *koine* culture of the wider imperial world. For example, in Egypt, Cyrenaica, Palmyra, the Balkans, and elsewhere, widespread practices of portraiture were combined with regionally or locally specific visual traditions. Some of the most striking local developments in visual culture arose only within this expanded and interconnected world. At Palmyra, an oasis city situated on important trading routes between Asia and the Mediterranean, and poised between the Roman Empire to the west and the Parthian Empire to the east, the local "Palmyrene" style of art flourished during exactly those centuries in which the city was most involved in the Roman Empire. We can sometimes see a high degree of awareness about these visual interactions of empire and place. In a landmark study of the imperial cult in Asia Minor, Simon Price showed that local communities used visual images, inscriptions, rituals, and other aspects of the imperial cult as a way of defining to themselves the Roman emperor's superhuman position and extraordinary power.[20] Such efforts helped them

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18. A pioneer in this field was John Ward-Perkins; see Dodge and Ward-Perkins (1992). The relevant bibliography is now very large: a partial synthesis is attempted in Trimble (2011), 64–149. For the place of this trade within a broader economic phenomenon, Wilson (2008).

19. For example, Robertson (1995).

20. Price (1984). On local and regional appropriations of wider-world portrait practices, see, for example, Walker (1997). The case of Ghirza in modern Libya is explored by Mattingly

situate themselves within the larger world and reaffirm their own values in relation to it.

Third, these developments in image communication had an important outcome: they helped shape and strengthen communities—sometimes new kinds of communities, as the examples later will make clear. More generally, for the people and communities in the Roman Empire, these visual developments opened up new possibilities for self-expression, self-definition, and the negotiation of who they were within this larger world. The negotiation did not happen in an egalitarian situation. Conquest, taxation, and other forms of control, together with new political and economic opportunities for some parts of society, created an evolving landscape of both winners and losers.[21] More privileged groups always had better access to the resources of image communication, and they disproportionately shaped the visual landscape. Still, different communities and differently situated actors actively exploited the possibilities of image communication. All this should mean that, in the visual culture of the imperial period, we can see a robust network of visual stability, widespread visual literacies, and shared ways of communicating with very different possibilities, difficulties, and ambiguities.

Three Men Wearing the "Armsling" Himation

Three examples will show how this interaction could work. They represent three very different uses of the same visual motif, a man wearing the Greek *himation*, or mantle, in the "armsling" scheme (Figures 6.3, 6.4, and 6.5,). Portraiture in the Roman world treated the head and the body very differently.[22] The head was individualized, more so in the western empire and more so for men; in the Greek East, women, youths, and children were often given

(2003); see also Fontana (1998). On Palmyra's economic and cultural position between two empires, see now Smith II (2013).

21. On globalization theory and ancient Mediterranean connectivity considered in terms of winners and losers, Morris (2003). The example of local élite opportunities in Roman North Africa is discussed by Mattingly (1997b).

22. On head vs. body in Roman portraiture, Stewart (2003), 46–78. How this division works in the case of nude statue bodies is treated by Hallett (2005). On the different treatment of female portraits in Greek visual traditions, including during the Roman imperial period, Dillon (2010). The stock bodies employed in female portraiture are most fully surveyed by Alexandridis (2004); the most popular stock female body is the subject of Trimble (2011). For a detailed study of portrait heads and bodies at Aphrodisias, contextualized more broadly, see Smith et al. (2006).

FIGURE 6.3 Honorific portrait statue of Dometeinos from Aphrodisias, early third century CE. Photo montage: Smith et al. (2006), 172, Figure 19.
(New York University Excavations at Aphrodisias; J. Lenaghan)

generic or idealized facial features and hairstyles. In contrast, from the neck down, the body was typically represented in a generic form or scheme. These stock bodies did not depict the person's actual body, but instead expressed social roles and symbolic values. Women were usually portrayed in a mantle variously configured over a floor-length tunic; nude representations were relatively rare and restricted to funerary contexts. Men could be depicted in heroic nudity or military garb, but were most often represented in formal citizen dress. For this, the Roman toga was standard in the western empire, the Greek *himation* in the east.

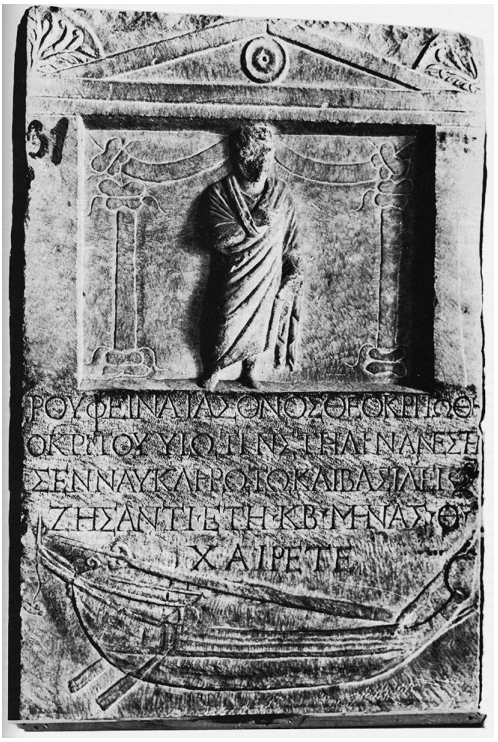

FIGURE 6.4 Gravestone of Theokritos from the Black Sea coast, perhaps Tomis. Institutul de Arheologie "Vasile Pârvan," inv. L 590.
(Institutul de Arheologie "Vasile Pârvan", Bucharest, Romania)

Worn with no tunic underneath, or if the figure was shown seated, the Greek *himation* could represent a philosopher, literary erudition, or traditional values. However, the default way to depict a respectable citizen male, from the Hellenistic period onward, was as a frontal, standing figure wearing a *himation* over a tunic. The scholarship distinguishes two main categories, depending on whether the right arm was depicted as free to move or not. Here, I want to focus on the more common category, in which the *himation* was wrapped around the right arm like an armsling, while the left arm hung down at the side.[23] Images of men dressed in this way had existed for several centuries, but during the Roman imperial period, we see at least two important developments. One seems to be an overall increase in the number of honorific

23. There are variations within the armsling *himation* type, including which leg the figure stands on, but most important for my argument here is the immediate recognizability of this visual emblem: Polaschek (1969); Pfuhl and Möbius (1977–1979) vol. 1, 61–62, 90–107 (discussing the "Normaltypus"); Smith et al. (2006), 36–38, 150–157, plus relevant catalog entries.

FIGURE 6.5 Linen shroud from Saqqara, Egypt, first or second century CE. Musée du Louvre, N 3076.
(RMN-Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY)

statues, gravestones, and other visual images, which would mean there were simply more depictions of men wearing the *himation* than there had been before.[24] A second change was the figure's expanded visual role and its use in new situations as well as traditional ones. It was still found above all in the Greek-speaking eastern empire—my three examples come from there—but the armsling *himation* could now be combined with a range of details in a wide variety of contexts and situations, as the following examples demonstrate.

Dometeinos, a Leading Citizen of Aphrodisias

The first example is the over-life-size portrait statue of Lucius Antonius Claudius Dometeinos Diogenes (*PIR*^{2} C 853) from Aphrodisias (Figure

24. This assertion remains impressionistic; I do not know of any overall counts, but both individual studies and general syntheses of images and image-bearing objects in the Hellenistic and Roman periods point in this direction.

6.3).[25] In the early third century, his statue and one of his niece, Claudia Antonia Tatiana (*PIR*² C 1071), were set up at the two main entrances into the city's *Bouleuterion*. Dometeinos' statue towered over viewers on an inscribed base 2.01 meters in height—itself as tall as many honorific statues. The inscription announced who Dometeinos was and who had honored him with this statue:

> ἡ πατρὶς / Λ(ούκιον) Ἀντ(ώνιον) Κλ(αύδιον) / Δο/μετεῖνον / Διογένην / τὸν νομοθέ/την, πατέρα / καὶ πάππον / συγκλητι/ *vac.* κῶν. *vac.* / τῆς ἀναστάσε/ως τοῦ ἀνδριάν/τος προνοησα/μένου Τιβ(ερίου) Κλ(αυδίου) / Κτήσιου πρεσβυ/τέρου ποιησαμέ/νου δὲ καὶ τὸν *vac.* / βωμὸν αὐτῷ καὶ / τὰ λοιπὰ παρὰ ἑ/αυτοῦ *vac.*
>
> The fatherland (honors) Lucius Antonius Claudius Dometeinos Diogenes, the law-giver, father and grandfather of Roman senators. The setting-up of the statue was seen to by Tiberius Claudius Ktesias the Elder, who also made the base for it, together with what remained, at his own expense.[26]

From this inscription and others at Aphrodisias, we know that Dometeinos' family had had Roman citizenship for many generations, that his benefactions were so extensive that he was eventually made high priest of Asia, and that his sons and grandsons became Roman senators. He and his family were among the wealthiest and most influential people in the province of Asia. His career exemplifies the tremendous advantages and opportunities available to local élites in the Roman Empire.

Dometeinos is portrayed wearing the "armsling" *himation*; he carried a book roll in his left hand, and more book rolls were carved into the supporting marble behind his left foot. These signal his Greek cultural training (*paideia)* and membership in the citizen body of the *polis*. At the same time, Dometeinos' long, priestly hairdo and imposing bust crown represent him as a priest of the imperial cult, a position held only by wealthy civic benefactors. His *himation* would have been painted purple accordingly, and the crown gold. This

25. Aphrodisias Museum, Geyre, Turkey. Inv. 64–221, 64–222, 64–277; Smith et al. (2006): cat. 48, pp. 69–71, 170–176, with earlier bibliography, figs. 19 (p. 70) and 24 (p. 172), pls. 40–42. Height of the base: 2.01m. Height of the statue including the plinth: 2.37m + 0.15m. Height of the complete monument: 4.38m. Statue of Claudia Antonia Tatiana: cat. 96, pp. 69–71, 216–219, fig. 19 (p. 70) and pls. 76–77. On the cultural dimensions of these visual choices, see also Smith (1998).

26. Transcription and translation from Smith et al. (2006), 174.

priestly costume emerged in honorific portraiture in the first two centuries CE. It expressed shared citizen values, while also setting Dometeinos above his fellow citizens.[27] Additional details at the same time connected Dometeinos to Aphrodisias and to the wider world of the empire. The heavy eyelids and the treatment of skin and hair followed Antonine court fashions, even as his choice of a *himation* suit and priestly garb affirmed his commitment to his home city. Similarly, the inscription on the base tells the reader that the local *patris* of Aphrodisias honored him with this statue, while also recording his status as the father and grandfather of Roman senators.

The key point for my argument is that the armsling *himation* scheme functioned as a stable visual building block within an assemblage of imagery and texts; this assemblage created a layered and highly self-conscious representation of a specific person and a specific local situation in relation to the imperial world. The finished statue communicated at both transmission and ritual levels, informing viewers about the position, deeds, and honors of Dometeinos and his family, but also reinforcing collective civic values, reifying the social hierarchy, and explaining Aphrodisias' position in the larger world. Indeed, over and over again, in cities around the empire, men and women belonging to the local élite were visually portrayed as essential links between the local city and the wider world, between the empire's rulers and their subject populations.[28] This imagery grew directly out of the honorific visual economy of the Hellenistic period, but these local élites operated within the Roman world's much wider and more integrated networks of privilege and influence. In this sense, the centuries-old armsling *himation* scheme exemplifies the way in which image communication in the Roman imperial world helped create and strengthen new *kinds* of communities.

Theokritos, a Shipmaster from the Black Sea Coast

The same armsling *himation* scheme could be used in much humbler situations, too, as on a gravestone from the Romanian Black Sea coast, perhaps from Tomis (modern Constanța) carved in the first half of the second century CE (Figure 6.4).[29] It depicts a man in the armsling *himation* scheme, frontally

27. On this priestly form of the *himation* scheme, Smith et al. (2006), 154–156.

28. On the epigraphic evidence for women's civic benefactions, van Bremen (1996).

29. Bucharest, National Museum of Antiquities ("Vasile Pârvan" Institute of Archaeology), Inv. L 590. Marble; 0.85m tall, 0.58m wide, 0.115m thick. The man's face has been struck off. Dated on stylistic grounds. Pfuhl and Möbius (1977–1979) vol. 1, no. 232, p. 104, with earlier bibliography, pl. 45; see also vol. 2, no. 232b, p. 291. Bordenache (1969), G 168.

posed and holding a book roll in his left hand. He stands within a deeply carved aedicula that fills the upper half of the stele; behind him are garlanded columns incised in much lower relief. His mother's commemorative inscription is just below:

> Ῥουφεῖνα Ἰάσονος Θεοκρίτῳ Θε/οκρίτου υἱῷ τὴν στήλην ἀνέστη/σεν ναυκλήρῳ τῷ καὶ βασιλεῖ / ζήσαντι ἔτη κβ' μῆνας θ'. / Χαίρετε.
>
> Roupheina daughter of Jason set up this stele for Theokritos son of Theokritos, her son, a shipmaster, also called Basileus.[30] He lived 22 years, 9 months. Farewell.

Under the inscription, a two-masted merchant vessel is carved in low relief. At the left, two steering-oars flank the stern. The mainmast is unstepped and lies across the length of the ship. At the right, a smaller foremast rests against the prow. Such rigging and equipment were typical of seagoing freight-carrying ships; this was not a riverboat, nor a small boat working in a harbor.[31]

This image is very different from Dometeinos' statue at Aphrodisias. We have moved from public civic space and honorific politics into burial practices and commemoration. Theokritos' gravestone is only 0.85 meters high, compared to the towering 4.38-meter combined height of Dometeinos' statue and base. The proportions of this tiny *himation*-man shrink as the eye moves down his body, in contrast to the classical proportions and virtuoso detailing of the statue at Aphrodisias. Roupheina and Theokritos both have Greek-style filiations showing that they were free-born, and Theokritos' responsible job is stated with apparent pride, but there is no mention here of Roman citizenship or civic honors. This gravestone operated at a more private level than Dometeinos' statue, and at a much lower level of wealth and status. Still, there are revealing similarities.

Here again, the armsling *himation* was employed as a stable visual building block in constructing a specific identity and local situation. Here again, the imagery worked at several scales of reference simultaneously. It linked this individual to his immediate family, to the regional connections of a *naukleros* operating a merchant ship, and to the Greek cultural traditions widely

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30. On this reading of βασιλεῖ, Stoian (1987), no. 186 (22), p. 212. There are other attestations of *Basileus* used as a name in Tomis and the region, including in connection with a *naukleros*: Barbulescu and Buzoianu (2009), 395 (discussion at no. 3).

31. Casson (1994), 101–140. *Naukleros* could refer to a shipowner, a transporter of goods, or a ship captain: Vélissaropoulos (1980), 1. On epigraphic evidence for an association of *naukleroi* at Tomis in the second century CE, Stoian (1987), no. 60 (26), pp. 90–91.

practiced in the eastern Roman Empire. The gravestone's words and images assembled a multifaceted identity for the dead man, including his name and filiation, participation in Greek civic values, highly skilled and responsible position as a shipmaster, untimely death, and mother's grief. The gravestone transmitted messages about who Theokritos was, but it also communicated at a ritual level. It connected the dead man to collective values, reassured the bereaved that Theokritos had been properly cared for in death, and provided mourners with a focus for rituals of grief and commemoration.

The individual elements of Theokritos' gravestone and the way they are put together are highly formulaic and conventional[32]—as were the structure and many of the visual and epigraphic elements of Dometeinos' statue. These characteristics are fundamental to the way *koine* visual culture worked. Theokritos' gravestone gained its commemorative power from the open-ended interplay of conventional elements. For example, the image of the ship affirms his profession as *naukleros*, but it also suggests a symbolic meaning in the finality and stillness of the unstepped mast. His gravestone presented mourners and other viewers with evocative juxtapositions of image and text, land and sea, grieving mother and dead son, a time-specific death and timeless commemoration.

A Young Man Buried at Saqqara in Roman Egypt

My last example is a linen shroud or wall hanging from Saqqara, the necropolis of ancient Memphis (Figure 6.5).[33] Painted in the first or second century CE, it depicts three life-size figures standing on a papyrus skiff. At the center is a young man wearing a *himation* in the armsling scheme over a tunic with two narrow purple stripes, or *clavi*. He stands barefoot on a plinth, with his

32. Cf. other gravestones from the Greek east in the imperial period depicting a single man wearing the armsling *himation*: Pfuhl and Möbius (1977–1979) vol. 1, 90–107, and plates 34–47. None of these gravestones is identical to any other, but they show repeated patterns and conventional elements, including architectural frames of various kinds, one or two small serving figures (not seen on our example), and sometimes additional images such as the funerary feast, a rider, or family groupings.

33. Paris, Musée du Louvre, N 3076. Tempera on linen. 1.75m long; 1.25m wide. The most detailed publication is Aubert et al. (2008), cat. 23, pp. 137–141, with full bibliography. The (disputed) date is based on the facial portrait of the young man; for reasons unknown, it was painted on a separate piece of linen and inserted into this fabric. Acquired in the late nineteenth century, its original context is unknown, but it is similar to several other funerary cloths from Saqqara. Some are worn in ways that suggest that they were used as shrouds for a body; others are in unusually good condition, suggesting that they had a different use, perhaps as wall-hangings during funerary rituals.

weight mostly on the left leg and the right slightly bent; he holds a rose-petal garland in his left hand. His head was painted on a separate piece of fabric and inserted into this one. At the left is the god Osiris, depicted as a mummy with elaborate linen wrappings in a rhomboid pattern. Osiris wears the *atef* crown and holds the crook and flail.[34] Jackal-headed Anubis stands at the right, wearing a striped headdress with a lunar disk on top. His garment has green feathers down the front; like his black skin, these symbolize regeneration. Anubis embraces the young man, leading him from death toward eternal life.

This is a remarkable mix of Greco-Roman and Egyptian visual idioms. The young man's head-portrait is one of more than one thousand from Roman Egypt; they were painted in a Greco-Roman style on wood or linen, and were included in the mummification of the dead.[35] Occasionally, as here, the entire body is represented in the visual language of wider-world portrait practices. In her study of funerary art in Roman Egypt, Christina Riggs compellingly explains this culturally mixed imagery in terms of its ritual functions.[36] One of her key insights is that the deceased was represented differently at different stages of transfiguration. At the start of the process, it was important to show the deceased as lifelike, including the depiction of his or her social status and values. Portraits painted in a Greco-Roman visual idiom accomplished this very well. On the Saqqara shroud, the young man's wide eyes, the naturalistic shapes of his face and features, and his tousled, curly hair all create the appearance of a recognizable individual. The armsling *himation* scheme, the plinth below his feet, the depiction of a *contrapposto*, and the corresponding curve in his body all draw from contemporaneous visual practices of portrait statuary. They do not mean that the young man actually had a portrait statue in life; their function was instead to represent the young man in the visual terms of civic life.

It is from this stage closest to life that Anubis leads the young man deeper into the process of transfiguration. Later stages drew on traditional Egyptian iconography and style. Anubis' head, hips, legs, and feet are shown in strict profile, while his shoulders are seen in three-quarter view; Osiris is fully frontal.

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34. Siegfried Morenz (1957) has made the controversial argument that this figure represents the same young man a second time, now depicted as Osiris and in this way demonstrating his successful mummification and transfiguration.

35. Until the late twentieth century, the Egyptian aspects were often ignored and the portraits treated as isolated artworks. Recent scholarship has productively reevaluated this material in relation to its historical and ritual uses; see further Borg (2010), with substantial bibliography.

36. Riggs (2005). Mummification in the Roman period drew on pharaonic ideas and traditions, but did not replicate them to the same degree of technical or ritual care: Taylor (1997).

Four canopic jars, their lids figured as the heads of the four sons of Horus, occupy the upper registers between the figures. Just outside the young man's right calf is an image of Anubis holding the scales, while below, black skeletal figures may represent the souls of the damned. Above the young man's right shoulder sits a protective winged lion; above Osiris' right shoulder, a servant uses a *shaduf* to raise life-giving water from the Nile. In other words, the choice of a Greco-Roman or Egyptian visual idiom played an important communicative role. Form and style mattered, but not as an expression of the ethnic identity of the deceased or his family. At a transmission level, this mixed imagery communicated a message about who and what the deceased person was in life, and it made visible the stages of transfiguration. At a ritual level, the same imagery ensured the proper treatment of the dead, helped reconstitute the family after the loss of one of its members, and confirmed community values.

This example is strikingly different from Dometeinos' statue or Theokritos' gravestone, but here again we see the armsling *himation* employed as a stable visual building block within a complex visual assemblage. This motif seems to have been valued here for its ability to link the dead man to the civic values of public life; in fulfilling this function, it also served the needs of Egyptian mummification. On the Saqqara shroud, the dead man is shown participating in both worlds at once, in a culturally and temporally layered representation of who he was and what was happening to him. Here again, we see a highly self-conscious engagement with the visual culture of the wider imperial world, strongly inflected by local needs and traditions. And here again we see communication with images helping to create and affirm new kinds of communities. The subjects and viewers of portrait mummies did not share an ethnicity in a modern sense; "Greek" and "Egyptian" were complex legal categories in Roman Egypt, configured differently than in the Ptolemaic period and largely dependent on citizen status, socio-economic level, and location of residence.[37] This culturally mixed funerary imagery seems to have been employed by the wealthiest families in the smaller towns of Roman Egypt, outside the main cities. Not everyone in those cities—or even within a single family—was buried in the same way; this kind of mixed imagery was part of expensive burials, and is found only selectively at any given site.[38] In other words, this imagery seems to have constructed local difference and family hierarchy as much as it affirmed a translocal community and connection to the wider world.

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37. Bagnall (1997).

38. At Marina el-Alamein, the best-known archaeological context for mummy portraits, only one tomb—the largest and most elaborate of those excavated—held portrait mummies. Within that tomb, not all the bodies had been mummified, and not all the mummies were given portraits: see Daszewski (1997).

Conclusions

This chapter has argued that the size, diversity, and connectivity of the Roman Empire in the world of the first centuries CE fostered creative new developments in image communication. To think in terms of transmission and ritual communication has assisted our understanding of this creativity. In three specific examples, we have seen the armsling *himation* scheme employed in a wide range of situations: for the honorific statue of a well-connected and wealthy imperial priest at Aphrodisias; for the gravestone of a young shipmaster on the Black Sea coast; and for the funerary rites of a young man at Saqqara. Whether sculpted in the round, carved in relief, or painted; whether reproduced at a small scale or more than life-size; whether the man portrayed was youthful (as in the case of Theokritos and the Saqqara shroud), or elderly (as in the case of Dometeinos), this visual scheme illustrated an important phenomenon of image communication in the Roman Empire.

Sameness was fundamental. There is no evidence that these three armsling *himatia* copied an important original. Nor is there élite emulation here; there is no sign that Theokritos' depiction in an armsling *himation* indicated aspirations to the honorific statuary available to a man like Dometeinos. Instead, the value of the scheme lay above all in its repeatability and its immediate recognizability across distance, time, and social strata. In this stable aspect, the armsling *himation* was one visual form among many circulating in the first centuries CE. This visual culture relied on the widespread repetition of known images and visual motifs.

At the same time, the armsling *himation* scheme was incomplete on its own. It required at least a head and a physical context; in practice, as the examples discussed have demonstrated, it could be combined with a surprising variety of associated figures, styles, texts, and ritual practices. Difference was as important as sameness and repetition; they worked in tandem. The people involved were self-conscious and sophisticated about who they were, and how and where they stood in relation to the larger world. This distinctiveness is most apparent in the case of Dometeinos, by far the wealthiest and best-connected of these men; but all three examples communicate multiple layers of identity and different scales of reference at once, from the individual through the immediate family to various aspects of the larger world.

In each case, image communication helped define and strengthen communities; the latter included new kinds of communities. Dometeinos' career attests to the extraordinary new opportunities available to local élites in this period; his portrait statue participated in the legitimation of those élites as essential links between city and empire. The gravestone of Theokritos the

naukleros helped define a community that commemorated its dead in similar ways, that practiced (or at least identified with) traditional Greek cultural values, and that was also deeply involved in the empire's commercial networks. The Saqqara shroud, with its thoughtful mix of Greco-Roman and Egyptian imagery, helped ensure the dead man's passage into the afterlife; it also linked his family to similar practices among people in other towns of Roman Egypt.

Three images make for a tiny sample size. Moreover, they are all restricted to portraiture. On the other hand, one reason why portraiture was in such wide use across the Roman Empire may have been its capacity to mediate in this way between sameness and difference, empire and locality. If nothing else, these three examples point toward how complex and variegated visual communication was in the first centuries CE. We see here a dynamic aspect of Roman imperial visual culture, one that extended far beyond portraiture. Visual images communicated who people and groups thought they were and how they expressed their own situations within the larger world.

7

Musical Persuasion in Early Greece

Timothy Power

ANCIENT HELLENIC MUSIC was a broader cultural field than music nowadays tends to be. Most importantly, musical sound did not occupy a realm separate from poetry.[1] Rather, both were integral components of *mousikê*, the art or craft of the Muses, the tutelary divinities of music-making and poetry. Virtually all poets were also musicians and composers. Indeed, while Greeks did make and appreciate instrumental music, music's default setting was some type of song. Certain kinds of verse—those classified as lyric or, more generally and more accurately, melic (from *melos*, "melody, tune")—were sung to the accompaniment of a reed or stringed instrument (often the lyre, whence the adjective "lyric"). The texts of Sappho, Anacreon, Pindar, and other melic poets were originally set to musical scores that, because of deficiencies in notation, were mostly forgotten by the end of the Hellenistic period and now are lost. Other kinds of verse, most notably the dactylic hexameters of the Homeric epics, were intoned with minimal articulation beyond the natural pitch of the language, and without the use of instruments. Yet this type of performance, which may not seem musical to us, was as much *mousikê* as melic performance was. Furthermore, dancing commonly accompanied song, particularly the songs performed by choral ensembles during religious festivals.

Mousikê encompassed a wider range of communicative contexts and functions than does music today. Early Greece was, to use John Herington's phrase, a "song culture" in which poetry set to music affected practically all aspects of

1. Useful overviews of *mousikê* may be found in Barker (1984); Gentili (1988), 24–49; Comotti (1989); West (1992); Anderson (1994). The essays in Murray and Wilson (2004) are indispensable.

life.[2] In the largely pre- and para-literate Archaic and Classical *polis*, song was the main vehicle of cultural transmission—significantly, the mother of the Muses is Mnemosyne, "Memory."[3] Cosmogonies, theogonies, sagas of war, dynastic struggle, and civic foundations—all were preserved by the Muses, who notionally disclosed them to bards such as Homer and Hesiod, who in turn communicated this material to their fellow mortals. The prefatory invocations of the Muse or Muses in their songs served to guarantee the authority of their contents.

We should distinguish between private and public contexts of musical communication. A well-documented example of the former is the symposium, the ritualized party at which men, primarily (but not solely) of the aristocracy, gathered to drink wine and sing songs accompanied by the lyre or reed pipes called *auloi* (which sounded somewhat like the modern-day oboe).[4] The texts of sympotic songs—both anonymous ditties and works attributed to famous poets such as Anacreon and Theognis—articulated and preserved, through constant performance, the beliefs and moral codes shared by the group. As the preserved lyrics of Alcaeus attest, drinking songs also commented on current political events. Song, rather than speech, was accordingly the foremost kind of communication during symposia.

In this context, music was also a means of non-verbal, symbolic communication. Since musical connoisseurship and competence were badges of social distinction, the act of taking up the lyre and skillfully singing a traditional tune was an opportunity for each symposiast to display to his companions his *savoir faire*, and thus to affirm his membership in their circle. A well-educated, culturally refined gentleman could in fact simply be called *mousikos*, "musical." In Classical Athens (as in other cities, though evidence beyond Athens is slim), boys of well-to-do families underwent primary education with a *kitharistês*, a lyre teacher and music-master. The schoolroom was a sort of conservatory, where students learned the basics of lyre-playing and a repertoire of canonical lyric songs as well as poems for recitation.[5] These lessons in *mousikê* instilled traditional moral and aesthetic values. More profoundly, the experience of learning and performing dignified melodies and rhythms was thought to shape the student cognitively and emotionally, making him

2. Herington (1985), 3–4.

3. Hes. *Theog.* 53–62.

4. On the symposium and sympotic song, see now Hobden (2013); Wecowski (2014); Steiner (2012); cf. Bowie (1986); Murray (1990).

5. Note Ar. *Nub.* 961–972, *Eq.* 984–991; Pl. *Prt.* 325c–326c.

not only musically competent in the symposium, but also conspicuous in the civic realm for his speech and comportment. As a fifth-century sophist much concerned with musical education, Damon of Oa, is said to have remarked, "A boy singing and playing the lyre should exhibit not only his manliness and self-control, but also his sense of justice."[6]

Much less is known about the role of music among private groups of women and girls as well as of lower- and middle-class Greeks of both sexes. We do know, however, from the lyric poetry of Sappho (late seventh century) and from Athenian vase paintings of the Classical period that some aristocratic women, at least, were trained in *mousikê* and made music with one another at gatherings in homes and religious sanctuaries (Figure 7.1).[7] Sappho's lyrics, which record the feelings and experiences of her circle of friends in the Lesbian city of Mytilene, suggest that song-making served much the same functions for them as it did for male symposiasts.[8]

As for public contexts, regular and occasional festivals featured new and old songs by solo singers and citizen choruses. Besides transmitting myths, legends, and genealogies, these performances maintained religious beliefs and social values important for collective identity and civic ideology.[9] Two examples are illustrative. First, in Plato's *Timaeus*, one of the interlocutors, Critias, relates a childhood memory of the Apatouria festival in Athens, the occasion when boys were enrolled in phratries.[10] They competed in a contest in rhapsody, the chant-like recitation of verses. (Professional rhapsodes intoned the Homeric epics at festivals.) Many of the boys "sang" (*aeidein*)—the slippage between recitation and singing is telling—the poetry of Solon, the sixth-century Athenian lawgiver and poet-composer. Since Solon composed his verses in the first person, the young Athenians singing these songs were publicly—and, true to the Greek agonistic spirit, competitively—imitating this Athenian founding father. Moreover, because the songs defended Solon's social and political program, the boys were communicating Solonian wisdom to their contemporaries and, through this civic display of their musicianship, demonstrating their own readiness to become leading citizens and stewards of traditional culture.[11]

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6. D–K 37 B 4. Cf. Pl. *Prot.* 326a–b. On Damon, see Wallace (2004), (2015). All dates are BCE.

7. For female musicians in Attic vase painting, see Bundrick (2005), 92–102.

8. Caciagli (2011) offers a valuable recent discussion.

9. Cf. Stehle (1997); Kowalzig (2007).

10. Pl. *Ti.* 21b.

11. Cf. Stehle (1997), 65–66.

FIGURE 7.1 Two women, one playing a lyre: Red-figure *pelike*, Polygnotos group, fifth century BCE.

Musée du Louvre, G 543.(Photo: Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY, ART53620)

A second example comes from Archaic Sparta, where Alcman composed *partheneia*, or "maiden songs," for choruses of Spartan girls. In the first section of Alcman's best-preserved *partheneion*, the girls sing of a destructive feud between mythical Spartan dynasts, a tale of social disorder and impiety whose relevance to contemporary Sparta is highlighted by a series of aphorisms.[12] Thereafter, the choral song turns self-referential. The girls sing of themselves, commenting on their appearance and emotions, on their affection for their (apparent—much here remains obscure) chorus leaders, Hagesichora and Agido, and on the performance they are delivering. Many scholars regard this *partheneion* as a libretto for an adolescent *rite de passage*.[13]

As at the Apatouria, then, *mousikê* was the medium through which Spartan society witnessed the ritual initiation of its youth. But this performance communicated a complex set of messages. The girls sang for the pleasure and

12. *PMGF* 1.1–39.

13. Calame (2001); cf. Ferrari (2011).

edification of their audience while showing their fitness as future wives and mothers of citizens.[14] Their choral display was itself socially exemplary, a visual and sonic model of collective order.[15] The girls also sang to one another, expressing their collective identity, mutual affinities, and group hierarchy. Finally, they sang for the divinity at whose festival they performed and to whose local cult they were devoted. Toward the end of the *partheneion*, the chorus asserts, "I desire most of all to please Aotis," Aotis being a dawn goddess that scholars have variously identified with Artemis, Aphrodite, or the locally divinized Helen.[16]

The performance of a chorus such as Alcman's was a spectacular form of cultic worship, an appeal delivered on behalf of the entire community to a god or gods, in whom it was meant to produce pleasure and goodwill. The first book of the *Iliad* contains a paradigm of such choral communication with the divine. In an effort to persuade Apollo to lift the plague sent upon the Greeks at Troy, a chorus of Achaean youths "went about propitiating the god with song and dance, singing beautifully"; for his part, Apollo "felt delight in his heart as he listened."[17]

Early Greek culture recognized the persuasive force of music as a whole. "Persuasion (*peithô*)," Plutarch says, was regarded as "something musical (*mousikon*) and dear to the Muses."[18] Greek authors routinely speak of music as persuasion caused by enchantment.[19] The fourth-century historian Ephorus of Cyme said that music was introduced into human society "for the purpose of beguilement (*apatê*) and spellcasting (*goêteia*)."[20]

Instrumental sound and the singing voice were both regarded as sweeter and more moving than the speaking voice.[21] By the same token, musicality was

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14. For the educative aspects of the choral training of girls in Archaic Greece, see Ingalls (2000); Calame (2001).

15. For the chorus as an ideal of social order, note Xen. *Oec.* 8.3–4. In the utopian city of his *Laws*, Plato greatly expands the historical function of choral performance for maintaining sociopolitical equilibrium: Prauscello (2012); Kowalzig (2013).

16. *PMGF* 1.87–88.

17. *Il.* 1.472–474. Choral song as akin to offering or sacrifice: Svenbro (1984); Wilson (2000), 11–12. As an element of sacrifice: Naiden (2012), 22, 59–62, 151–153. Furley (1995) discusses the persuasive language of cultic hymns.

18. Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 745d.

19. On musical enchantment and responses to *mousikê* more generally, see Peponi (2012). For the incantatory effects of early Greek sung language, Segal (1974).

20. *FGrH* 70 F 8 = Polyb. 4.20.5.

21. Cf. West (1992), 42–44.

an asset for an orator.[22] A Roman authority on rhetorical training, Quintilian, advises would-be orators to study music, citing the legendary lyre-singer Orpheus as a model for the effective public speaker.[23] The theme is an old one. Plato says of Protagoras, the itinerant sophist whose lectures amazed fifth-century Greek audiences, "like Orpheus, he charms with his voice, and those charmed by his voice follow him about." Perhaps thinking of Orpheus, the sophist Gorgias of Leontini compares persuasive speeches to *epôidai*, "incantations," that bewitch the soul.[24] It probably came as no great surprise to his audience when an orator of the Second Sophistic, Dio Chrysostom, confessed that he listened with greater pleasure to expert singers than to orators.[25]

The persuasive speaker could also resemble a piper. Alcibiades tells Socrates, "Indeed, you're a far more wondrous piper than Marsyas. He entranced people by means of his instrument. . . . But you differ from him only in that without an instrument you accomplish the same thing, by means of bare words."[26] The comparison of Socrates to Marsyas, the master piper of myth, points up the irresistibility of the philosopher's speech: the force exerted by the plangent, penetrating tones of well-played *auloi* over mind, body, and soul was legendary.[27]

The musical enchanter par excellence, however, was Orpheus, whose lyre songs animated rocks and trees, calmed savage Thracians and wild animals, and even swayed the will of the gods. His sung appeal to Hades and Persephone to release his wife Eurydice from the Underworld remains still, alongside the captivating song of the Sirens, the paradigm of musical persuasion in the Western tradition. But other mythical lyre-singers commanded similar powers: Hermes's lyre persuaded Apollo to relinquish his anger, and his cattle, while Amphion's charmed stones into arranging themselves into the city-walls of Thebes.[28]

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22. As Demosthenes (3.288) complained, it was for his rival Aeschines, who had the advantage of having been a tragic actor-singer: see E. Hall (1999), (2002).

23. Quint. *Inst.* 1.10.9–33.

24. Pl. *Prot.* 315a; Gorg. *Encomium* 10; cf. Pl. *Euthphr.* 290a.

25. Dio Chrys. 19.4. Some writers on rhetoric and oratory argue that eloquence is more persuasive than music; their defensiveness is telling. According to the author of *On the Sublime*, the sounds of the *aulos* and lyre, while moving, are merely "images and spurious imitations of persuasion" compared to the artful arrangement of words (39.1–3). See also Cic. *De Or.* 2.34; Quint. *Inst.* 9.4.10–13.

26. Pl. *Symp.* 215b–c.

27. See, for example, Soph. *Trach.* 217; Dio Chrys. 1.1–2; Quint. *Inst.* 1.10.32.

28. *Hymn. Hom. Merc.* 420–23; Hes. fr. 182 M–W. Note too the story of Arion in Hdt. 1.23–24.

Myth and poetry obviously exaggerated the enchanting effects of *mousikê*, but they doubtless reflected a widely held belief in its uncanny ability to move and manipulate listeners. Indeed, some of the foremost intellectuals of Classical Greece constructed elaborate theoretical systems around this belief, implicating music not only in the ethical formation and behavior of individuals, but in the constitution of the *polis* as well. Plato's Socrates could take it for granted that "rhythm and melodic mode (*harmonia*) introduce themselves into the depths of the soul, and touch it with great vigor."[29] And, citing Damon of Oa, an influential exponent of musical "ethos theory," Socrates affirms: "Styles (*tropoi*) of *mousikê* are nowhere changed without affecting the most important laws and customs (*nomoi*) of the *polis*."[30]

Music as a medium of persuasion, and especially as an influence on politics, is the subject of the rest of this chapter. Two texts—one Archaic from Solon, the other Classical from Pindar—illustrate these themes. Whereas the examples of musical communication reviewed above were consensual and conservative, these texts present song-making as an agent of change, even disruption. Following the discussion of these texts, we turn to Athenian *khorêgoi*, who manipulated the institutions of civic musical culture to burnish their public images and advance their political self-interest.

Solon's Protest Song

Let us begin with a short fragment from the *Salamis* elegy of Solon. The interpretation of the fragment must depend to some extent on the intriguing yet problematic testimony about its performance supplied by Plutarch.[31] He reports that the Athenians, tired of fighting the Megarians for control of the island of Salamis, passed a law that no citizen should agitate for Athens to take the contested territory. Solon disagreed with the decision to abandon Salamis, as did many young, hawkish Athenians, and he decided to reignite the city's passion for war with a ruse. He first circulated a rumor that he had gone mad, then:

> having secretly composed an elegiac poem and having practiced it so that he could perform it orally, he leapt out suddenly into the agora,

29. Pl. *Resp*. 3.401d.

30. Pl. *Resp*. 4.424c, with 3.398c–402a. Cf. Anderson (1966); Wallace (2004); Pelosi (2010).

31. Plut. *Sol*. 8.1 = Solon fr. 1 West.

> wearing a felt cap. When a large crowd had assembled, he mounted the herald's stone and in song went through the elegy, whose beginning is:
>
> I myself, a herald, come from lovely Salamis, | composing a song (*ôidê*), an orderly arrangement of words (*kosmos epeôn*), instead of prosaic speech (*agorê*). . . .
>
> This very gracefully composed poem, entitled *Salamis*, is 100 verses long. After Solon had sung it and his friends began to praise him—particularly Peisistratus, who urged on the citizens and made them eager to obey Solon's words—the Athenians repealed the law and again took up the war, appointing Solon commander.

Polyaenus, who gives much the same account as Plutarch, adds that Solon "won the war by means of *mousikê*"; that is, thanks to his persuasive act of musico-poetic communication.[32]

Plutarch's contention that with his elegy Solon intended to reverse public policy, or at least popular opinion, must be accurate; the remaining three couplets preserved from the song indicate as much.[33] Most scholars today, however, reject much of the rest of his account—the law against advocating war in writing or speech (but not song), the feigned madness, and the theatrics. They hold that Solon's statements in his initial couplet were rhetorical rather than literal. Over the past few decades, a consensus has emerged that this elegy, like others of the time, was performed in symposia. Its premiere performance took place amid symposiasts who were intimates. (In Plutarch's account, these are the enthusiastic friends in the agora, including Solon's young relative Peisistratus, who would seize tyrannical rule in 561.) From there Solon would have expected it to be communicated across the city at large through re-performances.[34]

In the song culture of Solon's time, new songs, even relatively long ones such as the *Salamis*, would in all probability have been transmitted from one drinking-party to the next via symposiasts, and then, in some cases, from sympotic milieux to the whole *polis*. Already in the *Odyssey*, banqueters

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32. Polyaen. 1.20.1. A later, somewhat different account: Diog. Laert. 1.46. In the fourth century, Demosthenes seems to allude to the story in a speech (19.252, 255). Cf. Noussia-Fantuzzi (2010), 203–207, on the likely early date for the story.

33. Solon frs. 2–3 West.

34. Sympotic performance: Bowie (1986), 18–22; Irwin (2005), 41–42. Public performance: Herington (1985), 34. Battle exhortation occurs elsewhere in Archaic elegy composed for sympotic (note Callinus fr. 1 West) and quasi-sympotic occasions (such as the military banquets that were probably the setting for the elegies of Tyrtaeus); see Bowie (1990).

desired "the newest song to reach their ears," in this case the bard Phemius' tale of the recent travails of Achaean heroes returning from Troy.[35] Solon himself plays a leading role in an anecdotal account of the sympotic transmission of a song. At a symposium, he hears his nephew performing a song by Sappho, his contemporary; enraptured, he demands to be taught it on the spot. The story, related by an author of the Roman imperial period, Aelian, is most likely apocryphal, yet it surely captures the vogue for new songs at Archaic symposia.[36]

The lyric poetry of Sappho's compatriot, Alcaeus, offers a parallel to the *Salamis*. His songs attack the leaders of rival factions (*hetaireiai*) in Mytilene, above all the demagogue Pittacus, who had won power there around 600. In these works, the poet-singer addressed himself primarily to members of his own, aristocratic faction. But it is difficult to believe that Alcaeus was content merely to preach to the choir, as it were. He may well have intended his songs to propagate his views among other aristocratic Mytileneans hostile toward leaders like Pittacus, and sufficiently cultured—*mousikos*—to sing his compositions at their own symposia.[37] Alcaeus was, after all, a consistent loser in the struggle for power. According to both the biographical tradition and his own verses, he was driven into exile, where, cut off from civic life, he "longed to hear the Assembly summoned and the Council."[38] "Protest music" may have given Alcaeus a political voice that he would have lacked otherwise.

Solon was never the political outsider Alcaeus was, but he too used *mousikê* as an alternative to official modes of civic discourse, and his *Salamis* was in its own way a protest song. In the initial couplet, Solon dramatizes the elegy's performance as the authoritative public announcement of a herald, but speaks of an *ôidê*, or "song," instead of an *agorê*, the prosaic "speech" that a herald would use, or that speakers would use in an assembly.[39] The appositional phrase *kosmos epeôn* suggests, however, that an *ôidê* is in fact more suitable than an

35. *Od.* 1.351–352.

36. Apud Stob. 3.29.58.

37. Rösler (1980) argues that Alcaeus composed *only* for his restricted sympotic group, since the fragmentarily preserved texts do not directly address the wider citizenry of Mytilene, but the argument is needlessly limiting. Cf. Parker (1981); Walker (2000), 215–216.

38. Alc. fr. 130b.3–5 Voigt.

39. Cf. Anhalt (1993), 122. The word *agorê* is the Ionic dialect equivalent of Attic *agora*. In Homer, *agorê* may denote either a "speech in prose"—as Solon clearly means it—or "(place of) assembly." Semantic confusion may have contributed to the belief that the elegy was sung in the Athenian agora. Cf. Noussia-Fantuzzi (2010), 205, 213.

agorê in times of political crisis such as the Salamis affair.[40] The melodic and rhythmic structure of music—here, not only the singing voice, but probably also the *aulos*, which regularly accompanied Archaic elegy—confers *kosmos*, an aesthetically satisfying arrangement or ordering.[41] Solon implies that the beautiful *kosmos* of song can achieve what mere speech cannot: to persuade listeners to take up arms.[42]

Kosmos also denotes political, social, and moral order.[43] We saw above that musical training and practice were thought to instill ethics and proper comportment—in a word, a kind of *kosmos*.[44] If we link these ideas, we may say that Solon's "cosmic song," besides being a harmonious composition, offered Athens a model of the sociopolitical and moral *kosmos* that the city had lost because of its unseemly neglect of Salamis. The phrase *kosmos epeôn* might even recall the epic use of the verb *kosmein* to describe the marshaling of troops for battle.[45] Music "marshals" the words intended to mobilize Athenians for war against Megara.[46]

The notion that music could model and even bring about social order is well attested for Archaic Sparta. Plutarch reports the story that the lawgiver Lycurgus prepared the then-fractious Spartans to accept his constitutional reform, which was actually called *kosmos*, by bringing to them Thaletas (also known as Thales), a Cretan composer of lyric and choral *mousikê*.[47] Thaletas,

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40. On the sense and syntax of the phrase, Noussia-Fantuzzi (2010), 211–212; Gentili (1988), 50.

41. For the musical structure of Archaic elegy, which may in some cases have been quite complex, see Faraone (2008); for performance, Budelmann and Power (2013).

42. The lyric songs of Demodocus and Hermes that move audiences to tears and joy (respectively) are sung "according to *kosmos*" (*Od.* 8.489–491, *Hymn. Hom. Merc.* 433–435). However, musicians do not have a monopoly on such expression. Skilled orators are occasionally said to impart *kosmos* to spoken words (note Eur. *Med.* 576; Pl. *Ap.* 17b–c), although in these cases the poet-musician may in fact be the model for the (excessively) artful speaker. For the often negative connotations of oratorical *kosmos* as purely cosmetic trickery, see Worman (2002), 24–26. Poetic *kosmos* can also be suspected of deception: Parmenides fr. 8.52.

43. Solon fr. 4.32 West.

44. The sympotic elegy of Theognis evokes its own re-performance by young men singing to pipes, *eukosmôs,* "in good order" (242), an expression with both aesthetic and ethico-political resonance. As Ford (2002), 36–37, remarks: "The performances will no doubt be elegant, but they will also reinstate the essential moral orderliness of the singer, who elsewhere proposes to 'adorn' (*kosmein*), his city by moderation and justice [Theognis 947]."

45. Note *Il.* 14.379.

46. See apposite comments in Mackie (1996), 17–20, on the poetic representation of military *kosmos* in *Iliad* Book 2.

47. Hdt. 1.65.4.

Plutarch writes, was himself an expert lawgiver of a kind, who, instead of persuasive speeches (*logoi*) composed songs that were "exhortations to obedience and concord, since their melodies and rhythms possessed much that was orderly (*kosmion*) and calming."[48] Similar stories feature Terpander, a lyre-singer brought from Lesbos to Sparta on the advice of the Delphic oracle to dispel civil strife and restore unanimity; one variant has Terpander actually setting to music the laws (*nomoi*) of Sparta.[49] These semi-legendary accounts surely reflect an authentic Spartan belief (and related practices) according to which musical communication possessed an "Orphic" power to create *kosmos*. The prominent role played in Spartan society by Tyrtaeus, an elegist of the seventh century, confirms such a belief.[50]

The *Salamis* elegy probably represents Solon's poetic and political "*début* on the public scene."[51] If *mousikê* initially offered the young Solon a strategic backchannel for protest and persuasion, however, he would not abandon it for some more "official" form of communication as he matured into Athens' leading statesman. In fact, song remained fundamentally integrated into Solon's political activity throughout his career, as a primary medium for publicizing and defending his reformist agenda. The singer was inextricable from the politician and legislator.

Pindar's Diplomatic Muse

Two second-century inscriptions from Crete—one from the city of Knossos, the other from Priansos—record a diplomatic tour of the island undertaken by envoys sent from Teos to seek guarantees of continued *asylia*, inviolability, for their city.[52] One of the envoys was Menecles, a skilled citharode, a singer to the large concert-lyre called the *kithara*. While on Crete, he offered concerts featuring works by Timotheus and Polyidus—once-controversial citharodes of the fifth and fourth centuries who had come to be regarded as classic by the Hellenistic period—as well as pieces by "our old-time Cretan poets." The former works were probably virtuoso compositions intended to dazzle Menecles'

48. Plut. *Lyc.* 4.

49. Ps-Plut. *De mus.* 42.1146b; Clem. *Strom.* 1.16.78.5. The claim is probably derived from a semantic coincidence: *nomos* can mean "law" or "musical composition." Yet rhythmic and even melodized laws are attested across Indo-European societies: Franklin (2004), 244.

50. Tyrtaean continuities with Solon: Herington (1985), 32–34.

51. Podlecki (1984), 123.

52. *ICret* V.viii 11, xxiv 1, with Chaniotis (2009), 84–85.

audiences, while the latter were obviously meant to appeal to their patriotic sensibilities. As the inscriptions show, he struck just the right note; his concert program, combining musical prestige and nostalgia, impressed and persuaded the Cretans.

Two other, more or less contemporary, inscriptions from the city of Mylasa in Asia Minor attest to a Mylasan envoy's performance of works by the Cretan composer Thaletas while visiting Crete.[53] Indeed, "musical diplomacy" of one sort or another was probably common, especially in the later Classical and Hellenistic periods, when musicians traveled international circuits for concerts and festival contests. Polyaenus tells of the leading part played by a "star" citharode of the mid-fourth century, Aristonicus of Olynthus, in a mission dispatched to the Bosporus by the general Memnon of Rhodes.[54] Memnon was plotting to invade the region; the massive crowds drawn to the concerts put on by his "goodwill ambassador" allowed him to gauge the size of the local population. Polyaenus' account is surely embellished, but it cannot be altogether wrong for him to report that musicians could be exploited in interstate relations.[55]

Pythian 4, an *epinikion* or "victory song" composed by Pindar, ostensibly to celebrate the chariot victory of Arcesilas IV, king of Cyrene, in 462, constitutes a different kind of musical-diplomatic intervention, aimed at solving some problems of the Cyrenean élite. The song is remarkable among Pindar's preserved *epinikia* not only for its extraordinary length—at 299 verses, it is more than twice as long as any other—but still more for its epilogue (lines 263–299), which is mostly occupied with a plea to Arcesilas for the restoration of an exiled aristocrat, Damophilus, whom Pindar explicitly names (281). We are not told the reason for Damophilus' exile, but we may presume that he was punished for his involvement in the factional strife (or perhaps insurrection) alluded to in lines 271–276.[56]

Since Pindar places the plea prominently at the conclusion of this ode, it has been thought that Damophilus commissioned *Pythian* 4 in hopes that its performance in Cyrene would succeed in persuading Arcesilas to pardon him.[57] A more likely scenario, however, is that a reconciliation was arranged in advance, and that Damophilus or Arcesilas commissioned the ode after

53. *IMyl* 652–653, with Chaniotis (1988b).

54. Polyaen. 5.44.1.

55. Cf. Power (2010), 159–160.

56. Cf. Braswell (1988), 3.

57. Ancient commentators on Pindar already held this view (Schol. *Pyth*. 4.467).

these negotiations. The performance would celebrate Damophilus' recall—and, of course, the clemency of Arcesilas (cf. 270)—before an audience of Cyrene's leading citizens.[58] Even if Pindar is only reprising a successful appeal to the king, he maintains the fiction that Arcesilas needs persuading. And this would not have been merely for show. Some in the initial audience of *Pythian* 4 had to be convinced of Damophilus' contrition, while others wanted to be assured that the king would publicly forgive an enemy. Pindar thus styles his "Muse"—his song—as a peace-broker bearing a "true message" (279): first, a sterling recommendation for Damophilus (280–292), and second, a report of the exile's prayer for restoration, which takes up the final lines of the song (293–299):[59]

> But he prays that, when he has endured to the end his ruinous affliction, he will someday see his home, and that joining in symposia at the fountain of Apollo he will often give up his heart to youthful joy, and that holding the richly ornamented lyre (*phorminx*) among his sophisticated (*sophoi*) fellow citizens he will attain peace, neither bringing pain to anyone, nor himself suffering harm at the hands of the townsmen (*astoi*). And he would recount, Arcesilas, what a spring of ambrosial verses he found, when recently he was hosted at Thebes.

In this passage, the climactic image of symposia convened near Apollo's fountain, a Cyrene landmark, does symbolic (and rhetorical) double duty. On the one hand, it is a poignant condensation of the comforts of home and fellowship Damophilus longs for; on the other, it is a harbinger of the political health that will be restored on his return. The theme of the orderly symposium as a reflection of a peaceful *polis* is common in early Greek poetry. As Pindar puts it in another *epinikion*, "Peace loves the symposium."[60] Here, however, it is convivial music-making in particular that signifies sociopolitical reconciliation. Pindar imagines a "harmless" Damophilus playing the lyre at a symposium of his fellow citizens, who are, as he must also be, *sophoi*, an adjective here synonymous with *mousikos*: they are skilled in performing as well as evaluating song. The scene is one of musico-political harmony—we might say *kosmos*—appropriately set at the fountain of Apollo, god of lyric music

58. Cf. Carey (1980); Braswell (1988), 5–6.

59. At Pind. *Pyth.* 2.3–4, the song (*melos*) is figured as a message (*angelia*), but there the message relates, as expected, praise of the victor.

60. Levine (1985); Pind. *Nem.* 9.48.

and civic order.[61] The lyre held by Damophilus is notionally an instrument of the peace he longs to attain, but also of peace that will reign in Cyrene once Arcesilas welcomes him home.[62]

Pindar may have sought to deepen this notion through an intertextual reference that the Cyrenean *sophoi* would surely have appreciated. At the time of composition, in 462, the typical Greek symposiast would play a tortoise-shell lyre (*lyra* or *khelys*), yet Pindar calls Damophilus' instrument a *phorminx*, the name for a lyre constructed with a sound-box of wood rather than of tortoise-shell.[63] This is the stringed instrument played by singers in the Homeric epics. Although the *phorminx* had largely fallen out of use by the fifth century, Pindar sometimes retains the word for the sake of its ennobling, epic tone.[64]

What is remarkable about the use of *phorminx* in *Pythian* 4 is the epithet attached to it, *daidaleos*, "richly ornamented."[65] The wording cannot but recall another such daedalic *phorminx*, the one played by Achilles in *Iliad* 9. In this scene, envoys are sent by Agamemnon to persuade Achilles to return to battle. They find him sitting in his tent with Patroclus, singing of heroes and "delighting his heart in a clear-sounding, fine, richly ornamented (*daidaleos*) *phorminx*" (186–187). Achilles listens to the envoys, but refuses to end his self-imposed exile. Here, the normal socializing tendency of music-making is inverted in such a way as to highlight his destructive isolation. Pindar's allusion to this scene pointedly revises the Homeric script. As opposed to the anti-social music of Achilles, Damophilus' singing to the "richly ornamented *phorminx*" marks his peaceful reintegration into society and reconciliation with his king.

The length of *Pythian* 4 has led some to the view that its performance could only have been managed by a solo citharode. But in all likelihood it was sung, at least at its premiere, by a chorus of Cyrenean citizens. We do not know the occasion or location of this first performance, but perhaps it took place at a banquet organized by Arcesilas, with Cyrene's leading citizens in attendance along with some other residents (*astoi*).[66] The event may well have

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61. Cf. *Pyth.* 5.60–65 for Apollo's role in the foundation of Cyrene, a passage that also mentions the god's gift of lyre-playing.

62. Cf. Athanassaki (2011), 257; Braswell (1988), 395.

63. Scholars distinguish wooden "box lyres"—the *phorminx* and its larger descendant, the *kithara*—from tortoise-shell "bowl lyres"; see West (1992), 50–51.

64. Note Pind. *Ol.* 1.17 and fr. 129.7 Snell and Maehler.

65. For this sense of *daidaleos*, see Braswell (1988), 396. Nowhere else in the Pindaric corpus does this adjective or its cognates modify the word *phorminx* or other words for lyres.

66. See Felson (1999), 13–14. Clay (1999) discusses possible convivial contexts for choral *epinikia*.

been held at Apollo's fountain, and Pindar may have intended the sympotic scene in *Pythian* 4 to evoke the gathering at which his song was delivered. Furthermore, the final two lines of the song seem to suggest that, at his homecoming, Damophilus will sing *Pythian* 4 itself, whose "ambrosial verses" he will have learned from Pindar, his host in Thebes. The premiere, in other words, offers the promise of its solo re-performance by Damophilus.[67]

Pindar understood the musical sound of his victory odes to be an integral part of their essential communicative function, to praise the victor and create consensus around that praise. He routinely has his choruses sing about the very music they are singing—its melodic modes, rhythms, and instrumental accompaniment—as well as about their own voices and dance movements, often emphasizing the opulent beauty, refined craftsmanship, and creative originality of these elements.[68] Illustrative is the synaesthetically glamorous *Nemean* 8.15: the chorus sings of "bearing a Lydian headband wrought with sonic intricacy."[69] In *Olympian* 10, a boxing victory calls for music in which "luxuriant song and dance (*molpa*) will answer to the reed [of the *aulos*]" (84), and the "pleasant-voiced lyre and the sweet *aulos* sprinkle grace" upon the victor (93–94). On the one hand, the expertly composed music and beautifully executed performance reflect the excellence of the victor—"glorious songs" as a "mirror of fine deeds."[70] On the other hand, this reflection or echo induces the audience to accept the excellence of both victor and music. The metamusical references have a partly persuasive purpose.

Musical enchantment is explicitly foregrounded in the beginning of *Pythian* 1, an ode composed for the Syracusan tyrant Hieron. Pindar evokes an image of Apollo leading the Muses with his lyre. Their choral music pacifies all who hear it, making the world tranquil and orderly; its "shafts [of sound] enchant even the minds of the gods" (12). There can be no doubt that this divine chorus is a paradigm for the epinician chorus and its own capacity for persuasion.

Embedded in the narrative in the middle of *Pythian* 4 is another model of musical persuasion. Pindar recounts the quest for the Golden Fleece by Jason and the Argonauts. As is often the case in the *epinikia*, a myth of heroic struggle and success serves to magnify the athletic achievement of

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67. On the virtual "double performance" of *Pythian* 4, see Felson (1999), 31. For the monodic re-performance of choral *epinicia* at symposia, see Morrison (2007), 15–19.

68. Examples: Anderson (1994), 94–101; Montiglio (2000), 82–115. For a striking claim to musical novelty, see Pind. *Ol.* 3.3–6. Prauscello (2012) discusses Pindar as a self-conscious musical innovator.

69. Cf. Anderson (1994), 100–101. Lydian headbands as symbols of glamor and luxury: Kurke (1992), 96–97.

70. Pind. *Nem.* 7.14–16.

the victor.[71] In telling the story of the quest here, however, Pindar includes an episode that would seem to reflect the compelling power of his own music. In an effort to help him win the Fleece from the Colchian king Aeëtes, Aphrodite contrives for Jason to seduce Medea, the king's daughter:

> The Cyprian goddess first brought to mortals from Olympus the varicolored *iunx,* having yoked it with four spokes to an irresistible wheel, the maddening bird. And prayers and incantations (*epaôidai*) she taught the skilled (*sophos*) son of Aeson, that he might take away Medea's respect for her parents, and that desirable Hellas, the longed-for, might drive her, burning in her mind, with the whip of Persuasion.[72]

The strange device that Aphrodite invents for Jason, a wheel with a bird splayed over the top, is an historically attested musical instrument called the *iunx,* after the name of the bird, a wryneck.[73] When briskly revolved, the *iunx* hummed, and thus enchanted listeners. As this passage indicates, it was typically used, along with incantations, in casting amatory spells.[74] Jason's love magic has the intended effect: he seduces Medea and with her assistance wins the Fleece.

Since Jason goes on to betray Medea and to be ruined by her in turn, it has been argued that this episode serves as a negative foil: Pindaric persuasion is founded on truth, not deceptive magic.[75] Yet Jason's divinely inspired music—something mentioned in no other version of Jason and Medea's encounter—arguably sounds a more exemplary note, suggesting that the epinician song might likewise charm its listeners.

Paramusical Communication and Political "Optics"

In the Athenian democracy of the fifth and fourth centuries, the visible, public aspect of choral musical performances—their "optics"—had a political valence. By helping to stage these performances, politically ambitious citizens won

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71. The Argonautic myth is indirectly connected to Cyrene and Arcesilas through the figure of the Argonaut Euphemus, claimed as an ancestor by the Battiad line of kings to which Arcesilas belonged: Carey (1980).

72. Pind. *Pyth.* 4.214–219.

73. However, birds were not usually attached to actual *iunges.*

74. Schol. Opp. *Hal.* 1.565: "[The *iunx*] is a type of musical instrument, which sorceresses use for love." Discussion and sources: Johnston (1995), 180–186.

75. Johnston (1995).

recognition and popular support that furthered their careers. Such a man typically served as a supervisor or sponsor, called a *khorêgos*, assigned by the *polis* to underwrite, train, and outfit one of the tragic, comic, or dithyrambic choruses that competed at the major civic festivals of Athens.[76] Such a *khorêgia* was one of the main civil services (*leitourgiai*) required of wealthy citizens. While a burden for some, it offered a welcome opportunity for self-promotion to others eager to capitalize on the value placed upon drama and choral *mousikê* in Athens. Outfitting a festival chorus communicated to the entire citizenry a commitment to civic beneficence and piety, while also associating the *khorêgos* with the poet who composed for the chorus and the aulete who accompanied it—an association all the more profitable if the play or dithyramb triumphed in the festival contest.

Pericles was thus off to an auspicious start in public life with his *khorêgia* of Aeschylus' prize-winning *Persians* in 472.[77] Four years earlier, Themistocles had sponsored the victorious production of *Phoenician Women* by Phrynichus, a tragedy that glorified Themistocles' naval triumph at the recent battle of Salamis.[78] We may speculate that his choregic success had the intended effect of reviving his popularity, which was at that point beginning to wane, and of inspiring support for his controversial diplomacy and naval expenditures. Plutarch says that Themistocles commemorated his choregic victory with an inscribed plaque (*pinax*), and indeed it was common for dramatic and dithyrambic *khorêgoi* to advertise—and immortalize—their victories with inscribed monuments erected in well-trafficked locations throughout the city.[79]

Such monuments formed one part of a program of paramusical mass communication.[80] In another part of it, *khorêgoi* accompanied their choruses at the public events surrounding the dramatic and dithyrambic contests. Costumed

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76. See Wilson (2000) for a comprehensive study of the *khorêgia*. In the Archaic period, the *khorêgos* was the "chorus leader" who sang and danced with the chorus he led. In Classical Athens, the term referred to an off-stage choral financier (although it inevitably retained some of its performative connotations). There is some evidence, however, that *khorêgoi* on rare occasions did double duty as chorus leaders, or *koryphaioi*: Wilson (2000), 114–115, 130–136.

77. *IG* ii^2 2318.10.

78. Plut. *Them.* 5.4. Pericles was attempting to position himself as an heir to Themistocles: Podlecki (1998), 11–16. Mosconi (2000) discusses the importance of *mousikê* to Pericles' political program; cf. Wallace (2015).

79. See, for instance, what is likely to be an early fifth-century inscription commemorating a dithyrambic victory (*Anth. Pal.* 13.28), discussed by Wilson (2000), 120–123.

80. For this term describing "actions and activities that go with" musical phenomena, see Stige (2012).

in splendid crowns and garments, they led them in the procession for the City Dionysia festival.[81] Some contrived to make a spectacle of themselves in the theater itself before or after the performance, broadcasting their magnificence to the assembled citizens.[82] Plutarch recounts an illustrative story about the *khorêgia* of the wealthy general and statesman Nicias. To the great delight of the audience, a handsome young slave of his appeared in the guise of Dionysus during one of his choral performances. After the applause continued for some time, "Nicias stood up and said he thought it unholy that one whose body had been dedicated to a god should remain a slave, and he declared the young man free."[83] With this theatrical turn, the *khorêgos* was able to convey his common touch, piety, generosity, and power.[84]

According to Plutarch, Nicias—who lacked Pericles' oratorical flair, not to mention the demagogue Cleon's talent for pandering—aimed to win over the Athenians through his lavish spending on several *khorêgiai*, all successful, which he commemorated with impressive monuments. His grandest *khorêgia*, however, took place, not in Athens, but on Delos. This island, site of a major sanctuary of Apollo, hosted a festival to which many cities sent *theôriai*, sacred delegations that featured choruses. In 417, as part of his sponsorship of the Athenian delegation there, he presented his city's theoric choral performance in characteristic style, with an eye as much to glorifying his city and himself as to delighting the god:

> Nicias is remembered too for his ambitious displays on Delos, how brilliant and worthy of the god they were. The choruses that the cities used to send there to sing for Apollo would sail up to the island in a haphazard manner, and immediately the crowd meeting the ship would call on them to sing in no proper order at all, but while they were disembarking in haste and confusion and still putting on their crowns and costumes. But Nicias, when he led the *theôria*, first disembarked on the [neighboring island of] Rheneia with his chorus, sacrificial offerings, and the rest of his equipment, and he brought along a bridge he had made to measure in Athens, which was conspicuously arrayed with golden adornments, colored dyes, garlands, and tapestries. During the

81. Dem. 21.22, referring to the orator's own *khorêgia*; Ath. 12.534c, on Alcibiades.

82. Wilson (2000), 97–98, 140–141.

83. Plut. *Nic.* 3.3–4.

84. Cf. Wilson (2000), 138: "The *khorêgia* is here . . . a site of power for the individual who can reduce the gap between a god and a slave."

> night, he spanned with the bridge the narrow strait between Rheneia and Delos. Then, at daybreak, leading the procession for the god he brought across his chorus, splendidly outfitted and singing as it went.[85]

The surprising procession from the small satellite island of Rheneia to Delos is more than a *coup de théâtre*. About a century earlier, the Samian tyrant Polycrates, whose naval empire anticipated that of Athens, had captured and then dedicated Rheneia to Apollo, linking it to Delos with a chain.[86] As it processes over the bridge, Nicias' chorus repeats but humanizes Polycrates' gesture, displaying both piety and imperial domination. And at its head walks Nicias, conducting, as it were, this musical rendition of Athenian power and prestige.

Nicias' rival Alcibiades also undertook several *khorêgiai* in typically colorful fashion. As he marched in processions to the theater, conspicuous in purple finery, he awed the gathered spectators. Craving international recognition, he entered seven chariots in the race at the Olympic games (probably in 416), winning first, second, and third (or fourth) place. He then commissioned Euripides, the most famous living poet-composer, not only in Athens, but also probably in the entire Greek world, to celebrate his achievement in an epinician song. It may have been performed before a large Panhellenic audience at the lavish victory party thrown by Alcibiades at Olympia.[87]

Duris of Samos, a historian of the later fourth century who claimed descent from Alcibiades, tells of another public relations coup involving famous musicians.[88] In 408 (or perhaps 407), Alcibiades made his first return to Athens since 415, when he was forced into exile. Though he was coming home after being appointed to a naval command and leading the Athenian fleet to several critical victories in the eastern Aegean, he could not be sure of the reception he would encounter.[89] A grand entrance was in order, one that would consolidate popular support for him by advertising his recent military successes and by recalling the magnificence that had made him an icon in happier times. Accordingly, Alcibiades entered the Piraeus leading triremes adorned with spoils and trophies of war. Duris adds that on Alcibiades' own ship, which

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85. Plut. *Nic.* 3.4–6.

86. Thuc. 3.104.2, with Nagy (2013), 252.

87. Plut. *Alc.* 11; *PMG* 755.

88. Plutarch, who records Duris' account (*FGrH* 76 F 70 = *Alc.* 32.2–3), is skeptical of it, but there is little reason to reject it altogether. For its likely veracity, see Gentili and Cerri (1988), 14–24; Munn (2000), 166; Verdegem (2010), 332. Cf. Wilson (2010), 204 n. 104.

89. Xen. *Hell.* 1.4.12, 17; Plut. *Alc.* 32.3, 34.1–2. Cf. Munn (2000), 166–167.

had been fitted with purple sails, two musical celebrities were employed to perform menial tasks. Callippides, a popular actor-singer of tragedy, served as boatswain, while Chrysogonus of Athens, a virtuoso aulete and winner of the Pythian *aulos* contest (the most prestigious in the Greek world), piped a melody for the rowers to keep time.[90] To complete the effect, each wore the sumptuous stage costume associated with his art. Duris claims that Alcibiades gave the impression of a drunken reveler (the role he plays in Plato's *Symposium*, where he also makes a grand entrance accompanied by an aulete). But his display must have been intended to communicate another message: the prodigal had returned in all the glory of his splendid *khorêgiai*. The welcoming crowd's reaction, which expressed both nostalgia and renewed optimism, shows that this bit of political theater had the desired effect.

Conclusion

In his *Laws*, Plato envisions a conservative society where it is compulsory for "every adult and child, free and slave, male and female, and indeed the entire city never to cease singing incantations (*epaidein*) to itself."[91] Plato is using "incantations" figuratively; what he means are pleasurable—and accordingly persuasive—musical performances vetted for moral and political fitness by civic officials. By singing these salutary songs together for one another, the inhabitants of Plato's ideal city maintain ideological conformity.[92] Although this sort of state-controlled music sounds suspiciously like mass brainwashing (in line with the authoritarian tenor of the *Laws*), it nevertheless derives from the culture of the early Greek *polis*, where music affirmed traditional values and reinforced communal identities.

But if *mousikê* was often a force for sociopolitical conservatism, its powers of persuasion, both sonic and visual, could also be deployed to change minds in more localized circumstances and for more selective ends. We saw this in the cases of Solon's elegiac redirection of the Athenian position on Salamis, Pindar's application of choral and sympotic music to the restoration of Damophilus, and the paramusical grandstanding of Nicias and Alcibiades.

Other examples are numerous. For instance, aristocratic families of the Archaic period apparently used funeral lament—a musical form in which

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90. For Callippides, known for his innovatory dramatic realism, see Csapo (2010), 117–149. For *aulêtai* on triremes, see West (1992), 29.

91. Pl. *Leg.* 1.655c.

92. For music in the *Laws*, see works cited in n. 15 above.

women as well as professional male mourners took a leading role—to promote their own standing in the *polis*. It is significant that Solon, who clearly appreciated music's ability to influence popular attitudes, is reported to have passed legislation restricting the performance of "formally composed dirges," a move likely intended to limit extravagant displays by Athenian élites.[93] Another area to consider would be the cultural-political initiatives of the Archaic tyrants, who were masters at paramusical self-promotion. In fact, much that was deemed traditional in the civic musical cultures of the fifth century was originally introduced by tyrants to curry popular favor and advertise their own prestige.[94] Their exploitation of *mousikê* is as clear an indication as any of its effectiveness in shaping and circulating politically persuasive messages.

93. Plut. *Sol.* 21.4.

94. See, for example, Ieranò (1992) on the introduction of dithyrambic choruses in Corinth under Periander (Hdt. 1.23); for the politicized establishment of "tragic choruses" and the intervention in epic recitations by Cleisthenes of Sicyon (Hdt. 5.67), see Herington (1985), 83–84 and Cingano (1985); for the arrangement by the Athenian Peisistratids of rhapsodic contests at the Panathenaea, which featured performance of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Davison (1955), Aloni (2006); for the Samian tyrant Polycrates' "imperial" manipulations of festival *mousikê* and rhapsodic epic, Burkert (1979), Aloni (1989).

8

Gesture in the Ancient Mediterranean World

Gregory S. Aldrete

IN 168 BCE, there occurred one of the more famous diplomatic incidents between Greeks and Romans. King Antiochus IV was successfully prosecuting a military campaign against his rival, Ptolemy VI, when he was intercepted at the village of Eleusis near the outskirts of Alexandria by Gaius Popillius Laenas, an envoy sent by the Roman Senate. Used to the stately, complex rituals of Hellenistic diplomacy, Antiochus, upon seeing Laenas approach, appropriately extended his right hand in a gesture of friendship.[1] Rather than taking the proffered hand, however, Laenas slapped into Antiochus' open palm a set of tablets containing a demand from the Roman Senate that the war be ended. Taken aback by this breach of etiquette, Antiochus nevertheless gave the standard reply in such situations—that he must consult with his advisors to consider the Roman demand. Upon hearing this, Laenas reacted with an even more shocking, cruder gesture: he took the vine stick he habitually carried and drew a circle in the sand around the astonished monarch, declaring that Antiochus could think all he wanted, but had to give an answer before he could leave the circle. It was only after the hapless Antiochus agreed to do all

1. Shaking hands and the similar gesture of the mutual forearm clasp were particularly important symbolic actions in the ancient world, with a variety of meanings, depending upon the context. In addition to being a gesture of greeting or recognition, on Greek and Roman grave reliefs, it is often a symbol of farewell; in Roman legal contexts, it signifies the sealing of a contract; and when made by husbands and wives in Roman or Etruscan art, it denotes affection, harmony, or the marriage union itself. On these usages, note Brilliant (1963); Neumann (1965); Davies (1985); Pemberton (1989).

that Rome demanded that Laenas then "seized his right hand and greeted him warmly."[2]

This incident, which became known as the "Day of Eleusis," has been variously interpreted as a contrast between Roman crudity and Greek refinement, as evidence of the brutish nature of Laenas, as an expression of Roman arrogance, and as an assertion of Roman dominance.[3] For the purposes of this chapter, an exact interpretation is less relevant than the fact that the power of the anecdote depends on a gesture, or rather three gestures, each of which violates a set of well-defined expectations.

The first gesture occurs when Antiochus extends his hand expecting that Laenas will shake hands with him, only to have the Senate's demands thrust into his palm instead. Gestures of acknowledgement or greeting, such as the modern habit of shaking hands upon practically every social encounter, serve a vital function in initiating contact among individuals who up to that point may have been strangers.[4] They establish a pathway for subsequent communication, and they often imply mutual acknowledgement of status—that the other person is worthy of recognition and further interaction. We can view a simple handshake as a tripartite set of actions consisting of offer, acceptance, and mutual acknowledgement. In addition, every such greeting bridges a liminal moment, transforming two or more separate people into a group. Within these routine gestures, however, lurks the potential for multiple outcomes. A proffered hand constitutes an invitation, but it is one that may be rejected as well as accepted. Laenas takes a third path, neither rejecting further contact with Antiochus, nor bestowing upon him the expected reciprocal greeting. By placing the tablets in Antiochus' outstretched hand, the Roman transgresses against the expected ritual while simultaneously creating a new, uncertain interaction between the two men.

Laenas' next act of nonverbal communication was even more original. Imagine how much less potent his demand would have been if he had merely

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2. Livy 45.12; Polyb. 29.27. This anecdote is reported by nearly a dozen ancient sources: see Gruen (1984), 658, for a complete list and discussion.

3. On the incident generally, as well as interpretations regarding the motivations of the participants, see M. Morgan (1990). Sheila Ager assesses it from the perspective of diplomacy in Chapter 15 below.

4. Today's rather casual use of the handshake as a bland greeting—a near-universal part of modern social interactions—may not have been so pervasive in the ancient world. There, to clasp hands was considered a more formal gesture that often carried important specific meanings (see note 1), and would have been reserved for appropriate situations only. For this reason, Laenas' failure to reply in kind to Antiochus especially violated etiquette.

stated to Antiochus that he required an immediate reply, rather than also literally drawing a circle in the sand around him. With this gesture, he was not only reinforcing the idea that the king had to make an immediate decision, but also depriving him of any sense of control, even over his own body. The ancient Mediterranean world linked control over one's body and one's status. It was a hallmark of the very lowest-status individuals, such as women and slaves, that their bodies were subject to the demands and desires of others. By stripping away Antiochus' ability even to move, Laenas was symbolically asserting his dominance over him and laying bare the reality of the power relationship.

Laenas topped off his performance with one final, unexpected gesture. Once Antiochus had yielded to his demands, he grasped the king's hand and shook it in what would normally have been regarded as a warm display of friendship. Because of his previous gestures, however, this standard ritual had been perverted. Note that Antiochus did not offer his hand; instead, it was forcibly seized by Laenas in violation of the proper sequence of offer, acceptance, and mutual recognition. This was not friendship offered by one party, which was then accepted and reciprocated by the other; it was "friendship" imposed by force. The gesture of Laenas grabbing Antiochus' hand once again perfectly reflected the political reality of the situation. This notorious exchange between Laenas and Antiochus, which hinged on the three gestures made by the Roman, exemplifies the role that nonverbal, corporal forms of communication could play in the ancient world.

Gesture in the Ancient World

What is a gesture? A gesture can be as subtle as a slightly arched eyebrow or as obvious as an angrily shaken fist. This chapter uses "gesture" broadly, to designate almost any way in which a person of the ancient Mediterranean could have obtained or conveyed information by viewing or reacting to the bodily motions or postures of another. This definition encompasses, not only the movements or positions of the hands, arms, head, and other body parts, but also actions such as pointing, spitting, and Laenas' drawing the line in the sand. It also includes the impression created by posture, deportment, or stance. Finally, it even applies to some extended sequences of related actions, most obviously the manner in which a person walked, and the particular characteristics of their gait. A gesture could be static or dynamic; it could be intentional or unintentional; it could last for an instant, or embody a near permanent state of being. The common thread is that it functions as a visual

medium of communication in which information is conveyed nonverbally by the human body.[5]

Gestures are often represented as merely repeating information that is being stated in another form, most commonly verbally. As an example, consider the contemporary practice of having a person fluent in sign-language accompany public speakers. In this common view of gestures, they become a kind of second-best form of communication—a substitute for the "real" message. Particularly in the ancient world, however, gestures were not relegated to such a subordinate role. Quite often, they served as means to impart information that was either partially or completely different from that being conveyed verbally. To be sure, this information was often complementary to what was being spoken, but still it constituted a separate form of communication. Anyone who only heard the words would have lost a vital component of the overall message being communicated.

Indeed, gestures in the ancient world quite often had legal and social effects that operated independently of spoken words.[6] The best-known example is probably the interplay of gestures used in the Roman arena by gladiators, audiences, and the sponsors of games by which the life, death, and rewards of the combatants were negotiated and decided.[7] The Persian *proskynesis*, an innocuous gesture in its home culture, where it recognized status, provoked indignation and resentment when transplanted to a different context, the court of Alexander the Great.[8] In Roman society, a slave could legally be freed if his master spun him around in a circle with his hand and then released him.[9] Similarly, in Mesopotamia, slaves were sometimes freed by their master breaking a pot and then anointing the head of the slave with oil.[10] In each of

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5. The historical and theoretical literature on this field is vast. Good general introductions, all with extensive further bibliography: Bremmer and Roodenburg (1991); Kendon (2004); Braddick (2009).

6. On gesture in ancient Egypt and the Near East, see Gruber (1980); L'Orange (1982); Dominicus (1994); Knippschild (2002). Basic works on gestures in Greece and Rome include Sittl (1890); Neumann (1965); Cairns (2005). In Greek art and literature more specifically: Gerhard (1965); McNiven (1982); Bremmer (1991); Lateiner (1995); Boegehold (1999); Cairns (2009). In Roman art and literature likewise: Brilliant (1963); Maier-Eichhorn (1989); Graf (1991); Gleason (1995); Lateiner (1996); Aldrete (1999); Lobe (1999); Ricottilli (2000); Corbeill (2004); M. Roller (2006); Winkler (2009).

7. Corbeill (2004), 41–67 and (1997); Fagan (2011).

8. Choksy (1990); Root (1979); Frye (1972). On the specific act of supplication, see Freyburger (1988); Naiden (2006).

9. Corbeill (2005).

10. Malul (1988).

these instances, gestures are conveying messages or wielding power independent of spoken language in order to reflect or determine important states of being, from life to death, from deference to domination, and from slavery to freedom.

The potency of gesture extended beyond the human realm. From palms uplifted in prayer to covering one's head while sacrificing, gestures played a central role in nearly all interactions with the gods and the numinous. The rites associated with the Lemuria are particularly rich in significant gestures. At midnight, the male head of each household rose barefoot from his bed, with no knots in his clothing, and made the apotropaic "fig" gesture, with thumb thrust between the closed fingers of his fist. Then, after washing his hands, he walked through the house casting black beans behind him with face averted, while uttering the words, "Casting these beans, I redeem me and mine." After the repetition of this gesture and utterance nine times, the ritual ended with more washing, the clashing of bronze vessels, a backward glance, and a final expiatory declaration.[11] While some of these acts—such as hand-washing, the averted gaze, the banging on bronze pots, and the apotropaic fig—have obvious meanings or relevance to this exorcism-like ceremony, the casting of the black beans is mysterious: Ovid suggested that the ghosts picked them up.

Of all the gestures used by man and gods, however, one stood out above the rest for its irrevocable force. For the Greeks, there was nothing that had greater power than Zeus nodding his head in assent. As famously explained by Zeus himself to Thetis in Book 1 of Homer's *Iliad*:

> "I will ensure that these things are accomplished. For behold—I will bend my head so that you will believe me. For among the immortal gods this act is the mightiest witness I can give, and nothing I do will be in vain nor revocable, nor a thing unfulfilled when I bend my head in assent to it." Thus spoke the son of Kronos, and he nodded his head with its dark brows . . . and all Olympus was shaken.[12]

Homer is quite clear that it is not Zeus' words that give force or credibility to his promise—he can and does lie—but rather, all power lies with the gesture: once he nods his head, the thing promised takes on irretrievable and unstoppable inevitability. Zeus uses this unique gesture as a replacement for other gestures or words that might conclude an act of supplication such as

11. Ov. *Fast*. 5.429–446.

12. *Il*. 1.523–530.

Thetis has made. As supplication was both religious and quasi-legal in character, Zeus's action illustrates how gestures not only conveyed information (the declaration to Thetis), but also possessed ritualistic power (here, the power of an oath) and embodied principles of cosmic justice. These principles were central to Greek religion as well as to the *Iliad*.

Gesture and Social Status

Numerous ancient authors wrote about bodily movements, including hand gestures, posture, stance, and gait, as well as about the importance of the messages conveyed by each of these. This sensitivity to nonverbal communication reflected several characteristics of ancient Mediterranean cultures. As many scholars have noted, Romans were obsessed with visible distinctions of rank and status. They found it indispensable to know whether someone with whom they were interacting was a slave or free, a citizen or a foreigner, a patrician or a plebeian, an equestrian or a senator. This need, along with the equally distinctive Roman emphasis on public competition, helps explain the many signs of rank and status in ancient Rome—the gold ring of the equestrian, the white toga of the citizen, the purple stripe of the senator, the tightly coiled hair bun of the Roman matron, and so on.

While signs of status such as clothes, jewelry, and hairstyle seem familiar even today, the Romans took this idea much further, and extended it beyond bodily adornments, to the body itself. How a Roman sat, stood, or walked, what gestures he or she used, and even the speed and style of these acts and gestures, were all believed to convey important information about the gender, status, and rank of the person in question. Recent analyses of this phenomenon in Roman society often usefully employ the concept of "*habitus*" popularized by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu.[13] For example, Matthew Roller (2006) has demonstrated that the postures assumed by Roman men, women, and children at formal dinners reflected attitudes towards gender and status. Furthermore, stereotypes such as adult, free males reclining at dinner could be manipulated, particularly in painting, sculpture, and other media, in order to assert status or sometimes even in an attempt to co-opt a desired status.

For the Romans, ordinary-seeming activities such as dining or walking possessed a self-conscious, performative aspect. Romans expected to be observed, and knew that how they performed the action in question sent messages about their roles and places in society. To be sure, sometimes eating

13. Bourdieu (1980). Fine examples of scholarship explicitly utilizing the idea of Roman *habitus* include Gleason (1995); Corbeill (2004); M. Roller (2006).

was just eating, but especially for Rome's élites, these mundane acts were often freighted with a set of expectations and meanings, of which both the performer and the observers were keenly aware. They believed that, thanks to the typology of bodily postures and movements, it was possible to discern the rank or status of persons stripped of their clothing and accoutrements and going about naked—to identify who was a slave and who a patrician, who was a citizen and who a foreigner, and even who was an orator and who an actor.

Gait is one illustration of this link between social identity and the body.[14] Scholars have demonstrated that the manner and speed with which a Roman walked, the purpose of his ambulation, and who accompanied him, all had meaning. More than this, these traits were believed to reflect—or literally to embody—the social, economic, and legal status of a person. Thus, the habitual gait of the slave was to run, indicative of the fact that he was compelled by his lowly status to constantly rush about performing the bidding of others.[15] An élite free male was expected to employ a relatively slow, controlled, upright, purposeful stride reflective of his dignity and power. Conversely, males who were effeminate or otherwise "unmanly" would reveal these deficiencies in the very way they walked. To Roman physiognomists, a languid gait, swaying hips, and poor posture were hallmarks of the sexually passive male, but such men could sometimes also be spotted too self-consciously attempting to conceal these physical tendencies. Finally, in keeping with the performative aspect of walking, it is not surprising that when a great man appeared in public, he was also typically surrounded by an entourage of friends, relatives, and clients, and such acts as traveling from his home to a meeting of the Senate took on the nature of a parade.

One much-discussed form of gesticulation in the ancient world is the stylized motions used by orators. Various aspects of oratorical gestures have been the focus of scholarly studies: these range from attempts to recreate one of Cicero's speeches complete with gestures, to detailed analyses of the exact meanings of specific convoluted finger positions encountered in ancient visual representations, as well as what different styles of delivery reveal about broader Roman societal concepts of gender and masculinity.[16] Since the goal of oratory was to persuade, speakers had to negotiate a fine line between using

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14. See, for example, Corbeill (2004), 107–140; Fowler (2007); O'Sullivan (2011): my paragraph is derived from the analyses found in these works. For Greek attitudes towards walking (as well as some discussion of sitting and standing), see Montiglio (2005).

15. On the leitmotif of the "running slave," see Csapo (1987).

16. Maier-Eichhorn (1989); Graf (1991); Gleason (1995); Aldrete (1999); Gunderson (2000); Hall and Bond (2002); Corbeill (2004); Hall (2004).

a lot of gestures because of their efficacy in winning over an audience and respecting conventions about the dignity and demeanor expected of upper-class Roman males, which imposed constraints on vigorous gesticulation. The tension between the two sometimes lent a particular gesture much of its potency, but whether an orator was regarded as a paragon of rhetorical persuasion or a laughing-stock often hinged on surprisingly subtle differences in delivery.

Ancient handbooks on rhetoric and oratory, such as those written by Cicero and Quintilian, are full of cautionary examples of orators who compromised the dignity expected of one of the Roman élite. In Cicero's *Brutus*, Gaius Scribonius Curio is described as having had an unfortunate tendency to sway from side to side while orating and to employ gestures that were too abrupt, giving the appearance that he was thrashing the air around him. These habits prompted the unflattering criticisms that it looked like he was either speaking in a storm-tossed boat or else trying to drive away flies.[17] Even worse, Sextus Titius' languid and stylized oratorical gestures led to a popular dance at Rome being labeled "The Titius."[18] On the other hand, when done correctly, gestures greatly enhanced the persuasive force of an oration by arousing the emotions of the audience. Cicero berated one speaker for not using enough gestures: "And you, Marcus Calidus . . . there was not one sign of agitation, neither in your mind nor your body. Did you strike your forehead? Did you slap your thigh, or at the very least, stamp your foot? In fact, you were so far from inflaming my emotions, I nearly fell asleep on the spot."[19]

Gestures Misinterpreted and Subverted

Gestures are intended to facilitate communication. Some ancient authors even argued that there was a language of gestures intrinsic to all humans. In reality, anthropological studies have shown most gestures to be cultural constructions, although some do possess the same meaning across many different societies. This potential of gestures to cross linguistic and cultural boundaries perhaps helps account for the great popularity of mime and pantomime shows in which comprehension and enjoyment did not depend on knowing Latin. This quality was especially useful in ancient Rome, which harbored a large, ethnically diverse populace who spoke many languages. The ability of

17. Cic. *Brut*. 216–217.

18. Cic. *Brut*. 225.

19. Cic. *Brut*. 278.

Roman mime and pantomime to communicate across linguistic barriers is exemplified by an anecdote concerning a Pontic ruler who visited Rome during the reign of the emperor Nero. Attending a pantomime show, the king was astonished to find that he could fully understand and follow everything that was happening merely by observing the eloquent gestures of the performers, even though the accompanying Latin songs were incomprehensible to him. When Nero asked what parting gift the king would like, he requested to be given the lead pantomime dancer, declaring: "I have foreign neighbors, who do not speak our language; and it is not easy to procure interpreters. Your pantomime could discharge that office perfectly, as often as required, by means of his gesticulations."[20]

Effective non-verbal communication requires that both sides share a common body of knowledge regarding the meaning of gestures. However, like any other form of communication, gestures were sometimes unsuccessful in conveying the intended message, and these failures could arise from various causes. Such moments of communication breakdown are noteworthy because they often reveal the underlying expectations or codes upon which the system depended. These breakdowns could be created by physical limitations, as when a gesture was far off or indistinct, but others occurred because of misinterpretation; while yet others were produced by cultural differences.

Perhaps the simplest way that a gesture could go awry was when it was made incorrectly or clumsily, so that the intended message was not conveyed. A humorous example of such a blunder happened when Quintus Haterius, of whom Tiberius was suspicious, went to the palace to pledge his loyalty. Encountering the emperor strolling through the halls, Haterius flung himself down before Tiberius and clutched at his knees in one of the standard postures of supplication.[21] His attempted display of deference went horribly wrong, however, when the emperor stumbled over Haterius and fell flat on his face. Nearly killed by Tiberius' bodyguards for apparently assaulting the emperor, Haterius only regained Tiberius' good graces through the intervention of Livia.[22]

Another hazard was an ambiguous gesture. Once, when Julius Caesar was haranguing his soldiers, he repeatedly pointed to his left hand while asserting that he would be willing to tear off his own ring and give it to anyone who helped him defend his honor. The soldiers on the fringe of the assembly "who

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20. Lucian, *Salt.* 64.

21. For Haterius (*PIR*^{2} H 24), see Freyburger (1988); Naiden (2006), 252.

22. Tac. *Ann.* 1.13.

could see better than they could hear" optimistically interpreted this gesture to mean that Caesar was promising to bestow the gold ring (and accompanying wealth) of an equestrian upon each of them.[23] In an era before artificial means of voice amplification, such situations would have been common, and this is probably one of the factors that encouraged the standardization of gestures, so that even those incapable of hearing a speech might infer the orator's words by observing the movements of his body.

The ambiguity of certain basic gestures presented unavoidable difficulties in communicating clearly, and such gestures could be turned against an orator by clever rivals. In 133 BCE, when Tiberius Gracchus was attempting to present his reforms at a massive and unruly assembly, the size and noise of the crowd rendered verbal communication impossible. Then Fulvius Flaccus, one of Gracchus' sympathizers, arrived on the scene with news that there was a plot to murder him. The dense crowd prevented him from reaching Gracchus, so he "mounted to a conspicuous place, and since it was impossible to make his voice heard so far, indicated with his hand that he wished to tell Gracchus something meant for his ear alone."[24] At Gracchus' urging, the crowd then parted to allow Flaccus to approach him and deliver his warning. Here, the gestures are understood and acknowledged.

A moment later, Gracchus himself had less luck in attempting to convey a more complex message. After he told those nearest him about the plot, they girded up their togas and broke up spear shafts to use in self-defense; but those farther away, who could only see these actions, became agitated, wondering what was going on. In an attempt to inform them, "since the questioners could not hear his voice, Gracchus motioned with his hand towards his head, making this visible sign that his life was in danger."[25] This gesture could lend itself to multiple interpretations, and Gracchus' enemies immediately took advantage of this: "On seeing this, his opponents ran to the Senate and told them that Gracchus was asking for a crown; and that his putting his hand to his head was a sign having that meaning."[26] A motion intended to suggest imminent danger and vulnerability was thus successfully (and cleverly) transformed into an arrogant demand for power and one-man rule—the sort of behavior most likely to incite tyrant-hating Romans. Accordingly, senators and

23. Suet. *Jul.* 33.

24. Plut. *Ti. Gracch.* 18.1–2.

25. Plut. *Ti. Gracch.* 19.1–2.

26. Plut. *Ti. Gracch.* 19.2.

their followers attacked and killed Gracchus. His gesture, meant to summon protective aid, became the cause of his own death.

As a sequel of sorts to this incident, Tiberius Gracchus' younger brother, Gaius, later found a way to alter a standard gesture to promote political change. Up to this point, it had been normal procedure for orators speaking in Rome's Forum to face the Senate-house and the adjacent *comitium* while speaking. On this occasion, however, Gaius Gracchus shifted his stance slightly so that he faced the other side of the Forum. In the words of Plutarch, "he continued to do this from that time on, and thus by a slight deviation and change of posture stirred up a great question, and to a certain extent changed the constitution from an aristocratic to a democratic form; for his implication was that speakers ought to address themselves to the people, and not to the Senate."[27]

A gesture could sometimes deliberately be used to undermine its own standard meaning, or even to suggest its opposite. One of the better-known gestures associated with women in ancient Greek and Roman art, especially with portraits of Venus, was for a nude woman to cover her groin with one or both of her hands, a posture conventionally interpreted as an expression of modesty. While that might be the "official" meaning of this gesture, women sometimes plainly used it as a titillating gesture of sexual provocation. For example, when Photis is seducing Lucius in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, after throwing off her clothes she strikes a version of this pose which is obviously lascivious in both intent and effect.[28] Again, the famous statue of Aphrodite fending off Pan with a playful slap of her sandal makes this gesture, ostensibly signaling her virtue, but in a coyly inviting way that suggests she might not resist his advances too vigorously (Figure 8.1). Thus a gesture could convey two diametrically opposite meanings at the same time.

Miscommunications involving gestures, as in the examples of Julius Caesar and Tiberius Gracchus, are interesting, but the deliberate subversion of an expected gesture, as by Gaius Gracchus and Photis, can be even more revealing. The anecdote concerning Popillius Laenas and Antiochus IV that began this chapter offered several examples of gestures that subverted conventional forms. Moments like these expose social expectations and codes of nonverbal communication. Laenas' actions carried additional force because of the ways that he violated the anticipated sequence of gestures, turning rituals intended to stress mutual acknowledgement and unity into an assertion of power and domination.

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27. Plut. *C. Gracch.* 5.3.

28. Apul. *Met.* 2.17.

FIGURE 8.1 Aphrodite fends off Pan, as Eros watches: First-century BCE marble from Delos. Athens NM, 3335.
(Photo: Marie Mauzy/Art Resource, NY, ART392192)

Gestures on the Ides of March

An examination of the use of gestures during one of the most famous episodes in Roman history—the assassination of Julius Caesar—furnishes an appropriate conclusion to this chapter. Most analyses focus on the motivations of the conspirators or the act of murder itself. However, if we instead highlight the role that nonverbal communication played on the Ides of March in 44 BCE, we find that the action on that fateful afternoon may have turned on a sequence of gestures. Furthermore, the way that these gestures were made, interpreted, and (most significantly) misinterpreted, to no small degree determined the outcome. The misinterpretation of one gesture in particular might have left the principal conspirators lying dead in pools of blood, rather than Julius Caesar.

After much dithering, the conspirators had determined to make their attempt upon Caesar's life when he appeared at the Senate meeting of March 15 to be held at the Theater of Pompey.[29] As the day wore on, however, and Caesar did not appear, they grew progressively more nervous and began to worry that news of their plot had been leaked to him. Plutarch describes the mounting tension, as many of the conspirators were forced to carry on their usual duties as magistrates with the outward semblance of calm, while internally, they were seething with anxiety and fear.

At this juncture, Popillius Laenas, a senator who was not privy to the plot, came up to Brutus and Cassius and whispered to them, "I join you in praying for the accomplishment of what you have in mind, and exhort you not to delay, for the matter is on men's tongues."[30] This ambiguous statement played upon their worst fears that their scheme had become generally known. Even greater was their consternation when, a little later, Caesar made his belated appearance, and Laenas, the man who apparently knew their secret, rushed to the side of Caesar's litter and engaged him in animated conversation. Unable to hear what was being said, the conspirators assumed that Laenas was warning him of their plot. Terrified, they "exchanged a series of glances," by which they "mutually agreed to kill themselves rather than be arrested." Cassius and some of the others had already reached into their robes to draw their daggers, "when Brutus noticed from Laenas' posture that it was obvious that he was urging a petition, not making an accusation." Because Brutus was surrounded by a crowd of people unaware of their plot, rather than speaking out, he had to find a nonverbal way to tell his co-conspirators that they were still safe. So he affected an ostentatious "cheerfulness of his countenance" in order to reassure them and stop their rash suicide. Laenas finally kissed Caesar's hand and departed, confirming that his earlier remark had been innocent and that he had only been presenting a petition.[31]

So, because of their misinterpretation of Laenas' bland good wishes, the conspirators almost failed in their task. What allowed them to proceed was

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29. The famous events of the Ides are related by a number of ancient authors, including: Plut. *Brut.* 14–17, *Caes.* 63–66; Suet. *Jul.* 80–82; Cass. Dio 44.19–24; App. *B.Civ.* 2.114–117; Nic. Dam. *FGrH* 90 F 2a.401. The incident involving Popillius Laenas appears in both of Plutarch's accounts as well as that of Appian. For a fuller narrative with bibliography, see Lintott (2009).

30. This direct quotation and all the subsequent ones are from Plut. *Brut.* 15–16.

31. It is an odd, but unintended, coincidence that the incidents discussed at the beginning and end of this chapter both center around men named Popillius Laenas. Presumably the two were related, although the earlier Laenas is by far the better attested figure. Of the later Laenas, little is certain other than his senatorial rank (specified by Plutarch); he may be the augur mentioned by Cicero (*Ad Att.*12.13.2).

Brutus' recognition of a series of gestures and postures used by a petitioner. These had a long history in the ancient world, going back to Near Eastern rituals. They could include such acts as prostration, grabbing the hem of the garment of the person being petitioned, seizing their knees, touching their chin, and more.[32] Although the specific supplicatory gesture employed by Laenas is not recorded, evidently it was one whose meaning was so clearly recognizable that Brutus could at once feel certain that the plot remained undiscovered.

After Caesar had entered the meeting-place of the Senate and had taken his seat, the conspirators gathered around him. Just before initiating the attack, one of them allegedly made a non-verbal declaration of their intent: Cassius "turned his face towards the statue of Pompey and silently invoked it, as if it had understanding."[33] With this gesture, Pompey was called upon to bear witness to the downfall of his old rival. Somewhat ironically, the conspirators then appropriated the very same ritual of petitioning that had caused them such terror a few moments before when Laenas had supplicated Caesar; now they used it to their own advantage to bring the plot to fruition. As soon as Caesar sat down, they surrounded him, and one of them expressed a plea on behalf of an exiled brother. Supporting his plea, the others joined in, taking hold of Caesar's hands, arms, and clothing.

Caesar at first assumed that they were petitioning him in one of the accepted ways, and he only realized that something was wrong when they refused to let him go, causing him to struggle in order to be free of their grasp. At this point, gestures of petition turned into ones of violence, as one of the conspirators wrenched Caesar's toga off his shoulder and the others drew their daggers and began the assault. Caesar initially resisted, but when he saw Brutus approaching him with dagger drawn, he made a gesture of submission, drawing his garments over his head and body and allowing himself to be stabbed without further resistance.[34]

Coming immediately after his recognition that his friend Brutus was among the assassins, Caesar's motion of drawing his cloak over his head could also be interpreted as a gesture of grief over Brutus' betrayal. Covering one's face with one's cloak was a well-known gesture in Greek tragedy used to signify grief or shame: thus in Euripides' *Orestes*, Electra covered her head and wept, and in his *Iphigenia at Aulis*, Agamemnon drew his robe over his eyes to

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32. See further n. 8 above. Naiden (2006), 32, identifies Caesar as one of the most petitioned figures in all of antiquity.

33. Plut. *Brut*. 17.1.

34. For this and other violent acts of petitioning, see Naiden (2006), 247–249.

weep.[35] Even at the moment of his death, Caesar may have either consciously or instinctively used a familiar gesture to express his emotions. He died as an actor in his own tragic drama.[36]

Throughout this course of events, the action hinged on gestures and on their correct interpretation. Consider the interplay of looks among the conspirators and how much was conveyed just with the eyes. It was with glances alone that the conspirators first conveyed concern and doubt to one another, then collectively decided to kill themselves, and then were stopped by Brutus. Another glance, from Crassus, invoked the shade of Pompey to bless their endeavor. Gestures of petition twice played pivotal roles, not only in restraining Caesar so that the assassins could kill him, but also in preventing the conspirators from rashly committing suicide. The significance of this earlier moment is often overlooked. Imagine if Laenas had not made one of the easily understood gestures of petition during the exchange beside the litter, and if the conspirators had acted upon their initial panicked response, drawn their daggers, and sacrificed themselves. The Ides of March would then have ended with Caesar alive and his chief opponents dead. The fate of the Roman world turned on correctly reading the body language of someone who was seeking a favor rather than communicating a secret. Of such subtle distinctions is history made.

35. Eur. *Or.* 280; *IA* 1547–1550.

36. On veiling as a gesture of grief in Greek drama, see Cairns (2009).

PART THREE

Divinities

9

Messaging and the Gods in Mesopotamia

SIGNALS AND SYSTEMATICS

Seth Richardson

Problems and Questions

The points I want to make about communication between the human and divine realms in Mesopotamia are modest ones about a vast subject.[1] Least of all do I intend to define what Mesopotamian religion "was," an essentialist approach discarded long ago[2] in favor of theories of practice that emphasize how religion was "done."[3] As A. Leo Oppenheim wrote forty years ago:

> It may be stressed that neither the number of deities worshiped nor the absence or presence of definite (and carefully worded) answers to the eternal and unanswerable questions of man separate decisively a polytheistic from a monotheistic religion. Rather, it seems to be the criterion of a plurality of intellectual and spiritual dimensions that sets off most of the polytheistic religions. . . . Instead of the symbol of the path and the gate, which may be taken to be the "kenning" of monotheism, a primeval, inevitable, and unchanging design or order (*dharma, ṛta,*

1. See Rochberg (2003).

2. Oppenheim (1977); cf. now Schneider (2011).

3. Beckman (2005); compare to Lopez (1998), who critically examines how "belief" became a central feature of theology and philosophy in the Christian West, and thus partly a historical phenomenon of religion and its study.

> *šimtu*) organizes the multifaceted structures of polytheistic religions. They are characterized by the absence of any centrality and by a deep-seated tolerance to shifting stresses, making possible the adaptability that such religions need to achieve their millennial lifespan.[4]

Whether or not this is true of all polytheism, it is certainly apposite of Mesopotamian religious thought, and it is to this relationship between plurality and communication that my chapter turns its attention. My goal is to problematize reductive, declarative sentences (especially in comparative work) about how Mesopotamians are supposed to have heard and been heard by their gods. Three main problems that have not received independent attention deserve elaboration to this end: the multiplicity and heterogeneity of communicative channels; the degree to which they were *not* systematically coordinated, theologically transparent, or liturgically arranged; and the observation that messages were as much about problems of communication as about the communication of problems.

A reflection on these issues brings to the foreground that no unquestioned certainties or single way of thinking governed Mesopotamian ideas about mortality, fate, or the nature of the good. The multiple and variable channels of media and genre[5] that Mesopotamian man opened to the transmundane world resemble the bet-hedging ambivalence of any churchgoer with a lucky rabbit's foot in his pocket: just like us, he was not sure of his position in the universe, he knew it, and he was willing to try almost anything to figure it out.

Genres as Information Networks

The multiplicity of Mesopotamian communicative channels to the divine is amply illustrated by the many relevant genres and corpora of cuneiform texts. The primary context for divine communications was temple religion, especially marked by monumental architecture; a professional priesthood and votary personnel devoted to specific gods and their consorts; and a liturgy of festivals and rituals centered on sacrifice, chiefly designed to promote the welfare of the polity.[6] Yet despite the fact that sacrifice was the primary means of

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4. Oppenheim (1977), 182–183.

5. On genre, see Vanstiphout (1999).

6. No monographic study of Mesopotamian sacrificial practices has ever been written, although they entailed such regular and massive deliveries that they attained institutional economies of scale. See the relevant essays s.v. "Opfer" in the *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* Bd. 10:1–2 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003).

communication with the gods in Mesopotamia, it remains poorly understood, because many of its procedures were never written down.[7] The temple setting was also the arena for divine communication through prayers,[8] hymns,[9] lamentations,[10] icons and statues,[11] and consecrations.[12]

But none of these forms was exclusive to temples. Messages also came from and went to the gods in ways less clearly associated with temples, including love songs,[13] dreams,[14] letters,[15] rituals,[16] divination,[17] ordeals,[18] demons,[19] dialogues,[20] incantations,[21] magic,[22] prophecies,[23] dances,[24] oracles,[25] amulets,[26] figurines,[27] and music.[28] (The reader can understand from

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7. See Pongratz-Leisten (2012). For one attempt to reconstruct the regular sacrificial regime in a specific Mesopotamian temple, see Neumann (2014), 212–243.

8. Seux (1976); Lenzi (2011).

9. Brisch (2010); Lenzi (2011).

10. Cohen (1988); Michalowski (1989); Cooper (2006).

11. Matsushima (1993); Berlejung (1997); Walker (1999).

12. Cazelles (1985); Löhnert (2010).

13. Sefati (1998); cf. Klein and Sefati (2008).

14. Oppenheim (1956); Butler (1998); Zgoll (2006).

15. Böck (1996); see AbB XII 99 note a, with literature; also AbB IX 141, XIII 164, XIV 9.

16. E.g., Ambos (2004).

17. Maul (2013).

18. Frymer-Kensky (1977); Bottéro (1981).

19. Black and Green (1992); Verderame (2012); see also the special issue of *Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni* 77:2 (2011) devoted to Mesopotamian demons.

20. Reinink and Vanstiphout (1991).

21. Cunningham (1997); Michalowski (1992). *BtM* p. 45: "The difference between a prayer and an incantation is often difficult to see, as many texts . . . show characteristics of both." The term "spell" is not as widely used in Assyriological parlance as in Egyptological literature.

22. Abusch and van der Toorn (1999).

23. Neujahr (2011); Stökl (2012).

24. Kilmer (1995); for examples, see *BtM* p. 90 and n. 1 on the *gūštu*-dance to Ištar; ibid., III.4 (a) iv.50.

25. Ellis (1989); Lambert (2007).

26. Farber (1989), noting the lack of a comprehensive study of this topic, which has yet to be remedied.

27. Barrelet (1968); Moorey (2003); Langin-Hooper (2013); Verderame (2013).

28. Kilmer (2002); Pruzsinszky and Shehata (2010).

this brief list why a single chapter cannot engage in their comprehensive analysis, nor even a substantial bibliography of secondary literature.) We can think of these genres as individual strategies within a larger game, but the ancient literature never clearly described them abstractly, or how they related to one another. The overlapping forms and precepts of institutional and personal access to the gods cannot therefore be substantially disentangled.

The omen series exemplifies the heterogeneity of ideas about how the gods made contact with man. Messages arrived through omens found in the livers of sheep,[29] the movements of stars,[30] the weather,[31] the patterns formed by oil on water,[32] the movement of smoke in the air,[33] ants on the walls, noises in the night, strange footprints in the street,[34] and the sex acts of (and between) humans, dogs and pigs;[35] in short, through extremely long lists of mostly observable[36] phenomena numbering in the tens of thousands.

However, as much as this seems to describe an encyclopedic *mentalité*—that all the world was significant—the fact that the massive lists of omens were neither exhaustive nor expanded over time tells us otherwise. The compendious series necessarily restricted themselves to elaborating a *finite* number of phenomenal topoi to form apodictic clauses of ominous significance: "If a door latch . . . ," "If a gecko . . . ," "If a black birthmark . . . ," etc.—but avoiding other phenomena as apparently insignificant. The omen series for freak births (*šumma izbu*), for instance, attends to anomalies for goats, cattle, horses, pigs, dogs, sheep, and gazelles, but not for lions, birds, foxes, or snakes, though these animals figured prominently in other kinds of omens.[37] Thus we must pause from examining the dizzying and seemingly interminable specificity of omens and other ritual texts to recognize that their *suggestion* of universal communicative capacity and the omnipresence of divinely revealed significance

29. Richardson (2010).

30. Rochberg (2004).

31. Gehlken (2012); van Driel (1992).

32. Pettinato (1966).

33. Finkel (1983); see also the context established by Brown (2006).

34. Freedman (1998), (2006).

35. Guinan (1998); Geller (2002).

36. Unobservable phenomena might include objectively impossible events, such as the sun rising in the night (see Rochberg [1991]), or contradictory ones, such as a door observed "unlatched" that nevertheless lacked a latch-hook (see Freedman [1998]: 153 Tablet 9 43').

37. Leichty (1970); cf. De Zorzi (2011).

were accomplished through a *bounded multiplicity* rather than through claims or theories of infinitude.

A study of genres effecting divine communication, then, benefits from analyzing them as a network of separate forms, rather than as the interlocking modules of a single way of knowledge. The compact, coded terms within genres were analogous to *data compression*, whose primary function was to reduce redundancies of language; they were technical literatures for professional use. But the multiplicity of genres worked as alternative communicative platforms, to build in *channel-redundancy*, for error-correction and access to knowledge and influence through other routes. Overlaps and substitutes made sure that if messages did not get through in one way or to the right "address" (i.e., "ritual failure"[38]), other methods, addressees, and premises about the nature of fate and divinity were available.[39] The genres thus braided both abbreviation and repetition into communications with the divine world, through the internal allusions and intertextual connections that permitted channel-switching. The diversity of practices already speaks to the robust heterodoxy and asymmetry of this communicative domain. It is towards the purposes of those *multiplicities* that my following comments aggregate—first by looking at its users' expectations of the system as a whole; and then at the two "flows" of communicative traffic, from men to gods, and vice-versa—to comment on the aspects of multiplicity, coordination, and bugs in the system.

Premises: Intention and Specificity

What did Mesopotamians hope for? Mesopotamian ritual and magical systems all shared some basic epistemological premises, notably the existence of the gods, their ability to act, and their superior knowledge of fate and the universe. The gods acted in the world on every level, from the cosmogonic, to the collective, to the individual. They were capable of seeing and hearing messages from men, and sending their own; but their attentions could be fickle, their motives unknowable, and their control over fate absolute and irrevocable. "Heed what I say, stand by me when I pray," one supplicant asks confidently of his god; while another one moans: "I am constantly in great distress: O my

38. See Ambos (2007) and Kozuh (2013); the concern for failure is in evidence from care taken to use "right wording" (*BtM* III.29 145–148) and procedures employed against improper performance (ibid., III.41(b)).

39. See the implied comparison of serial channels in the passage of *Ludlul bēl nemeqi* quoted below.

god, where are you?"[40] The benevolence of the Mesopotamian gods towards mankind was neither assumed[41] nor strongly linked to moral and ethical concerns: suffering could come as a consequence of sin or malfeasance, but these were not conditions necessary to bring about misery, nor was delivery from it always linked to right action. Death, illness, loss, and misfortune were often problems dealt out arbitrarily by indifferent gods (see later, on "pessimism").[42] We might at this juncture ask of communications not so much the "how" of it, but the "why" of it: what, indeed, could Mesopotamians who prayed, sacrificed, [43] or read omens hope to have gained by communicating at all, given that the fates were written, the gods were aloof, and hardship was the ineradicable lot of man?[44]

To consider this philosophical question fully, however, would lead us far from our path. More specific questions are: What metalinguistic expectations are revealed by the genres connecting mankind with the supra-human world? Were the channels two-way? (With rituals, the implication is pretty much "yes"; but with dreams, seemingly, "no."[45]) Was there an expectation of *quid pro quo*? Sacrifice and prayers without *do ut des* seems counter-intuitive: "I used to bring you [the god] a sheep offering every year," one supplicant complained, "but now an enemy has befallen me and I am miserable!"[46] But most prayers did not identify specific goals, and omens delivered only information, not help. It was impossible to know whether or when one's prayers had been heard, or what one might do about a malign sign. To what degree were communications mediated? Some communicative systems, heavily entextualized, required the intervention of ritual specialists; but other systems point to an equal presumption of direct access to the gods, anytime and anywhere. Thus

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40. *BtM* III.25 (as written, in third person) and III.49(a), respectively. For a disappointment in communication, see similarly ibid., "The Babylonian Theodicy," ll. 70–77 (*BtM* IV.17).

41. Potentially quite the opposite: in the gods' dialogue in the Flood Story about the "clamor" (*rigmu*) of mankind (which annoyed them to the point of sending the destroying flood), that "clamor" explicitly included the praises and prayers of men (*BtM* II.39, esp. Tablet I ll. 242, 354–359, 377–379, 391–394, and 403–406; cf. ibid. III.7(b) Old Babylonian version iv.5 and 16).

42. As one of the Naram-Sin legends has it, "death, plague, mourning . . . hunger, want, high prices . . ." (*BtM* III.7(b) Middle Babylonian Version ll. 11'–12'; Late Assyrian Version 94–98).

43. AbB XII 89: "Why am I offering sacrifices again and again?"

44. See Lawson (1994), with the review by Livingstone (1996).

45. Cf. AbB IX 263, in which a dream is said to imply that the sacrifice of a sheep to a god is expected; XII 160, that a sacrifice should provoke an ominous sign.

46. AbB XII 99.

the expectations for the occasion, provocation, and temporal stability of divine communications varied radically, as did the degree of agency that men felt themselves to exercise through or over them.

The atmosphere of uncertainty and ambivalence underscores that the messages to the divine world were as much about the phatic problems with communication as they were about the communication of problems: "Why have you become so indifferent to me?" wrote one man to his god in a letter, unable to figure out why his exemplary devotion had not been rewarded and his messages not answered.[47] The poem *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* ("I Praise the Lord of Wisdom") is perhaps the most comprehensive meditation on the arbitrary relationship of man to the gods demanding his devotion. The pious (but bewildered and abandoned) sufferer grapples with his isolation despite several efforts to communicate:

> I, for my part, was mindful of supplication and prayer,
> Prayer for me was the natural recourse, sacrifice my rule . . .
> I wish I knew that these things were pleasing to a god!
> What seems good to one's self could be an offense to a god,
> What in one's own heart seems abominable could be good to one's god!
> . . . In good times, [people] speak of scaling heaven,
> When it goes badly, they complain of going down to hell.
> I have pondered these things;
> I have made no sense of them.[48]

The sufferer's tribulations are ultimately resolved and his trust restored through a series of signs and dreams;[49] but except as an exhortation to faith, his restoration is essentially as mysterious (both to him and to us) as his abjection.

What seems unifying about these apparently fallible approaches to communication is the overarching presumption that human interpretation was necessary—and therefore, lest we miss it, *possible*—to understand the messages of the gods.[50] The authors and users of these interpretive literatures were scholars, specialists, and ritualists relatively independent of priestly

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47. AbB IX 141; similarly the plaintive prayers in *BtM* II.37; III.4(a) ll. 58–72.

48. *BtM* III.14 Tablet II ll. 23–48.

49. Ibid., Tablet III.

50. Note the important role of "interpretation" (*pa/iširu*, lit. "secret") in letters related to omens in the State Archives of Assyria corpus.

cadres. The interpreter's role developed hermetic and exclusive qualities, such as claims of secrecy,[51] or the interpolation of "abracadabra" language,[52] both obfuscating and deliberately transgressive of clear messaging. One sees a perennial tension between the imperative to understand and explain messages and the metalingual protocols that authorized their interpreters. What men and women might hope for from the communicative system itself was something well short of what they might hope for from the gods.

Messages from Men to Gods

Since the intentionality and specificity of communicative acts play such a large role in our understanding of them, we should make a broad distinction between messages initiated by men (e.g., prayers and sacrifices), and those understood to have been received passively (e.g., terrestrial omens and dreams)—between provoked and unprovoked communications. Hymns, for instance, were uncomplicated in their address to specific gods (and temples) and plain function of praise, but they rarely included specific intentions—usually just general hopes for good fortune.[53] The complexity of hymns lay elsewhere, in their poetics and imagery, and in the Sumerian rubrics they bore, which indicated spoken, sung, and instrumental accompaniment—for which formalism and aesthetics seem more important considerations than theology.[54] Brief hymns could also be subscripted to other kinds of compositions

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51. On secrecy, see Lenzi (2008), (2013); van der Toorn (2007); Stevens (2013); and the concluding statement in the Agum-kakrime text: "may the one who understands" (*BtM* III.10). Lenzi (2013), 24–26, traces the link between scholarship and secrecy (KI-URÌ) as early as Sumerian texts like "In Praise of the Scribal Art." Sumerian is, in fact, rich in terms for "secrets" ([AD/PAP]-HAL, BU, KIŠI$_{12}$, LÍL, PUZUR$_{[2/4/5]}$, URAŠ), but the connection of secrecy to scholarly knowledge is more emphatic in later times.

52. See examples in Abusch and Schwemer (2011), Texts 7.6.4, 7.10, 10.4. "Abracadabra" words appear in ritual speech as early as third-millennium texts from Fara and Ebla (Krebernik 1984), formed both from onomatopoesis (ibid., Beschwörung 37, *amman-ammanam*; similarly, *BtM* I.7, *damum-damamum*, "magic words") and "Fremdsprache" (ibid., Beschwörung 1, "subaräisch"). On the latter's Elamite, Subarian, Hurrian, and "hybrid" variations, see van Dijk (1982): "'Unsumerisches' spürbar sei." My thanks to Christopher Woods for the Krebernik and van Dijk references.

53. But see Lenzi (2011), 6–7, who argues for hymns as complexes of discourse, communicating the practice of culture and community as much as the putative content of petitions and praises. Cf. the discussion of blessing-phrases in Old Babylonian letters in AbB XIV xiv–xv (K. R. Veenhof).

54. The range of rubrics suggests the complexity of the situation; e.g., BALBALE, ADAB, TIGI, ULULUMAMA, ŠIRNAMŠUB, ŠIRŠAGḪULA, KUNGAR, and ŠIRGIDA. On genre and Sumerian hymnics, see Brisch (2010).

(especially brief ZA-MÌ hymns); they were generically permeable and versatile precisely because of their low intentionality. Votive inscriptions on statues, stelae, and other objects[55] also stood at this lower end of the intentionality spectrum, meant to communicate with the god(s) continuously, with unspecific and formulaic wishes "for life." Their communicative power was reiterative, emphasizing repetition over specificity.[56]

Most prayers and incantations, although they presumed an asymmetry of power between men and gods, carried some expectations of reciprocity. These varied in degree: requests of a "general character," such as ŠU.ÍL.LA (lit., "raising of the hand") prayers, accompanied by simple offerings, typically sought benefits as mild as "blessings." More complex "incantation prayers" were usually more specific in their appeals, targeting afflictions as minor as dust in the eye or constipation,[57] and as serious as miscarriage or snakebite.[58] Most prayers entailed ritual actions, and must be contextualized as parts of performances, with both *recitanda* and *operanda*. Incantations often differed from prayers by laying out brief narratives[59] of a specific problem to be solved, presented in the manner of an illness or affliction: "The wind of an evil word has blown into me," one incantation against seizure by a spirit begins, "an evil Lurker has been put upon me and chased me all the time. . . ."[60]

A contrast emerges between the vocative[61] address to specific gods in hymns and prayers, and the nonspecific inclusivity of ritual prophylactic entreaties against multiple demons and ghosts. These latter ritual appeals often included long lists of possibly afflicting beings, with no necessary claim by the petitioner to know the correct identity of the agents:

> A ghost or *mukil rēš lemutti* ("supporter of the head of evil") which was set on me and so continually pursues me—I am frightened and terrified about him—he continually sets about oppressing and murdering

55. E.g., AbB XII 127, apparently a knife to be gifted to Marduk.

56. For a more specific prayer, see the "Cuthean Legend" story, in which Naram-Sin hopes to be remembered as an example to future kings; see Westenholz (1997), 264.

57. *BtM* II.16 and .19; but cf. II.14, an "all-purpose" incantation against all manner of poxes and fevers.

58. *BtM* IV.37 and II.23.

59. Cf. Sanders (2001).

60. Stol (1993), 26.

61. The generic verb for prayer in Akkadian, *karābu*, emphasizes spokenness in uses, usually "to greet," "to invoke (a name)," or "to utter" a specific type of prayer; but it also affords the sense of (non-orally) "dedicating" an offering or making a gesture of blessing.

> me. Whether he be an evil *utukku*-demon or an evil *alû*-demon or an evil ghost or an evil *gallû*-demon, whether he be a buried person's ghost or an unburied person's ghost or a ghost who has no brother or sister, or a ghost who has no one to invoke his name or the roving ghost of one of his family, or a ghost of one who was abandoned in the steppe and thus his spirit was not blown away and his name was not invoked: entrust him to his family ghosts.[62]

These lists sometimes ended with a rather desperate-sounding summary of "or whoever you are," in hopes of solving specific, named afflictions. Thus the aspect of communicated prayers and incantations could vary radically in their logical suppositions. In prayers and hymns, we find mostly positively articulated wishes, specific addressees, low intentionality, and an open, future-conditional temporality. Incantations, however, could have almost all of those reversed: requests with specific intentions, to remove present problems (i.e., as negatively articulated wishes) immediately; but a general and open address to any potential affective agent. The forms' mutual focus on the fate of the individual, however, could yet in turn be contrasted with the community focus of temple religion.

Any comment on intention should mention the often-glum future prospects of Mesopotamian man. As one suffering character mourned, it seemed that

> Those who neglect the god go the way of prosperity,
> While those who pray to the goddess are impoverished and dispossessed.
> In my youth, I sought the will of my god;
> With prostration and prayer I followed my goddess.
> But I was bearing a profitless *corvée* as a yoke.
> My god decreed instead of wealth, destitution;
> A cripple is my superior, a lunatic outstrips me;
> The rogue has been promoted, but I have been brought low.[63]

To give an analogue from a more "secular" context: the Code of Hammurabi, after its seemingly confident presentation of the laws, concludes with an admonition that any "wronged man" who failed to find justice through them should simply pray to the god Marduk as on Hammurabi's stele (Figure 9.1).

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62. Scurlock (2006), 199. Other illustrations of serial inclusivity include *BtM* III.49(f) and IV.27, esp. pp. 826–827. Cf. ibid., III.54, "To Any God," which acknowledges that the speaker does not know the identity of the god(dess) to whom he prays, and so just begins: "O god, whoever you are. . . ."

63. Lambert (1960), 75–77: "The Babylonian Theodicy."

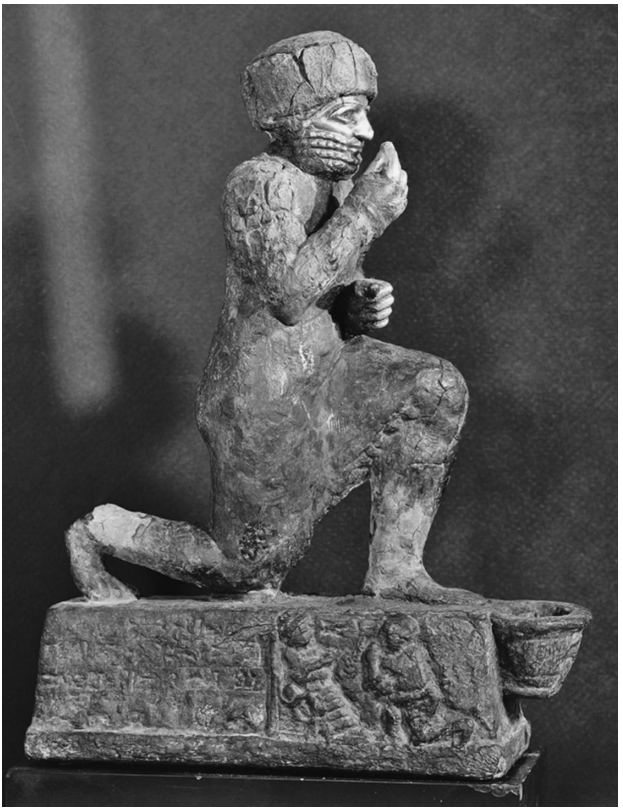

FIGURE 9.1 A man at prayer, perhaps King Hammurabi: Gold-plated bronze figure of the first half of the 18th century BCE, from Larsa. Musée du Louvre, AO15704. (Photo: Eric Lessing/Art Resource, New York, ART30878)

One could not expect the king's justice to right wrongs; the mercy of the unknowable gods was the only true appellate system.

Man's ability to steer his own destiny and the problem of suffering were primary subjects of Akkadian literature. One routinely finds a tension between encouragements towards faith—

> Prayer, supplication, and prostration
> Offer him daily, and you will get your reward.
> Then you will have full communion with your god.[64]

64. Ibid., 105.

—and expressions of profound doubt—

> The will of god cannot be understood,
> The way of god cannot be known:
> Anything divine is impossible to find out.[65]

A conventional designation of "pessimism" has been used to characterize this Mesopotamian outlook.[66] The gloomy tone about the limited value of messaging might lead us to think that Mesopotamians felt themselves separated from the gods by a vast and isolating gulf; that their messages were sent and received with little reciprocation, with the loneliness of satellites lost from orbit. But such passages have to be seen in their narrative contexts: expressions of doubt were the cruces through which narratives about faith were resolved. These doubts were not about the existence of the gods (a given), their essential characters (unknowable), or the importance of ethical and moral precepts (expounded in abundance), but about whether or not the gods heard and responded to communication at all.

Individuals were able to appeal directly to the gods,[67] but contact was frequently handled by intermediary specialists, such as lamentation-priests (*kalû*), magical experts (*āšipu*), or exorcists (*mašmaššu*). Yet we should be cautious of overstating the importance of scholars and scholarship in Mesopotamian society, in part because many vernacular communications remained unwritten, and in part because modern scholars tend to focus on the actors and materials that are their own historical analogues.

In many cases, gods being petitioned by humans were to be approached via an intercessory, personal god, as in one letter to the interceding god Amurrum, "whose pronouncement is heard before Šamaš."[68] The pairing of communicant and scholarly interpreter on the mundane plane was thus mirrored by communicant and intercessory god on the divine plane.[69] Thus

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65. *BtM*, I 345.

66. See Lawson (1994); as an example, *BtM* 306–308.

67. See Klein (1982).

68. AbB XII 99. See further Frechette (2012), 1–4, 28–30. The distinction between incantation and prayers as forms of petition is more informative in terms of the use of affective and sympathetic magic rather than of communications. But ritual actions thus differ not so much in intentionality and specificity, as in the variation of communicative media.

69. Cf., however, instances in which major gods were petitioned to intercede on behalf of *supplicants* to mollify their *personal* gods, reversing the expected chain of authority: see *BtM* III.42(b), .52(b), and *passim*.

communications were not only rule-bound, but heavily mediated between correspondents. Relations between man and his interceding personal god, however, could also be intimate enough to allow modest negotiating power for the human offering the prayer. This Old Babylonian letter to the god Lady Ninmug, for instance, held out sacrifice and praise as an incentive for her to act:

> Speak to my (divine) Lady Ninmug: Thus says Ninurta-qarrad, your servant. Since (the god) Išum will listen to your speech, intercede for me with Išum for this sin I have committed. As soon as you have interceded for me, I, in high spirits, will bring Išum a sacrifice, and for you I will bring a sheep. When I give praise in front of Išum, I will also praise you! (AbB XIII 164)

To the extent that offerings were implicitly understood to begin negotiations, men assumed some agency;[70] if there were rules, one could play by them.

Making sure the message got through was of primary concern, but it is difficult to reconstruct the *chaîne opératoire* of speaking with the divine—the pretexts, the anticipated replies, the expected rewards and sanctions. Certainly compositions like *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* reveal that Mesopotamians at least *hoped* their communications with gods would be dialogues.[71] Breakdowns in communication were considered catastrophic, as this narrator laments the collapse of messaging routes one by one:

> I called to my god, he did not show his face,
> I prayed to my goddess, she did not raise her head.
> The diviner with his inspection did not get to the bottom of it,
> Nor did the dream interpreter with his incense clear up my case.

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70. The potentially cynical or manipulative expectation of exchange is parodied in the Babylonian "Dialogue of Pessimism," in which a man is at first advised: "The man who makes sacrifices to his god is satisfied with the bargain: he is making loan upon loan"; but is then counseled to use prayer instead: "Do not sacrifice . . . you can teach your god to run after you like a dog" (Lambert [1960], 147–149). Similarly, in an early dialogue, a man chastises his (unfair) god with: "Brother does not despise brother, friend is not a calumniator of friend!" (*BtM* p. 78; similarly ibid., p. 329), "Prayer, supplication and genuflection: For every grain you render, your profit will be a talent!"

71. Compare other Mesopotamian works that presumed the possibility (while also doubting the efficacy) of dialogue with the divine: in *BtM*, see, e.g., the "Dialogue Between a Man and His God" (I.78), "The Poem of the Righteous Sufferer" (I.306), "A Sufferer's Salvation" (I.324), "The Babylonian Theodicy" (II.790), and the "Dialogue of Pessimism" (II.799); III.49(a) ll. 3–4, 11.

> I beseeched a dream spirit, but it did not enlighten me,
> The exorcist with his ritual did not appease divine wrath.
> What bizarre actions everywhere![72] (II.4–10)

The passage reveals two important principles. The first is that the major modes of messaging were held to be serial or parallel rather than parts of a single procedure. This is a common template: one hymn to Ištar describes previous attempts at song, prayer, offering, *and* dirges in turn;[73] another credits Marduk as the force behind divination, exorcism, conjuring, *and* snake charming;[74] a third has Šamaš communicating through omens, prayers, supplication, *and* "whispers."[75] These multiple media invited invidious comparison and formal criticism: they and their expert handlers were often critiqued as ineffective, and even parodied as useless.[76] Elsewhere, a *laissez-faire* view prevailed, recognizing that individuals might simply be communicating according to their means:

> The diviner brings you cedar, the widow a flour offering,
> The poor woman oil, the rich man a lamb from his wealth.
> I bring you a lump of earth, product of the depths.[77]

What is *never* vigorously asserted across the ancient literature is that these methods of communication belonged to a unified or coordinated system. They were more like speech registers. One way of speaking might be deployed not only for its own merits, but also because it was not another: as slang is used to eschew high diction, so dreams were depended on to convey messages that might not or could not, it seems, come by other means. This buffering was not itself the subject of criticism or speculation, notwithstanding the occasional claims of specific knowledge arts to preëminence over others.[78]

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72. Ibid., v. I 312; similarly in the same composition, I. 43–54; compare with similar lists of parallel rites in *BtM* III.2 ll. 55'–59' (p. 235); III.15 1'7'.

73. *BtM* III.26 iv 38–52.

74. *BtM* III.44(h) 17–20; elsewhere (*BtM* III.21(c) 131–135), Marduk is contacted through sacrifice, spirits, dreams, and incense.

75. *BtM* III.32 ll. 129–138.

76. *BtM* III.28 163–164; IV.21, a jester's burlesque in which he mocks lamentations, exorcism and even sacrifice.

77. *BtM* III.50(p) 3–4.

78. E.g., when Agum-kakrime confirms cultic restorations through divination and purifies Marduk's temple with snake-charmers (*BtM* III.9).

The second point *Ludlul* reveals is that the channels of communication were metaphorized as embodied. The failure of senses, functions, and even organs is the text's repeated strategy for characterizing communication problems, and the narrator's later good fortune is described as the removal of blockages to the senses and bodily passages—the clearing of the windpipe, eyes, throat, etc.[79] The externality of contact with the divine was thus assimilated to the internality of the body. In this embodied perception of communication, the individual routes were seen as diverse, functionally specific, and unrelated except in some whole that was greater than the sum of its parts. This view acknowledged the larger truth that the communicants had little idea of how the larger system worked, its rules and sufficient criteria, and made few claims to explain it—only to appreciate that its different ways and means all connected somehow to the top of the system.[80]

Working from the idea that Mesopotamian intellectual life enthusiastically *pursued* this diversity of communicative precepts and practices as workarounds to blocked channels, one might usefully attend neither to concepts of efficacy nor to generic typologies, *but to multiplicity of practice as the summary cultural sign worth examining.*

Messages from Gods to Men: "Open Signs" and "Signals"

Although gods communicated directly to the world, interpreters were almost always interposed between them and their audience. Still, I would distinguish "oracles" (and prophecies, dreams, etc.) from "omens" and divination, not so much for their different degrees of professional mediation or provocation as for their lesser and greater (respectively) entextualization. The oracular utterances of prophets and ecstatics, for instance, were considered direct, one-way messages from the gods,[81] but their "passive" human conduits, though working without a text tradition, were nevertheless specialists of a kind. Inspired speakers included (most commonly, and in all periods) the *maḫḫû* ("ecstatic"),[82] but also, from various times and places, the *zabbu* (also

79. *BtM* III.14 Tablet III ll. 1'–35' and commentary a–k. Cf. *BtM* II.18, an incantation against gas, urged to depart not only through the anus, but also via the head, eye, mouth, and ears. See especially now Steinert (2012).

80. Steinert (2012), ix, similarly argues for a "Mesopotamian conception of the human person as a 'pluralistic' unity of multiple components, faculties and attributes."

81. See Stökl (2012).

82. <*maḫû*, "to become frenzied, to go into a trance."

an "ecstatic"),[83] *āpilum* ("answerer"),[84] and *rāggimu* ("prophet").[85] But oracular messages (I_5-GAR/*egirrû*, but also *tamītu*,[86] *qibītu*, and *zikru*) were not limited to professionals,[87] and could arrive through animals, figurines, or utterances (i.e., *kledon*-portents) overheard in public.[88] The medium of expression for prophecies and oracles was usually speech (*qabû*, "to say," *bakû*, "to wail," *ina pî*, "from the mouth," etc.), in contrast to the heavy reliance on textual material by the ominous system. What we call "oracles" from ominous procedures in later periods, however, typically required not so much interpretation after the fact (since they usually brought "yes"/"no" answers), but rather great care in the formulation of the question posed.[89] As with omens, prophecies and oracles concerned veiled conditions in the present or near future; they generally did not make claims about the far-flung future, which was kept secret by the gods.[90]

Gods speaking through dreams were more democratically available: they might appear to priest, merchant, or farmer alike.[91] But the best examples come from literary works in which kings and learned sages were the recipients;[92] and all dreams still required specialist interpreters to make

83. In Old and Standard Babylonian; perhaps <*zabābu*, "to be in a frenzy." AbB XI 34 suggests that the *zabbu* was typically naked.

84. <*apālu*, "to answer," known only known from the Mari texts; see Charpin (2002), with bibliography.

85. Besides *raggimtu*, "prophetess" (first millennium only); <*ragāmu*, "to call, to summon."

86. See especially Lambert (2007).

87. *BtM* II.35c, a request for an oracle which might come via a god, king, noble, or commoner.

88. See Oppenheim (1954–1956); and CAD E s.v. *egirrû* s. 3, with commentary p. 45, noting the particularly acoustic quality of oracles.

89. See Lambert (2007).

90. See especially Koch (2013) on concepts of time in Mesopotamian divination.

91. Cf. Oppenheim (1977), 182. But see AbB V 10 (a letter between a man and woman); VI 22 (between women); VIII 88 (to a professional *ša'iltum*, also mentioning divination and funerary offerings) and 115 (cf. CAD Š/I s.v. *ša'iltum*); IX 263 (a dream requiring sacrifice); X 158; XI 17 (a man with "very good" dreams); XIV 53; cf. XIV 154, in which one man dreams "every night" of his father-in-law, as a non-oracular wish for his well-being. The long composition "Erra and Išum" was said to have been entirely revealed to the scribe Kabti-ilāni-Marduk "while he was coming awake" (*BtM* IV.16, Tablet V, l. 43).

92. E.g., the Sumerian compositions "Dumuzi's Dream," the "Cursing of Agade," "Sargon and Ur-Zababa," in various stories of the Uruk kings Gilgameš, Enmerkar, and Lugalbanda, and perhaps at greatest length, in the cylinders of Gudea. In the Flood Story, Atrahasis receives his order to build a boat in a dream (*BtM* II.39, Tablet II iii.6–10 and III i.13–15).

their meanings plain,[93] remaining cryptic to the dreamer until explained by a professional (ENSI). As with omens, formal interpretation was based on associative principles: plays on words, colors, symbols, even the shapes of cuneiform signs.[94] Dreams could be ritually induced or incubated, but as a rule they were not presumed to answer specific queries; they were primarily meaningful for the dreamer. This contrasts sharply with many omens, which might be observed by, or had implications for, anyone and everyone[95]—e.g., "If a city's dump grows bishopsweed, an enemy will surround that city's gate"[96]—including the king, the army, or the nation as a whole.[97]

Omens were part of the Mesopotamian scientific repertoire as early as the third millennium, and occupied an increasingly large portion of the cultural imagination as the centuries passed, their several corpora growing in size and complexity. Here, too, interpretation was necessary for use, but its application operated on subtly different premises, depending on subgenre. Going forward with an analysis of these forms as a network, intelligence models make a helpful distinction between "open" sources, i.e., signs at least partially obvious to any viewer, and "signals" (or "signatures"), which require foreknowledge or interpretation (or both) for comprehension.[98] There were many "open-source" signs which, like dreams, were unprovoked and easily recognized as meaningful by anyone: freak human and animal births (the series *Šumma Izbu*[99]); terrestrial omens, covering anything from unusual weather to odd noises (*Šumma Ālu*[100]); and physiognomic irregularities, such a child born with an

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Dreams were emphatically visual experiences: e.g., in Šulgi C, which speaks of Šulgi's "vision" (IGI); and Mari texts (e.g., ARM 26/82 and 235), which speak of "dreams before one's eyes"; cf. ARM 26/142, a dream "not before his eyes."

93. E.g., *BtM* III.48(b) and IV.5; cf. Foster (2001), Gilgameš Tablet VII 172: "My friend had a dream needing no interpretation."

94. See, e.g., Frahm (2010), De Zorzi (2011), and Heeßel 2012 on the interpretive hermeneutics of divination.

95. Richardson (2002); note, e.g., the quotidian concerns of the letter AbB XII 160, about business to be conducted by "reliable signs."

96. Freedman (1998), Tablet I l. 51.

97. See Smith and Leon (2014) on divination's role in the production of state sovereignty. Cf. Guinan (2002), 191–192, viewing omens as having a primarily individual frame of reference; and Rosenberger (2013). Brown (2006) takes up the issue of specificity in omens.

98. See Brown (2006), 110.

99. Leichty (1970).

100. Freedman (1998), (2006).

unusually large head or nose (*alamdimmû*).[101] We know what we know about these types of omens mostly because of the interpretive literature that survives; but the identification of the signs in antiquity was relatively open.[102] Many hermeneutics for interpretation seem uncomplicated, deriving from broadly shared ideas such as the principle of the *pars sinister* and *pars dexter* as bad and good, respectively; inverted symbols as the "referential reversals of cultural categories;"[103] and certain mythemic presentations as evidently portentous, such as a double-headed lamb, or tripping while walking down the street—the universally accessible "black cat" omens common to all cultural story systems.

Extispical, astronomical, and medical omens, however, were messages closer to "signals"—less open to untrained observers, though each in significantly different ways.[104] One can begin with extispicy (also haruspicy, or hepatoscopy): the earliest ominous literature was the apparatus for the analysis of sheep livers by professional diviners (MÁŠ.ŠU.GÍD.GÍD).[105] Liver omens stand in an intermediate communicative position because they were notionally unprovoked, and their uses could be practical and immediate (i.e., not necessarily occasioned by high-state needs), such as to determine the timing of a business venture, or whether to protect a herd of sheep from raiders.[106] But the procedural bar was set fairly high: the diviner first had to pray for the gods to set signs in the liver;[107] the liver then had to be removed in a sacrificial rite;[108] and there was an extensive technical literature required for interpretation.[109]

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101. See Rochberg (2004), 44–97, on these and other divinatory forms.

102. See Guinan (2002), 192–193, on recognition.

103. See now Guinan (2014).

104. Cf. Brown (2006), 74–75, on omens of the type *oblativa* ("freely offered or unsolicited"), *impetrativa* ("from techniques employed, or objects manipulated"), and those "where a human is the divinatory vehicle."

105. The practice of liver divination dates back to ca. 2400 BCE, but the entextualization of the craft took place centuries later (ca. 1900 BCE); on the scholarly creation of the system (as against a redaction of common cultural practices), see Richardson (2010), 225–226.

106. AbB XIV 81; AbB XII 38; and Richardson (2002), Text No. 3, pp. 232–234 and 239–241, respectively.

107. See, e.g., *BtM* II.34–35: "In the lamb I offer, place the truth!" This act was not, however, requisite for an omen to appear: see, e.g., omens found unexpectedly "in the offering of a commoner," ARM 26/85 and 109.

108. Foxvog (1989).

109. In Neo-Assyrian times, liver omen queries were repeated, indicating that accuracy and authenticity were concerns that had gained in importance.

In all, there were enough interventions that it was practically impossible to gain access to the sign without looking for it in a deliberate and specific way. Though these messages were theoretically *already set* in any given liver, they required enough effort to locate and interpret for us to think of them as "invited"—somewhere between provoked and unprovoked.[110]

Then there were ominous systems whose meanings were entirely dependent upon professional intervention from end to end, from provocation to interpretation, such as the reading of movements of smoke in the air or of oil on water. These were provoked procedures and signifiers which were more aggressively arbitrary; thus non-professional observers would seldom be able to guess at the basic meaning of an oil pattern in the way they could intuit the negative meaning of a visibly diseased sheep liver. Access to these significances was as different as ours to, say, an ambiguous inkblot versus a large mass appearing on an X-ray.

Medical omens such as the series SA.GIG required a thorough knowledge of medicine for interpretation. (The distinction between medical "symptoms" and ominous "signs" is small enough that Assyriologists refer to this literature as "diagnostic omens.") Despite the term "omens," the semantic similarity to liver omens is inexact, if only because both the signs (presented as medical complaints) were neither invited nor provoked; nor was their observation restricted to professionals (any patient could recognize symptoms of illness); nor again were the signs ever desirable in and of themselves. Diagnostic omens referred only to themselves: they were not signs of anything other than a medical issue, and there was no result better than the nullification of the original signifier (i.e., the medical problem). The best possible outcome of a medical omen was its self-obsolescence: "The patient will get better."

Astronomical omens relied on expertise for primary observation to a degree that confounds any simple characterization of them as "unprovoked"[111]: most observers were not qualified to know what most signs looked like. Anyone might recognize an eclipse or a comet; but many omens in the skies involved not only identifying technical conditions (e.g., the heliacal setting of Saturn in Pisces), but a familiarity with the poetic (e.g., anthropomorphic metaphors, as when Venus "sports a beard") or theoretical precepts (e.g., symmetry and numerical simplicity) of the corpus.[112] Prediction (for periodic events such as eclipses) added another element of educated preparation, which could not

110. Richardson (2010).

111. Koch (1995), 10.

112. Rochberg (2004), 144, 172, and 32, respectively; see also Brown (2006), 80.

be said of sheep livers and black-cat omens. The mathematical knowledge required to anticipate, recognize, document, and decipher the movements of the stars and planets shows that although these messages came from the gods unbidden and unhidden, their observability required more than simply looking up at the sky: one already had to know what one was looking for. Astronomical omens were neither purely "open" nor "closed," but camouflaged—riddles hidden in plain sight.

In terms of the observation, interpretation, and referential frame of ominous systems, we face a remarkably uneven intellectual terrain of signification disguised by the common label of "omens." Their differing premises reveal ancient, emic multiplicities of form, genre, and access, over and above any absolute principle or procedure for receiving and understanding messages.

Omens were categorically different from other communications in literary and practical terms; and Mesopotamian diviners were usually schooled in more than one ominous literature. Thus we might form the expectation that specific types of omens were part of a larger system of signs. But what is more important for our particular focus is that divine communications were different enough *even within the ominous category* to reveal the very different logical and epistemological grounds necessary to connect observations (*protases*) to outcomes (*apodoses*), and thus to understand meanings and results. Most communications received from the gods were coded "signals" rather than open messages, requiring mediation and interpretation for access, reception, and understanding.

The generic labels we use smooth over many differences between what "omens," "spells," or "prayers" are or do;[113] moreover, the documents are not good reporters on the non-textual practices associated with them. Our surviving texts are the *residuum* of regular or occasional rites, practical tools that were originally structured by the immediate needs of performance; they were not composed with self-description in mind, let alone theology.[114] Contact with the gods was effected through ephemeral performances of which we possess only fragments. Nor were non-human correspondents limited to the gods: demons, ancestors, ghosts, and even disembodied lights might act as senders, messengers, or recipients. Perhaps some signs were perceived as correspondents *per se*, and others perhaps did not require correspondents. Thus the syntactic position of communicants was rarely clear.

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113. Vanstiphout (1999); Cooper (2006); Brisch (2010).

114. See Foster on genre and practice, *BtM* 39–46, preferring descriptive "categories" to genres, especially the "celebratory" (e.g., hymns), "narrative" (in portions of rituals; cf. Sanders [2001], 430), and effective (e.g., spells, rituals, sacrifices).

There are troubling implications for historians: what might we say about chains of communication in which the roles of the participants were not originally well-defined? Like diviners or priests, we moderns stand in the position of intermediaries and interpreters. This is uncomfortably mimetic unless we posit interpretation itself as the focus of social-historical analysis. Especially since Mesopotamian communications sought to clarify existing information as much as to impart new facts, it is interpretation that we should examine as a cultural precept and practice, a hunt for the social location of ancient communicants and interpreters,[115] and their concern for mediation and access.

Systematics and Heterogeneity

I will trouble the waters with one further caution about problems and pitfalls in any approach to the topic of divine communications that supposes some essential Mesopotamian viewpoint as a basis for analysis. Much Assyriological scholarship on knowledge arts posits a broad, systematic interrelationship inferred from a subset of partially integrated practices and genres. Of course, it is easier to understand anything if one presumes it to have an essential holism—in this case to approach the disparate cuneiform sources by positing that they are fragments of a once-coherent system of thought or practices now lost from view.

It is not hard to point to potentially connective tissue of this kind: Old Babylonian liver divinations were introduced with prayers, rituals, and attention to astronomical propitiousness.[116] Neo-Assyrian versions of these same procedures were further embroidered with formal queries, "disregard" recitanda,[117] and hemerologies. Medical recipes show cross-pollination between astrology, contagious magic, ritual incantations, and folk remedies;[118] astronomy populated the skies with gods, heroes, and monsters. These all might lead us to believe that the ancient corpora, fully reconstituted, would reflect a system of fundamentally

115. See now Garfinkle and Richardson (2016).

116. Cooley (2011).

117. The *ezīb* "disregards" were intended to protect the potency of an omen from polluting actions related to offerings, prayer recital, weather, cleanliness of personnel, or alteration of the ritual; see SAA IV xvi–xxviii.

118. E.g., the many prescriptions in Geller (2005) rely on hundreds of varied ingredients; and sometimes dozens of different prescriptions for identical symptoms/conditions; the exposure of medicines to stars; exorcistic incantations; or expiatory scapegoating rituals, such as the "third prescription" (of five) for being "ill in one testicle," which directs the afflicted to "seize a live *girītu*-fish, urinate onto its head, [and] release it into the canal" (p. 41, ll. 22–23).

related beliefs and practices based on an underlying theology. At the least, the routes of communication with the divine reflect discourse saturation, a network of forms in dialogue with each other's procedures and principles.

But modern secondary scholarship (much like its ancient counterpart) tends to highlight intertextual connections in demonstration of its own erudition; to this extent, there is some self-interest in any reconstruction of coherence. Equally rigorous attention to heterogeneity of genres, gaps in practice, and unsystematic references between most of the ancient verbiage would easily argue against such a reconstruction. The preponderance of unlinked and dissimilar material points squarely *away* from an ideology or theology framing any single set of Mesopotamian beliefs. A rational account would show that cuneiform sources documenting temple religion were not explanatory of omens; nor prophecies of dreams; nor prayers of sacrifices. The rickety bridges between forms of knowledge show us something less than a comprehensive *Weltanschauung*.

A study of Mesopotamian knowledge as discrete and local remains a desideratum; its critical methodology would have to find valid ways to evaluate absence of evidence, and to go beyond assuming a background of integrated belief and practice. I will not solve this difficult problem here, but I do suggest that the multiplicity of forms not only tolerated, but also bounded and dissipated the intellectual and religious contradictions that arose within the cultural arena—one that in turn provided a didactic framework for their resolution. I do not mean that connections between communicative forms were lacking; I merely point beyond an assumption that every piece of our evidence is part of a puzzle that would ultimately fit together into one picture. It would be more productive to consider the social milieu in which conflicts had to be ameliorated and shortcomings sufficiently, if imperfectly, resolved—the very human conditions in which all messages are sent and sought.

To highlight this point, we can look at four relevant series and their topical intersection with the gods: the terrestrial *Šumma Ālu* omens; medical texts related to rectal and renal diseases; the anti-demonic *Lamaštu* rituals; and the anti-witchcraft *Maqlû* texts. What was the profile of divine communications in them? The role played by the gods was ambiguous and unevenly distributed, and the "religious" footprint in the core practices described by the texts was very small.

To begin with *Šumma Ālu*: in the 2,759 substantially preserved omens of the first forty tablets,[119] 71 omens mention gods by name; another 112 mention

119. Freedman (1998), Tablets 1–21, and (2006) Tablets 22–40. By "substantially preserved," I mean sufficiently complete to identify a non-human agent; roughly 85% ($n = 1{,}686$) of the omens in Freedman (1998) qualified as such ($n = 1{,}962$).

unnamed gods; and 267 mention demons, protective spirits, animate figurines, ghosts, or disembodied supernatural agents. Such incidence in these 450 omens might seem to support the idea that a theological world view formed at least some background to the system. But the unspecific and unsystematic nature of these references belies such a view. Generic agents ("a god") outnumber specific ones ("the god Marduk"); many of the seemingly specified references to gods were actually rubrics for diseases (e.g., "the hand of Ištar") and not for gods as such.[120] Non-divine agents outnumber divine ones by about 3:2; and unidentified non-divine agents ("a glimmering light") number the same as identified ones ("a haunting ghost," "a *gryllotalpa*-demon").

More to the point: 84% of omens (n = 2,309) identify no ominous agent whatsoever. Only 16% describe their signifying, observable event (i.e., the protasis) as produced by any agent at all—including only 6.6% by a god—with the vast majority unmotivated by *any* particular sentient entity. The background reflects a world full of signals capable of interpretation, but not one in which they were understood to come from an identifiable sender, let alone the gods.[121] Almost nothing in the texts suggests that the knowledge they catalogued, i.e., the corpus itself, was divinely created. Making theological connections to other communicative channels (prayer, dreams, etc.) was simply not a priority for the authors, editors, or users of the texts. In the bluntest terms, the gods were much more absent from these omens than they were present.

Turning to diagnostic and prescriptive medical texts, we find a similarly low incidence of divinities, though, again, the number of references to gods, astronomy, and rituals suffices to show that *some* expectation of external connection is appropriate on generic grounds. Medical texts might borrow force and authority from the religious domain, because those cues do exist in the texts. But their profile is muted: taking the diagnoses and prescriptions for rectal and renal diseases as an example, one again finds references to gods, ghosts, and astronomical forces, but their numerical minority makes it hard to see that they were the binding intelligence for the practices the texts describe. Of thirty-five substantially preserved texts in this collection,[122] just six (17%)

120. Cf. instances of such diseases in the texts of Geller (2005) discussed below.

121. Mesopotamian experiments in syncretism and henotheism in the first millennium further complicate the clear understanding of *which* gods one might actually be in contact with; see Porter (2000b), and examples in *BtM* III.44(g), 47(c), III.22(b) Tablet III ll. 127–161, and, most famously, III.17 ("The Epic of Creation") Tablet VI ll. 121–122.

122. Geller (2005), Nos. 1–2, 3–11, 21–38, 42, 45, 49–50, 52, and 54. As above, it remains methodologically difficult to determine what "substantially preserved" ought to mean; I can only offer here that these 35 texts are more complete and legible than not.

invoke gods as the authorizing forces for the practices described, through sacrifice, incantation, or prayer.[123]

Again, the more substantial of these invocations could be seen as models of a divine control or authorship to be assumed for the twenty-nine texts in which such claims are not made. The corpus mentions other practices external to itself, too: five texts invoke astral bodies as instrumental to the efficacious preparation of medicine,[124] and seven texts use the euphemistic language of "Hand of [God X]" to name diseases.[125] But compiling positive references to these connecting topics obscures the fact that twenty-two of the thirty-five texts make no reference to any of these things, and that *none* of the thirty-five texts mentions a context of temple religion such as priests, divination/omens, hymns, or divine statues.[126] Again, what we find is an easy familiarity between practices and beliefs within close orbit, but not any major outreach to corpora beyond this horizon.

Even when the gods seem more emphatically present or active in these literatures, the postulate or degree of integration is far from clear. Among the eighteen preserved rituals of the series *Lamaštu* (a particularly nasty demon), only two mention any gods (the Annunaki);[127] but fully half of the thirty-six canonical spells and incantations going along with them make reference to gods great and small, often leaving no doubt that divine power underwrites the potency of the deployed magic. Still, what are we to make of the fact that the power of the gods in the spells is set on a par with the magical potency of "the garbage pile and its dirt," "the clothing of an unclean woman," and clay figurines of dogs inscribed with instructions to bark and bite at demons? The priority of the gods may not be in question, but their

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123. Ibid., Nos. 2 (one incantation among dozens is "by the command of Marduk lord of exorcism"); 9 (a sacrifice [SISKUR] before Šamaš and prayers [e.g., DU_{11}-GA] and incantations to Gula, called "supreme in spells and healing," comprising about 39 lines of a 142-line text); 10 (a ritual before Gula); 11 (a sacrifice before Gula); 34 (of 81 lines, one line mentions offerings before Gula); and 45 (incantations referring to Gula, Ea, and Marduk "the exorcist"). I do not include Text 31's reference to an ingredient(?) called "spittle of Anu."

124. Especially Lyra, the star of the god Gula; ibid., Nos. 1–2, 6, 9, 11, 49; a few other texts require that medicine be set out overnight under the stars.

125. Only one in any emphatic or consistent way, however: ibid., Text 49 (41 of 121 diagnoses); cf. Texts 6, 21, and 27 (once each); 34 (three times, in 81 lines); and 50 (one of nine diagnoses).

126. The colophon of no. 35 (ibid.) identifies the tablet as the property of the Aššur Esabad temple, but this is not part of the ritual itself.

127. Farber (2014), 143–195; I leave aside the ubiquitous characterization of Lamaštu herself as the "Daughter of Anu."

relationship to other agents remains unelaborated by the texts, unworthy of explanation.

Or take the anti-witchcraft ritual series *Maqlû*, in which we find an even more insistent role for the gods in many of its prescriptions.[128] There are passages which acknowledge the gods as the underwriters of ritual efficacy and the very authors of its incantations.[129] Many of these rituals were carried out with sacrifices to Šamaš the sun god, praying to him to "convict" afflicting witches.[130] Yet one also finds many prescriptions in which the gods are mentioned barely or not at all,[131] and one must be struck (as in *Lamaštu*) by the virtual absence of priests or even temples and shrines, even as scenery, and this moreover in a literature otherwise highly evocative of the urban environment—its streets, houses, gates, palaces, rivers, and rubbish piles.[132] Indeed, the focus of the texts is more medical than "religious," and ritualists appropriate to these procedures, such as the *asû* and *āšipu*, are the central figures, rather than priests. In parallel, although practices we could call both "religious" and external to the corpus[133] are again included (e.g., rituals requiring "pure sacrifice" [*niqâ ella*] and prayer [*nīš qāti, teslītu*] before divine statues);[134] still, the ceremonies were always at small, occasional, and portable altars (*pāṭirū*), and not in temples.[135]

The core passages of *Maqlû* again present lengthy lists of magico-medical materials and procedures used to expiate witchcraft ("You take mating geckos from the open country, dry them and burn (them) as

128. Abusch and Schwemer (2011).

129. Ibid., Texts 1.1 and 7.2; the so-called *ul yâttun* formula has the ritualist disclaim "this incantation is not mine," and credit the gods with their composition; similarly, *BtM* II.17.

130. Ibid., Texts 1.5, 2.2, 7.6.2; similarly, 7.6.4, asking him for "just verdicts."

131. Ibid., e.g., Text 2.5 substantially preserves 21 prescriptions, but only one mentions a god; Text 2.3 mentions gods in only three of its 18 prescriptions; Text 7.10 mentions gods in two prescriptions, but not in its 52 others. Texts 1.7, 8.14 and 12.1 mention no gods at all.

132. The only exceptions I can see are a passing reference to the Esagila temple in one of ten epithets of the god Marduk in Text 8.6; and two broken references to the *bīt sebitti* (É ^{d}IMIN.BI) in Text 11.1 (cf. George [1993]: nos. 422 and 1407–09, shrines at Babylon, Kalaḫ, and Nippur).

133. E.g., a passage (ibid., Text 7.6.7) which instructs the ritualist to draw a line with flour "like a diviner" (*kīma ša bārî*).

134. Ibid., especially the texts of groups 7 and 8: 7.5, 7.6.3, 7.6.5, 7.6.7, 7.7, 8.1 (*nīš qāti*)–8.5, 8.7–8.9, 8.11; also 8.13, to Ištar, with the supplicant's "prayer" (*teslīssu*); cf. the ubiquitous *šiptu*, "incantation."

135. In Text 8.13, for instance, the ritual is to be conducted "in a secluded place" (*ašar šēpu parsat*).

fumigants . . ."[136]), with occasional reference to astronomical conditions; but the few mentions of prayer, sacrifice, and the gods all seem grafted on after the fact, mostly in phrases peripheral to the main procedures.[137] It is difficult to determine the grounds on which one should prefer to see the gods as the fundamental powers behind practices that otherwise largely devote their textual energy to elaborating magical materials, *operanda*, and *recitanda* with no specified religious value. At most, the divine element is allied, supplementary, or parallel to the texts' main concerns.

The medical, expiatory, and ominous systems were largely self-contained, if we are to judge by the volume of text devoted to "non-religious" versus "religious" maneuvers. Their rituals occasionally reach out to the divine system to magnify their own authority, sometimes by allusion, sometimes by directly claiming the gods as authorizing forces. But they do so unevenly and unsystematically; even the claims within them that *might* seem doctrinal (e.g., divine authorship, albeit with infrequent subsequent reference to them) could only make sense to those already engaged in the practices that gave rise to them; more as *moves within a game* than the justification for *playing the game in the first place*.[138]

Though the low incidence of corporal externality is a result of incomplete evidence to some extent—simply, more texts might better show how various ritual and religious systems related to one another—the existing ones already reflect gaps in practice and compartmentalization of belief. These gaps had a function of their own: to build in resilience to the distinct intellectual systems, as a kind of buffering or firewalling; and to prevent the over-systematization of beliefs that were never meant to be rationally explicable in emic terms.[139] Autonomic practices avoid coherence and transparency, qualities that might empty them of their powers as mysteries.[140]

Assyriologists might find the foregoing account argumentative to the extent that it attacks a straw-man systematization that cannot be realized by any theology. That objection is a serious one, but it does not answer the sorts of questions I have posed. As long as analyses of Mesopotamian

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136. Ibid., p. 157.

137. The series (ibid.) mentions Lyra, Scorpius, Ursa Major, Jupiter, Centaurus, the Pleiades, the moon, stars, sun, and even rainbows.

138. I thank Dan Arnold for this point—an understanding to be traced to Wittgenstein—among his comments on an early draft of the chapter.

139. Compare Lopez (1998).

140. See the argument about "hypercoherence" in Richardson (2012), 233–234, 242–252.

literature go forward, the catalog of interdependences and intertextual references will only increase, and knowledge will look ever more systematic. But to point out that we will never reconstruct a Mesopotamian system—its Book of Common Prayer or some kind of communicant's *vade mecum*—is to say more than merely that the glass is perpetually half full; rather, it is to reconstruct a cultural field that not only permitted, but *depended on*, flexibility and multiplicity of practice to tolerate and resolve internal contradictions.

Conclusion

In the Mesopotamian cultural episteme, effective practice rather than belief was the paramount concern, and it was precisely the multiple platforms and *techné* of divine communication that fostered that efficacy. Co-existent forms of knowledge often rest on such uneven premises. The heterodoxy of pastiche allows for both the overlap of bedrock beliefs (building in a *simulacrum* of rationalism) and their severability (a defense against falsification when those beliefs are in conflict), while reducing or avoiding substantial redundancies and building in resilience. Full coherence, even were it possible, would have been undesirable in that it would have invalidated the exclusive social position of the qualified interpreter, and rationalized ultimately mysterious processes whose premise was a type of knowledge reserved for the gods.[141] Mesopotamian communications with the divine took on heterodox and heteromorphic contours to avoid absolute answers about the universe, with that avoidance providing a comforting psychosocial buffering against the unknowable. On the social level, full coherence would have privileged specific institutions (e.g., local temple cults) and individual actors (i.e., specialists) in unwelcome ways, concentrating socio-political power instead of accommodating the heterarchies that characterized the Mesopotamian world.

Such descriptions might attach to any culture—even our own. Thus one would be remiss in describing the flexibility and resilience of this specific intellectual milieu without also noting the pervasive Mesopotamian sense of anxiety and isolation. This so marks the corpora that one must acknowledge again the importance of the phatic functions of channel- and code-checking; i.e., the diagnostic scanning of the imperfect communicative systems: Had calculations been done correctly? Observations properly made? Errors avoided in

141. I.e., hypercoherence. At the highest orders, even Marduk, the supreme god, was unknowable to other gods (Foster, *BtM* III.14 I.29–32).

rituals?[142] To this extent, Mesopotamian communicative multiplicity reflected epistemological doubt as much as it reflected a foxish strategy of knowledge. To emphasize or celebrate flexibility as purely positive and utilitarian would be to avoid the atmosphere of florid existential crisis to which the texts responded in the first place.

Mesopotamians expressed ideas and conjectures about the communicative pathways between men and gods, and entrusted to those pathways serious commercial, medical, military, and cosmological concerns. But this does not imply that either system or certainty underlay the channels as a whole. The pervasive pathos of ambiguity and skepticism in cuneiform sources allows us to think otherwise. Nothing in our comfortable and retroactive declarations (let alone theirs) about "what they believed" could relieve Mesopotamian man's loneliness in the universe.

142. E.g., the checking of astronomical computations for the interpretation of heavenly signs (Rochberg [2004], 33, 68); the rereading of liver omens for accuracy (Koch [2002]); the identification of human errors in rituals (Ambos [2007]; Kozuh [2013]).

10

Pilgrimage and Communication

Ian Rutherford

MUCH, EVEN MOST, long-distance travel in the ancient world was religious in motivation: primary forms included attending or advertising festivals, consulting oracles, undergoing initiation at special initiation centers, and seeking a cure for an illness.[1] The visitors could be official delegates (*theoroi*) or private citizens (particularly for the purpose of healing or initiation). Sometimes symbolic pilgrimages were made by political or military leaders. All of these forms are attested in the context of traditional Greek polytheism, from the Archaic period through the Roman Empire. They are also attested in other parts of the ancient world, especially in Greco-Roman Egypt, but also in the Near East, particularly in the Jewish Diaspora; so the volume of sacred travel must have been high in all periods. We hear most about the larger sanctuaries, which drew visitors from a correspondingly broad area (Map 10.1); but there were also many smaller sanctuaries whose clientele was drawn from a regional "catchment area," and these have left less evidence. The largest figure recorded for a single pilgrimage is that given for Jewish pilgrimage to Jerusalem—over three million annually, according to Josephus (see below). That number is presumably an exaggeration, but Herodotus gives the figure of 600,000 for the festival of Artemis-Bubastis in the Egyptian Delta (see below). Major pagan festivals in the Greek world must also have drawn tens, perhaps hundreds, of thousands. Some of the so-called Puthais delegations sent by Athens to Delphi in the late second and early first centuries BCE seem to have comprised well over one thousand participants, including choirs, ephebes, and horsemen.[2]

1. In general, see Dillon (1997), and the essays in Elsner and Rutherford (2005).

2. Bubastis: Hdt. 2.60 with Rutherford (2005b). Puthais: Boethius (1918); Rutherford (2013), 222–230.

MAP 10.1 Regions and sites mentioned in the text

From the point of view of the participants, one important type of communication on these occasions was that between men and gods, for the gods were taken to be present at festivals. In this respect, pilgrimage resembled obtaining an oracle, the subject of Julia Kindt's Chapter 11 below. Since pilgrimage brought people together, it also facilitated communication on the human level. It might foster a bilateral relationship between the people of the sanctuary and those visiting it, or there might be a multilateral relationship among all the participants. Pilgrimage provided a framework for communication of all sorts—religious, cultural, economic, and political. It brought communities that were only loosely connected into closer contact, at least for a time. One effect was to create and consolidate a sense of common identity among participants and between the communities they represented.[3]

Pilgrimage Networks

In order to assess the communicative effectiveness of pilgrimage, it is helpful to consider the geographic origins of the visitors to sanctuaries. For any particular sanctuary, pilgrims tend to come from an established "catchment area," or religious network. These patterns seem to have been fairly stable. Both states and individuals made repeated visits to a sanctuary they had visited before, or that was at least familiar to them. It is difficult to tell how such patterns become established in the first place. Contributing factors might be the fame of the sanctuary or its ability to advertise itself, imitation or competition with neighboring cities, and direction by oracles or other divine authorities.

Some of the best-known Greek sanctuaries were considered "common" to all Greeks, and drew delegates and visitors from the whole Greek world. Key examples are the great Panhellenic festivals held at Olympia, Delphi, Nemea, and the Isthmus. Truces facilitated travel to and from these privileged locales.[4] Other festivals had a narrow scope. Some drew participants from a single region, or were confined to one particular perceived ethnic group, such as the Panionia, which served as a meeting-place for all Ionian cities.[5] In the Hellenistic period, Federations *(koina)* usually held festivals, which may have doubled as political meetings. Another type of network linked a mother-city and its colonies, which often seem to have been required to send regular offerings; here, too, the context is likely to have been a festival

3. McCorriston (2011), 52; Turner (1973).

4. Rutherford (2013), 187–189.

5. Herda (2006); Kowalzig (2007), 46–57.

in the mother-city.[6] In some cases, a specific set of cities or groups cooperated in organizing a festival, even though the festival itself might be open to a broader range of participants. The name for such an organizing body was an *amphictiony*, the most celebrated being the Delphic Amphictiony. Imperial states also took advantage of festival culture: already in the second millennium BCE, the Hittite empire made use of festivals for administration. Athens assessed the tribute required of its subject allies at one festival, and received the tribute at another. The Ptolemies also encouraged cities in their sphere of influence to attend a quadrennial festival in Alexandria, while the Seleucids held a similar festival at Daphne in Syria. Some cities in the Roman Empire sent delegations to festivals in Rome, though the practice was never widespread.[7]

Most pilgrimage must have gone unrecorded, but in some cases inscriptions make it possible for us to chart the origin of visitors to a particular sanctuary. A good case is Roman Claros, for which several hundred inscriptions spanning more than a century reveal visitors from all over Asia Minor as well as Greece and the Aegean. In some of these inscriptions, many delegations from the same town are attested over a period of years or even decades.[8] It seems likely that the occasion was a festival, and that visitors from different towns would have met there. Similarly, for the sanctuary on Samothrace in the late Hellenistic period, we have records of people who came as *theoroi* to attend the festival or as *mustai* to be initiated, sometimes both. These pilgrims came mostly from Asia Minor, Thrace, and the Black Sea region.[9] For the oracle of Dodona in Epirus, surviving evidence in the form of lead sheets (*lamellae*) points to a catchment area embracing northwest Greece and southern Italy.[10] A catchment area for pilgrims to the sanctuary of Asclepius at Epidaurus can be reconstructed from the Epidaurian *Iamata*, a fourth-century BCE record of cures that identifies the home-city of thirty-three pilgrims, mostly from the Peloponnese, northern Greece, Thrace, the Propontis, and the Aegean islands (Figure 10.1).[11]

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6. Graham (1964), 63–64; Rutherford (2013), 61–62.

7. Hittites: Rutherford (2005a); Singer (1984). Imperial states: Rutherford (2013), 254–258. Rome: Rutherford (2013), 49, 220–221.

8. Ferrary (2005); Busine (2005), 32–40, 59–71; Lane-Fox (1987), 174.

9. Dimitrova (2008); Cole (1984).

10. Lhôte (2006); Dakares (2013).

11. LiDonnici (1995).

FIGURE 10.1 Fourth-century BCE marble statue of Asclepius. Archaeological Museum, Epidaurus, Greece.
(Photo: Album/Art Resource, NY, alb1459801)

Similar cases appear in Greco-Roman Egypt. Here we have some data on pilgrims—mostly from the immediate region—to the healing sanctuary of Imhotep-Asclepius at Deir el-Bahari on the west bank of the Nile near Thebes, as well as data on visitors to the Memnonion at Abydos in the Roman period. This shrine served as a temple of Sarapis and later as an oracle of Bes; pilgrims here seem to have come mostly from the center and south of Egypt (Figure 10.2).[12]

In many cases, the clientele of sanctuaries must have come from more than one cultural zone, although this claim is hard to document. While the oracle

12. Łajtar (2006); Rutherford (2003).

FIGURE 10.2 Bas-relief of Bes. Temple of Hathor, Abydos, Egypt. (Photo: Vanni Archive/Art Resource, New York, ART97425)

of Ammon in the Siwa-Oasis was visited by Greeks from the fifth century BCE onwards (first probably from Cyrene), it had been set up by Egypt, so it seems likely that Greek visitors there will have encountered a range of North African cultures, and that some non-Greeks consulted the oracle, too.[13] The sanctuary of Apollo on Delos, in contrast, was visited primarily by Greeks, but some evidence for non-Greeks is to be found—for example, the "sacred sailors" of Tyre who dedicated images of the cities of Tyre and Sidon in the early fourth century BCE.[14] Although the sanctuary of Isis at Philai on the southern border of Egypt is most often thought of as an Egyptian one visited by Greeks and Romans, it seems to have been established by Egypt's Ethiopian rulers in the seventh century BCE; the sacred delegations from Meroe, well attested in the third century CE, had probably come there earlier also.[15] Another example may be the sanctuary of Derketo, the "Syrian Goddess" at Hierapolis (modern Membidj) in Syria, where Lucian says that tribute was brought by Arabia, as well as by Phoenicians, Babylonians, Cilicians, and Assyrians.[16] A further instance may

13. Kuhlmann (1988).

14. Rutherford (2013), 276–277.

15. Rutherford (1998); Dijkstra (2008).

16. Lucian, *Syr D.* 10.

be the ancient cult site of Mamre near Hebron in Palestine: according to a source from the fourth century CE, it was visited by Palestinians, Phoenicians, and Arabs.[17]

If we knew the full picture, hundreds of overlapping pilgrimage networks might emerge—of many different sizes and configurations, and on many different timetables. If we think of the sanctuaries as a network, it is possible to imagine how communication would have been possible from one end of the Eastern Mediterranean region to the other, via a sequence of festivals. Thus, someone living on the Black Sea might attend a festival on Samothrace, where he would make contact with someone from Ephesus, who later attended a festival in Cos, where he in turn would meet someone who had recently returned from the Ptolemaia festival in Alexandria. As in a system of airline hubs, it would have been possible to travel anywhere in a few legs. Although the meetings were brief and infrequent, and the number of participants limited, they may still have sufficed to facilitate communication between participants. To use the language suggested by Mark Granovetter, even weak "ties" or links may turn out to possess great strength in connecting part of a network.[18]

In the rest of this chapter, I briefly look at three aspects of communication in particular: range of contact, dissemination of information, and cultural assimilation. For the sake of brevity, I limit myself almost entirely to Greek examples.

Range of Contact

Festivals facilitated many types of meetings between people. There must have been many random meetings, as when Plato, on his way back from Sicily, was said to have encountered the recently exiled Dion of Syracuse at the Olympics of 360 BCE.[19] It was supposed to be common for young people to meet their future spouse at festivals, as Philip met Olympias when both were being initiated at Samothrace, or as Acontius of Ceos and Cydippe of Naxos met when they were attending the same festival on Delos.[20]

Professionals of various sorts were to be found at festivals because of the ready audience.[21] For merchants, festivals were excellent places to trade, so

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17. Burkert (2012), 40–41, referring to Sozomen, *Hist. eccl.* 2.4.2–5; see also Safrai (1994), 143–145. Cf. Frazer (2003), 336.

18. Granovetter (1973); see also Rutherford (2007).

19. Pl. *Ep.* 7.350b; cf. *Ep.* 2.310b–d. Ael. *VH* 4.9 says that some people met Plato while at Olympia, but did not realize it was he until he entertained them at Athens.

20. Philip: Plut. *Alex.* 2; Acontius: Call. fr. 67–75 from Xenomedes of Keos.

21. Dio Chrys. 8.9.

much so that "festivals" and "fairs" may seem to be broadly similar events.[22] In the "parable of the three lives," attributed to Pythagoras, trading was one of three motivations that brought people to religious festivals, the others being competing in the games and watching them.[23] The most celebrated example of a sanctuary with a large market is Late Hellenistic Delos: having been restored to Athenian control in 166 BCE, it became a sort of free-trade zone patronized by merchants from Rome and elsewhere.[24] For similar reasons, major temples, which often became very rich through dedications, sometimes had a secondary function as banks, as did the temple of Artemis at Ephesus.[25]

Festivals were also places where political business could be conducted. Thus, when ambassadors from Mytilene in 428 BCE wanted to make an official request of the Spartans and their allies, they did so at the Olympic Games.[26] Festivals might in some cases accommodate formal political meetings; for example, the so-called Hellenic League, set up by Antigonus and Demetrius in 302 BCE, had regular meetings attended by councilors (*sunhedroi*), the first meeting being held at the Isthmian Games.[27]

In the case of empires, festivals might facilitate communication between the administrative center and the subjects. The best evidence comes from the Ptolemaic empire with its festivals in Alexandria, attended by delegations from the areas of the Eastern Mediterranean under Ptolemaic control. In 247 BCE, a citizen named Theopropos from the small city of Kalynda in Caria used a *theoria* there as means to appeal to the Alexandrian authorities to solve an economic problem back in Caria. He may have sought the role so that he would have access to Alexandrian officials.[28] This episode is recounted in a letter to Apollonius, chief minister of Ptolemy Philadelphus, in which Theopropos asks that Apollonius write to the local authorities back in Caria. The petition may well have been negotiated by Zenon of Kaunos, then one of Apollonios' aides, who happened to have had relatives in Kalynda. Similarly, a letter sent by Ptolemy Euergetes to Xanthos in Lycia in 243–242, following the Theadelphia festival, says that, after they had finished with their religious

22. See Frayn (1993), 133–144; de Ligt (1993), 56–105, and Appendix 1, 243–246; Horden and Purcell (2000), 432–434; McCorriston (2011), 28–31.

23. Heraclid. Pont., fr. 88 Wehrli.

24. Rauh (1993).

25. Reger (2007), 476; Bürchner (1905), 2802–2803.

26. Thuc. 3.9–15.

27. Rutherford (2013), 259, following Robert (1946), 26.

28. Zenon Papyrus 59341(a), with Bagnall (1976), 99–100.

duties, the Xanthian *theoroi* had an audience with the king and queen, where they expressed the goodwill of their city and "gave us the documents relating to your requests."[29]

The Dissemination of Information

Festival networks enabled the easy dissemination of information. Sacred delegates sometimes carried out secondary functions, such as conveying the text of honorific decrees between cities or undertaking diplomatic missions.[30] Organizing the festival itself required a high level of communication. Cities organizing festivals sent out *theoros*-delegates to proclaim the sacred truce and to invite other cities to attend; these delegates presumably also announced the date and duration of the festival.[31] This process of formal announcement (*epangelia*) may in some cases have occupied several months. *Epangelia* is attested in the fifth century BCE, but must have begun as soon as festivals became regional rather than local gatherings. In the Hellenistic period, the best evidence for this practice is the lists of hosts (*theorodokoi*) in different cites appointed to receive delegates. In some cases, it seems that *theoroi* carried out two activities on the same mission, visiting a festival and announcing en route that one would take place in their own community.[32] Such festival announcers must have been accomplished travelers, so it is not surprising that Eudoxos of Cyzicus, for example, who came as a *theoros* to Alexandria to announce a festival at Cyzicus, went on to explore navigation routes in the Indian Ocean.[33] The *theoroi* toured the Greek world proclaiming the establishment of new festivals while seeking recognition for the "inviolability" of their community. Their travels could be far-flung. In the case of the festival of Magnesia on the Maeander (proclaimed in 208 BCE), the message reached the Seleucid king Antiochus I as he was campaigning on the Persian Gulf.[34] These announcers seem to have sought to win recognition from the cities they visited by setting out mythological and historical links between the city organizing the festival and the city or king being

29. Rutherford (2013), 257–258; Bousquet (1986) on *SEG* XXXVI 1218; Rutherford (2013), 413–414.

30. Conveying a text: Rutherford (2013), 111 n. 5. Diplomats: Rutherford (2013), 260–263.

31. Boesch (1908); Perlman (2000); Rutherford (2013), 71–92. Timing: Rutherford (2013), 72.

32. See the fragmentary Coan decree, *IG* xii.4 1.207.

33. Strabo 2.3.4–5, with Agius (2008), 48; on long-distance experts, see Helms (1988).

34. Chaniotis (1988a); (1988b).

invited.[35] Announcers generally invited cities to send a delegation to the inauguration of the new festival. In all likelihood, subsequent celebrations did not attract so many delegates, or delegates from so far away.

Major sanctuaries and their festivals are also likely to have been conduits for the dissemination of information of a more general sort. A good example of how this role might have functioned can be found in British-controlled India of our era. Writing about the huge "Kumbha Mela" festival at Allahabad in North India—used, and feared, by the British authorities because of its capacity for disseminating information—the historian Kama Maclean says:

> The capacity of the pilgrimage network to carry information was also understood by the East India Company and later the administration of the Raj. The government, as we have seen, sought to positively influence the messages carried back to village India. It was the ultimate strength of the pilgrimage communication network to influence Indian opinion that forced the British, despite their dislike of the "heathen practices" carried out at the mela and the overwhelming costs involved in providing adequate infrastructure, to patronise the melas as they did. Inevitably, with the rise of nationalist mobilization in the early twentieth century, the Allahabad Melas became a site where these nationalist ideas were disseminated. . . .[36]

There is not such good evidence for the ancient world. However, news could certainly spread at a festival, as we see from Thucydides' account of the Isthmian Games in 412 BCE, where the Athenians found out about a Spartan plan to help the island of Chios break away from Athenian control.[37] Eight centuries later, in Egypt, we find a sanctuary spreading a subversive political message: Ammianus Marcellinus relates a crisis over the oracle of Bes at Abydus in 359 CE, when the Roman emperor intervened on the grounds that it was becoming a focus for anti-imperial sentiment.[38]

Festivals were often the arena for symbolic political actions, sometimes held in a theater where the audience was made up of festival delegates who would carry news back to their home communities.[39] That was true of the

35. Sosin (2009); Rutherford (2013), 76–81.

36. Maclean (2008), 144–146, citing Bayly (1996), 2.

37. Thuc. 8.9–10.

38. Amm. Marc. 19.12, with Kerkeslager (1998), 169–174, 190–197.

39. For theater rituals, see Chaniotis (2007).

ritual-political events of the Greater Dionysia at Athens, where the audience must have included subject allies. Thomas Gelzer has argued that short victory odes composed and performed at major festivals immediately after the victories they celebrated sometimes incorporated propaganda and other political messages aimed at festival-goers, who could be relied upon to relay what they had heard back to their own communities.[40] In the same way, Alexander the Great had the important "Exiles Decree" of 324 BCE proclaimed at the Olympic Games; and Titus Flamininus, after his conquest of Macedon, made his celebrated proclamation of the freedom of the Greeks at the Isthmian Games in 196 BCE.[41] For professional rather than political reasons, artists and intellectuals sometimes chose sanctuaries to display their skills, as the Sophist Hippias of Elis supposedly did when answering questions at Olympia during the *paneguris*.[42]

Information of another type was conveyed by dedications made in a sanctuary and intended to be seen by future visitors, or by rituals staged in a sanctuary to impress visitors. Monumental dedications, often accompanied by inscriptions, were rarely made in the name of Greece in general (as the Serpent Column at Delphi was). It was much more common for them to be made in the name of one particular city-state or group; sometimes they even advertised military victories over other states.[43] Rituals such as processions or dances achieved the same effect; a god would purportedly approve of such performances, increasing their prestige.[44] In Plato's account of his utopian city of Magnesia, which he envisages as cut off from other *poleis*, he recommends that delegations should nevertheless be sent to Panhellenic festivals, since these will enhance Magnesia's reputation.[45]

The Dissemination of Cultural Practice

More generally, pilgrimage to common sanctuaries may have disseminated cultural norms and thus consolidated group identity.[46] The simple act of

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40. Goldhill (1987); Gelzer (1985).

41. Din. *In Dem.* 82, 103; Diod. Sic. 18.8.

42. Pl. *Hp. mi.* 363c, with Tell (2007).

43. M. Morgan (1990), 18; Cf. Plut. *De Pyth. or.* 401d.

44. For divine approval of these performances, see Naiden (2012), 321–327.

45. Pl. *Leg.* 12.950e–951a. Cf. Xen. *Mem.* 3.3.12 on Athenian choruses at Delos.

46. See Stravrianopoulou (2006b), 9, on the "communicative tasks" of rituals, which include "the transmission of norms of behaviour, the demonstration of intentions, the assignment of tasks and roles, the inclusion or exclusion of individuals. . . ."

following the same ritual script at the same sanctuary evidently disseminated norms among the participants.[47] Direct evidence for pilgrimage to sanctuaries as a way of consolidating group identity is difficult to identify, but in the world of classical Greece, great regional festivals like the Panionia must have strengthened the sense of identity of communities within the region, just as Herodotus implies. Similarly, colonies sending delegates to festivals in the mother-city felt a stronger attachment to the metropolis as a result.[48]

The sense of identity felt in the sanctuary might also be transplanted to the pilgrims' home community in two particular ways, the export of souvenirs[49] and the establishment of filial cults.[50] This process is particularly easy to trace in the case of the cult of Apollo Clarios, whose oracles are known to have been displayed in the home towns of the pilgrims; statues of Apollo Clarios were sometimes erected there as well, apparently symbolizing the power of Apollo to overcome plague. In this case, then, it seems likely that pilgrimage to Claros and the consultation of the oracle resulted in religious ties across Anatolia. Similarly, the sanctuary of Artemis at Ephesus is said in a decree from the second century CE to be so celebrated among Greeks and barbarians that shrines had been dedicated to her "in many places."[51] So, too, Pausanias says that "all cities worship Ephesian Artemis and in a private capacity, too, men honor her more than any other deity."[52] To what extent devotees of Ephesian Artemis actually made the journey to Ephesus, as opposed to contenting themselves with local versions of the cult, is impossible to assess (although some degree of pilgrimage to Ephesus is certain), but the numerous filial cults of this goddess imply a measure of cultural dissemination.

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47. See Chaniotis (2011), preceded by Mylonopoulos (2006). For the general idea that sacrifices unified the participants, note Ath. 9.363d, with Naiden (2012), 118.

48. For diaspora, see also the case of the Ainianes who (according to Plut. *Quaest. Graec.* 297) used to live in the area of Molossia and Kassiopaia, to which they still sent a regular sacred delegation.

49. Künzl and Koeppel (2002); Cline (2014).

50. Filial cults in general: Rutherford (2013), 300–301; Kötting (1950), 46–47. Filial cults of the Samothracian gods: Cole (1984), 57–86. Specialized *paneguris* coinage may be another such medium of communication, although it is still not well understood: see Psoma (2008); Nollé (2014).

51. *SIG* III 867; see Jessen (1905), 2768–2769. Paus. 4.31.8 says that all cities worshipped Ephesian Artemis, a devotion he attributes to the Amazons. Kötting (1950), 50–52, also thinks that the so-called *Ephesiaka Grammata* would have been distributed on amulets by pilgrimage to and from Ephesus; for these, see Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 706e.

52. Paus. 4.31.8.

In Plato's account of festival delegates dispatched by his utopian Magnesia, we find negative confirmation for cultural dissemination and for the consolidation of group identity via shrines. Magnesia is cut off from other cities to prevent this sort of dissemination, and it has no need for group identity because it is superior to all other *poleis*. So, when visitors from other cities come to listen to the excellent music at Magnesian festivals, they have no other contact with the citizens.[53] Thus, in this section of the *Laws*, dissemination is imagined as contagion.

Recently, scholars have argued that participation in the great festivals contributed to the development of Greeks' ideas of national, rather than just regional, identity.[54] Herodotus is again the source, for he singles out sacrifice on these occasions as an important criterion for being Greek.[55] An especially notable contribution may have been made by Greek colonies, whose sense of Greek identity was intensified by encounters with foreign peoples.[56] Greek writers associate the great festivals with a Panhellenic spirit of cooperation for which the usual term is *homonoia*, "concord," the same word that Philo in the first century CE uses for the effect of the Hebrews' pilgrimage to Jerusalem.[57]

Philo's remarks about pilgrimage to Jerusalem point to a parallel for the dissemination of Greek cultural norms, and for the consolidation of Greek identity, through visits to shrines. Visits to the Temple in Jerusalem are mandated by the Torah, which states that Hebrew males should visit this shrine three times a year, at the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover), the Feast of Weeks (i.e. Pentecost), and the Feast of Tabernacles.[58] The main visitors must have been people living in the Holy Land itself but, in the Second Temple Period at least, occasional participation seems to have become normal for Jews of the Diaspora living many hundreds of miles away in Egypt, Cyrene, or Mesopotamia.[59] Both

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53. Pl. *Leg.* 12.950e–51a, 953a.

54. Notably, J. M. Hall (2002). Cf. the explanation of Athenian democratic identity in Goldhill (1987).

55. Hdt. 8.144.2.

56. Malkin (2003).

57. Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1.69, with Thériault (1996); Rutherford (forthcoming).

58. *Exod.* 23.17; *Deut.* 16.16.

59. Since no sign of this pilgrimage network is found before the late first century BCE, Goodman (1999) has suggested that the involvement of the Diaspora communities was successfully promoted by Herod the Great. If so, he was possibly imitating earlier Hellenistic festival networks, such as the Ptolemaia in Alexandria or the Seleucid festival in Daphne. A "pilgrimage pattern" in Exodus: Smith (1997).

Greek and Jewish sources emphasize the huge numbers of participants.[60] In his *Special Laws Related to the Ten Commandments*, Philo says:

> People without number from cities without number stream to the temple on every feast, some from the East and the West, some from the North and the South.[61]

Describing those present for Pentecost, *The Acts of the Apostles* lists "God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven," including:

> Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judaea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome; Cretans and Arabs.[62]

Josephus implies that the total was over three million.[63] He may well exaggerate, but even a fraction of this number would be huge for an ancient pilgrimage. As Martin Goodman has pointed out, such high numbers are the consequence of an unusual principle of Jewish religion of this period; namely, that Jerusalem was the only place of sacrifice.[64]

The festivals thus became meeting places for groups of Jews and Jewish proselytes who would otherwise have little contact.[65] Philo describes it as:

> . . . consolidating friendship even with those who hitherto were unknown to us, and making the mixing of habits (*ethe*) on the occasion of sacrifices and libations into the surest pledge of concord (*homonoia*).[66]

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60. Safrai (1974), 192–194; (1969), 16–17.

61. Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1.69.

62. *Acts* 2.5–11.

63. Joseph. *BJ* 2.280 on Passover in 65 CE; also *BJ* 6.420–428. *Tosephta Pesachim* IV.3 implies an even higher number.

64. Goodman (1999), 70. Joseph. *AJ* 4.201: "In no other city let there be either altar or temple; for God is one and the Hebrew race is one"; similarly, *Ap.* 2.193, "We have but one temple for one God (for like ever loves like), common to all as God is common to all"; trans. H. St. J. Thackeray.

65. Safrai (1969), 20; (1974), 203; Wilken (1992), 105.

66. Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1.70.

The "habits" mentioned here presumably are the customs of members of different diasporic communities. Josephus reports that Moses says:

> Let them assemble in that city in which they shall establish the temple, three times in the year, from the ends of the land which the Hebrews shall conquer, in order to render thanks to God for benefits received, to intercede for future mercies, and to promote by thus meeting and feasting together feelings of mutual affection. For it is good that they should not be ignorant of one another, being members of the same race and partners in the same institutions; and this end will be attained by such intercourse, when through sight and speech they recall those ties to mind, whereas if they remain without ever coming into contact they will be regarded by each other as absolute strangers.[67]

No statement in a Greek or Roman writer comes so close to justifying pilgrimage in these sociological terms. Yet, if we look for support for the idea elsewhere, an obvious example—both ancient and modern, and indebted both to Judaism and to other ancient Near Eastern religions—presents itself: the Islamic Hajj to Mecca. It has long been seen as a process that disseminates cultural norms across the Muslim world.[68]

Conclusion

Ancient Greek pilgrimage was in some respects atypical. The delegate, as opposed to the pilgrim in general, seems to be a uniquely Greek figure. Also uniquely Greek is the web of instructions, announcements, and regulations that affected the work of the delegate. In addition, to conceive of the delegate as a *theoros*, an observer, but an interested observer, and not a mere spectator, seems to be a distinctly Greek idea. This concept influenced Greek thinking about exalted contemplation of any kind, and led to the word *theoria*—the

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67. Joseph. *AJ* 4.203–204, trans. Thackeray.

68. See for example, West African Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca as described by Thayer (1992), 185: "In general the *hajj* in the context of West African Islam can be seen as a vehicle for the diffusion of religious and cultural concepts and practices. Thus, while the pilgrimage always served a religious end for those who participated in it, because of the knowledge, books, Sufi initiation, or whatever else they acquired in the Holy Places, the pilgrims themselves served as a conduit through which these were spread through West Africa."

root of English "theory"—becoming an ancient Greek philosophical term.[69] In many other respects, however, Greek pilgrimage was typical. In Greece as in other societies, great shrines were important cultural as well as religious centers, and communication in this context was bound to be far-reaching as well as important. Pilgrimage enlarged this network, making the shrine a place of diverse contacts among worshippers, a source of various kinds of information, and, above all, a place of cultural development and social consolidation. The phenomena of pilgrimage might be centrifugal, as in the Greek world, or centripetal, as in Judaism and Islam, but they were always channeled through a network that rivaled other, better documented networks formed for war, trade, or administration.[70]

69. For this process, see Nightingale (2004); Sassi (1991).

70. Comparisons suggested by the evidence treated in Malkin (2011).

11

The Inspired Voice

ENIGMATIC ORACULAR COMMUNICATION

Julia Kindt

An oracle is not a site of uncertainty or infallibility;
it is a site of both.
—MICHAEL WOOD[1]

Introduction

The ancient Greeks knew of a number of ways to attempt to communicate with the divine through the medium of language, including prayers, hymns, curses, and oracles. All of these strategies imagine the gods and goddesses as entities that could be addressed for certain purposes and, potentially at least, take an interest in human affairs. Because this kind of communication addressed the supernatural, it differed from other kinds, including communication *about* the gods rather than *with* them.

On the spectrum of ways in which the Greeks sought to converse with the divine, oracles stand out.[2] They allowed humans to address the gods about an array of problems. Moreover, in contrast to other forms of religious communication, they also promised an instant, verbal response from divinity, even if this response frequently seemed to pose more questions than it really answered (see below).

A large number of institutions provided religious communication through oracles. Among them, the oracle of Apollo at Delphi was the most authoritative

1. Wood (2003), 56.

2. On ancient Greek divination, see Johnston (2008).

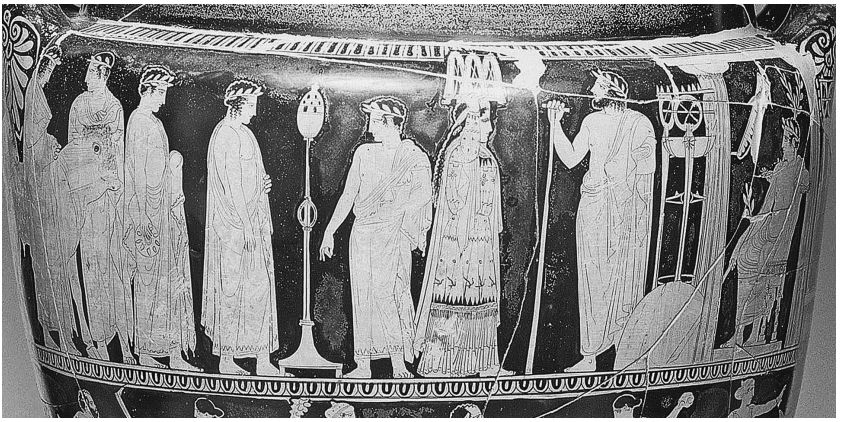

FIGURE 11.1 This fifth-century BCE red-figure Attic bowl unearthed at Spina on a mouth of the river Po depicts the chain of communication at the Delphic oracle. Seated on the right is Apollo, the source of the oracle. To the left of the god is an attendant, and to the left of the attendant is the priestess, the Pythia, to whom the god imparted inspired messages. Beside the Pythia stands another attendant. The attendants turned the Pythia's utterance into the often-ambiguous oracles for which Delphi was famous. Archaeological Museum Spina, Ferrara, Italy.
(Photo: Alfredo Dagli Orti/The Art Archive at Art Resource, NY, AA325110)

(Map 10.1). Its prophecies were considered to be more truthful than, for example, the predictions and omens provided by itinerant seers[3] (Figure 11.1).

This chapter enquires into the kind of religious communication the Greeks associated with Delphi. It explores the principles and practices of oracular divination as represented in Greek thought and literature, and investigates the way classical scholarship has looked at this evidence. A particular focus will be on the significance of the famous "enigmatic language" of the oracle—the hallmark of Delphi and other oracular institutions as represented in Greek thought and literature.

Testing the Oracle

A mischievous man (*anēr kakopragmōn*) once decided that he would prove the Delphic oracle wrong.[4] Holding a sparrow hidden underneath his cloak, he approached the oracle asking whether what he held was dead or alive. He planned either to kill the bird or to let it live, depending on the oracle's

3. Flower (2008).

4. Aesop 55 Halm.

response. The god, however, saw through the cloak, and replied: "You there, hang on, do whatever you want: it is entirely up to you whether you show me something living or dead!"[5] Aesop, who included this story amongst his fables, concluded with the moralizing observation that the god was obviously not to be trifled with.

This story plays on several aspects central to oracular divination. Most notably, it nicely captures the air of suspicion and fraud that ever so subtly (and sometimes not so subtly) attached itself to the oracular business. Except, of course, that in this case the ambiguity inheres, not in the oracular response at all, but rather in the man himself and his intent to prove the oracle wrong. In fact, Aesop's fable upends the normal dynamics of oracle consultations because here the consultant seeks to mislead the god, not the other way around.[6] The ambiguity typically associated with oracular responses—often so frustrating for those seeking to benefit from the god's superior knowledge—is turned against the oracle itself, but with only limited success. The oracle rather elegantly deconstructs the ambiguities presented to it by naming the two possible outcomes.

Compare this incident to a similar one in which a certain Daphidas asks the Delphic oracle whether he would find his horse.[7] To outsmart the oracle, he invokes an *adunaton* (an impossibility): as he did not even own a horse, he obviously could not retrieve one, and either a positive *or* a negative response would prove the oracle wrong. In contrast to Aesop's fable, however, the oracle does not immediately unmask the fraud but seemingly falls into the trap, by matching the impossible question with an equally impossible prediction: that he would soon find the horse. Valerius Maximus, who tells the same story, adds that the oracle also stated that he would fall from it and die.[8]

Later, Daphidas learns that what appeared to be the wrong answer has a second, alternative meaning, which he had not considered, one that confirms the oracle's authority and truthfulness and brings about—literally—his downfall. King Attalus of Pergamum seized him and had him thrown down a cliff. Just moments before his death, Daphidas learns that the rock was called *hippos*—"horse"—from which he concluded (rightly, it seems) that the oracle did not lie.[9]

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5. Trans. L. Gibbs, with modifications.

6. Compare also Croesus' oracle test in Hdt. 1.46–48, with Kindt (2006).

7. Suda Δ 99.

8. Val. Max. 1.8 ext. 8; see also Posidonius apud Cic. *Fat.* 3.5.

9. Suda Δ 99.

What are we supposed to take from these obviously moralizing stories about the nature of oracular divination? And what, if anything, can we learn from them about the meaning and significance of enigmatic oracular communication? To be sure, we could take them as evidence for an ancient tendency to challenge the perception of the enigmatic voice as genuinely inspired and divine. After all, both characters are initially unconvinced that oracular ambiguities are anything more than prophetic fiction-making.

In semiotic terms, both tests deny the existence of a fixed referent for the oracular sign. What is at stake is the idea that the enigmatic divine voice circumscribes a particular future, a particular reality. In both instances, the possibility is raised that oracular ambiguity does not reveal a hidden truth, divine authority, or an otherworldly system of knowledge, but rather represents a much more worldly instance of "deliberate ambiguity" employed to cover all possible outcomes of a given course of events. By challenging the oracle with a question that not only has no right answer (as in the second example), or the answer to which changes depending on a given course of events (as in the first), oracle-testing seeks to invalidate the very modes of meaning upon which oracular ambiguity rests.

But this testing is only half the story. In both instances, the oracle ultimately reaffirms its role as the speaker of true prophecies and revelatory ambiguities. The enigmatic voice reflects a form of divine knowledge that exceeds human knowledge—that sees through all human clothes and is able to foretell human fate.

Oracular communication, it follows, is authoritative communication, is enigmatic communication: to try to beat oracles on their home turf (as by tricking them with obscure or ambiguous requests) is as futile as it is dangerous. At the very least, these two incidents suggest that if we want to benefit from the superior knowledge of the gods, we had better take oracular ambiguity seriously. We shall return to this point later in this chapter.

Ambiguities and Authorities

It remains to be said that—perhaps unsurprisingly—classical scholarship has inherited the suspicious attitude towards oracular ambiguity. Like the mischievous man and Daphidas, scholars have frequently put oracular ambiguity to the test, in order to show that the Delphic oracle employed ambiguity *deliberately* in order to generate responses that cover every possible outcome of a given course of events.

Take, for example, the scholarly discussion of a prediction allegedly given to the Spartans in about 550 BCE. The Spartans consulted the Delphic oracle

about conquering Arcadia and received the following response from its priestess, the Pythia:

> Arcady? Great is the thing you ask. I will not grant it.
> In Arcady are many men, acorn-eaters,
> And they will keep you out. Yet, for I am not grudging,
> I will give you Tegea to dance in with stamping feet
> And her fair plain to measure out with the line.[10]

In their 1956 study of the Delphic oracle, Herbert Parke and Donald Wormell present this prophecy as a prime example of "deliberate ambiguity." They argue that

> this oracle . . . is evidently authentic and was delivered under approximately the circumstance which Herodotus records. . . . Happily for the Pythia, her metaphorical language could lend itself to other interpretations, and when the current opinion was that the gods expressed their meaning darkly, a devious construction could plausibly be put on the prophecy after the event.[11]

In short, by choosing to employ ambiguity, the oracle preserved its standing as a speaker of true prophecies, no matter how events turned out.

For a long time, the question of the meaning of oracular ambiguity was invariably tangled up with the question of authenticity. In order to write a history out of oracular responses and the circumstances surrounding them, classical scholars sought to distinguish genuine and authentic responses (which were really spoken at Delphi) from inauthentic ones, and to identify the background of possible forgeries. Who invented a particular oracular response and for what reason were the principal questions asked about oracles. The ambiguous language of the oracle employing metaphors, homonyms, and obscurities—what throughout this chapter (and following Giovanni Manetti) I summarily refer to as the "enigmatic mode"—indicates that a given response was not historical.[12] The extraordinary tales of enigmatic prediction, interpretation and misinterpretation, and the subsequent spectacular fulfillment of prophecy, were frequently exposed as mere forgeries, brought into circulation

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10. Hdt. 1.66, trans. A. de Sélincourt. For an interpretation of this response within the wider context where Herodotus features it, see Kindt (2006).

11. Parke and Wormell (1956), 1: 94.

12. Manetti (1993), 24, with nn.10, 170.

after the event. The existence of "deliberate ambiguity," however, is easily disproved: in most cases the circumstances according to which almost every famously ambiguous prediction was fulfilled were far too specific to be deliberately taken into account at the moment of its alleged delivery (see later in the chapter for examples).[13]

Joseph Fontenrose criticized the arbitrary and subjective nature of such assessments, and sought to put the discussion of prophecies on firmer grounds. In his now classic study *The Delphic Oracle*, published in 1978, he assigned the approximately 535 extant Delphic oracles to categories according to the time elapsed between their alleged delivery and the moment when they were first recorded in writing.

This categorization of prophecies according to strictly formal characteristics yielded a variety of interesting insights. For example, it emerged that the enigmatic mode was almost exclusively a feature of responses written down long after the event. Almost all prophecies cast in the enigmatic mode fall into Fontenrose's categories of "quasi-historical," "legendary," and "fictional" responses.[14] Although he cautioned that the time between prediction and fulfillment was *not* a direct indicator of an oracle's being genuine or authentic (in the sense that it was really spoken at Delphi), it emerged that the astonishing predictions first appeared in written form long after the events to which they refer. Fontenrose concluded that ambiguity was a feature of historical storytelling and not as much of real oracles delivered at Delphi and elsewhere. Delphi, he maintained, gave more or less straightforward answers to much simpler questions, many of which were of the yes/no variety, along the lines suggested in one of Plutarch's dialogues: "If they shall be victorious, if they shall marry, if it is to their advantage to sail the sea, if to take to farming, if to go abroad."[15] In sum: the enigmatic voice is a feature, not of the real, but of the imaginary Delphi as it was visited and revisited throughout Greek and Roman thought and literature.

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13. With the exception of oracles of the type given to Croesus (that he would destroy a great empire if he waged war on the Persians, see Hdt. 1.53), which would be disproved only in the unlikely event of the war's ending in a tie (with no empire being destroyed), there are very few examples of oracular ambiguities embracing all possible outcomes of a given course of events; but see also Ennius *apud* Cic. *De div*. 2.56.116, with Fontenrose (1978), 67, 83, 343–344.

14. See Fontenrose (1978), 7–10. His "quasi-historical" category is for responses first written down long after their alleged delivery, "legendary" for those reported in timeless tales and legends, and "fictional" for those found in literature, most notably Greek tragedy.

15. Plut. *De E apud Delph*. 386c, trans. G. P. Goold, with Fontenrose (1978), 9. This insight is also confirmed by the evidence from Dodona: see Lhôte (2006).

With this insight, Fontenrose made an important contribution to the study of inspired divination: he suggested a more systematic and rational approach towards oracles. At the time of publication, his study was also an important statement against the rampant romanticism of Delphi—Delphic ritual in particular—in classical scholarship.[16] In addition, his close analysis revealed many parallels in form and content between different oracle stories.[17] Overall, however, his rigid classification of oracular responses (dividing them structurally in different modes, topics, themes, and patterns) was not conducive to an exploration of the significance of the enigmatic and inspired voice in the ancient world. Like his predecessors, Fontenrose was driven by a certain desire to look *behind* enigmatic prophecies, to disentangle the clothing of language, and to examine the reality underneath. He did not attempt to think *through* the ways in which oracles (especially enigmatic ones) reflect—and reflect on—the world.

During the last twenty years or so, classical scholars have come to think about the inspired voice in more productive terms. Rather than always and necessarily using ambiguity as an indicator of an oracle's lack of authenticity and historicity, the "enigmatic voice" is now embraced in its own right as a mode of thinking typical of the oracular endeavor and central to the communication of divine knowledge through predictions. In religious terms, it is seen as part of a much broader meditation on the nature of the gods in Greek and Roman thought and literature (see later in this chapter).

What instigated this change in paradigm was certainly a larger "cultural turn" within some areas of classical studies. Questions of the responses' authenticity and historicity pose themselves along different lines, depending on what kind of history one intends to write out of these responses and the narratives that surround them. To return once more to the example from Herodotus: if one wants to use his account of the oracle allegedly delivered to the Spartans before their attempted invasion of Arcadia to write the military history of the fifth century BCE, one must come clean about whether one is prepared to assign these responses any place in the historical succession of events. If, however, one is interested in how the responses featured in the *Histories* reflect the principles and practices of Herodotean historiography, or in how this account presents Greek sentiments towards Sparta and her military ambitions more generally (several later authors report the same story), it will stand as a cultural product in its own right.[18]

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16. See Fontenrose (1978), 196–232.

17. Fontenrose (1978), 58–87.

18. See Fontenrose (1978), 293 (Q 88) with further literature.

The "cultural turn" in the study of the ancient world in general and of oracular prophecies in particular inspired new questions about the worldview expressed through enigmatic oracles alongside more traditional questions regarding their social and political role ("function").[19] The cultural history that is now derived from oracles, Delphic and otherwise, complements and sometimes even challenges the traditional social and political history of the ancient world. Lisa Maurizio, for example, has suggested that we see the typical story pattern featuring an ambiguous response, subsequent human interpretation or misinterpretation, and the eventual, frequently surprising fulfillment of the oracle's prophecy, as either the product of a complex process of structuring and story-telling or as features of a unique and inspired voice, one both female and divine.[20]

Maurizio has also pointed out that in the process of this rethinking of paradigms, the authenticity of oracles has been redefined. Rather than indicating forgery, invention, or diplomatic evasiveness, the enigmatic mode conveys a kind of authenticity that is independent of the question of what happened at Delphi or elsewhere. It helps make a given oracle "a *bona fide* member of the Delphic tradition."[21] That is to say, the enigmatic mode no longer indicates an oracle's lack of authenticity and historicity, but becomes itself a trademark, a kind of sign (which resembles the costly signs analyzed in James Osborne's Chapter 5 herein).

Before we inquire further into what is at stake in human–divine communication imagined as enigmatic communication, it may be worth pointing out that the cultural perspective puts the study of Greece and Rome on par with that of other societies both past and present. This shift opens up the possibility of a comparative appreciation of institutions, discourses, and practices. Interesting parallels between ancient divination and oracular communication on one hand and ethnographic material on the other have been noted.[22] For example, the enigmatic mode crops up, not just in Greco-Roman oracles, but also in other divinatory systems.[23] While the imagination of a divine voice as an ambiguous voice thus seems to be a cross-cultural constant, the way in

19. On the social function of oracles, note C. Morgan (1990), 148–190; Parker (1985).

20. Female voice: Maurizio (2001). Oracles and story-telling: Maurizio (1997); Kindt (2016).

21. Maurizio (1997), 317.

22. See Maurizio (1995); Raphals (2005); Bowden (2005), 28–33; Flower (2008), 145–146.

23. See, for example, Fernandez (1991), 217–218, on the "cryptic potency" in various African divinatory systems.

which it is reflected in the ancient evidence (i.e., in the apparent futility of oracle testing!) seems to be specifically Greek and Roman.

In the field of classical scholarship, the productivity of this new cultural perspective towards the inspired voice is illustrated by a variety of studies investigating oracular ambiguity as a central and in itself meaningful aspect of human–divine communication. In the remainder of the chapter, I discuss the core problems around which current debates about the significance and meaning of oracular obscurity revolve, as well as some of the theoretical and conceptual questions emerging from it.

The Inspired Voice in Context

A great deal of current thinking about the oracular voice starts from the narrative nature of much of the oracular tradition.[24] Already Fontenrose has pointed out typical narrative features of oracles, beyond the use of hexameter verse. Thus a conditional opening line (*all' hotan/hopotan*) introduces a command in the main clause (*tote dē*).[25] Elaborate predictions often consist of a salutation to the inquirer ("Foolish king Croesus");[26] the repetition of the question asked ("You ask about Tegea");[27] a claim of oracular authority ("I know the grains of sand on the beach . . ."); [28] a condition; the prediction; and an explanation of the prediction. None of the historical responses in Fontenrose's category shows these features. There seems to be an unbridgeable gulf between oracular practice and oracular promise, or between the real and the imaginary Delphi.

Such structural features also became the target of several oracle-parodies, confirming the fact that they were widely recognized as a typical feature of the oracular voice. In Lucian's *Zeus Rants*, for example, a desperate Apollo finds his predictive capacities challenged by Momus, a minor divinity. When pressed to demonstrate his skills by predicting the outcome of a debate between two humans (one arguing for the existence of the Greek gods, the other against), Apollo finally puts this forward:

> Hark to the words of the prophet, oracular words of Apollo,
> Touching the shivery strife in which heroes are facing each other.

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24. See now, in detail, Kindt (2016), with further literature.

25. Fontenrose (1978), 166–174.

26. Hdt. 1.85.2.

27. Hdt. 1.66.2.

28. Hdt. 1.47.3, with Kindt (2006).

Loudly they shout in the battle, and fast-flying words are their weapons;
Many a blow while the hisses of conflict are ebbing and flowing
This way and that shall be dealt on the crest of the plowtail stubborn;
Yet when the hook-taloned vulture the grasshopper grips in his clutches,
Then shall the rainbearing crows make an end of their cawing forever:
Vict'ry shall go to the mules, and the ass will rejoice in his offspring.[29]

It is not just the typical structure of oracles that is parodied here. The language in which this message is formulated comprises nothing but a series of metaphors well known from other Delphic oracles. Elsewhere, however, these figures of speech do not come so thick and fast. By stacking them up, Lucian causes Apollo's speech to appear artificial, so that the god makes an impression quite the opposite of what he intends and for which he is famous. Normally weighty, the metaphorical language loses its heft and becomes ridiculous.

Hence, Apollo's performance is rejected by Momus:

ZEUS: What are you guffawing about, Momus? Surely there is nothing to laugh at in the situation we are facing. Stop, hang you. You'll choke yourself to death with your laughing.
MOMUS: How can I, Zeus, when the oracle is so clear and manifest?
ZEUS: Well then, suppose you tell us what in the world it means.
MOMUS: It is quite manifest, so that we shan't need a Themistocles. The prophecy says as plainly as you please that this fellow is a humbug and that you who believe in him are pack-asses and mules, without as much sense as grasshoppers.[30]

Lucian's satire here takes aim at the very core of the enigmatic voice—its unimpeachable divine authority. When the linguistic structure collapses, the god's power goes with it.

In order to make sense of the oracular voice as an enigmatic voice, it is not enough to consider the typical features of oracular responses. Just as important is the drama of human–divine communication that surrounds the prophecies. The ancient evidence frequently provides information, not just about the divine response itself, but also about the inquiries allegedly made at Delphi, and about the human struggles to make sense of the inspired voice. The questions put to Delphi, whether real or imaginary, are perhaps as interesting as

29. Lucian, *Iupp. trag.* 31, trans. A. M. Harmon. See also Ar. *Eq.* 195–201; 1015–1020, for oracle parodies featuring similar patterns and exaggerated tropes.

30. Lucian, *Iupp. trag.* 31.

the oracles themselves, for they provide us with invaluable information about ancient concerns about the future. Moreover, oracle stories require interpretation, but they frequently also depict the act of interpretation in the body of their own narratives. They are, as I will show, *about* interpretation in a very fundamental sense.

Oracle stories have their own topography. The fundamental setup of these tales is one of question and answer, of prediction and fulfillment, of riddle and solution—and, indeed, many oracles started life as riddles (or proverbs) before they became subsumed into the oracular genre.[31] The ontological contrast between humanity and divinity constitutes the fundamental premise around which the entire exchange revolves. Oracle stories imagine the encounter between humanity and divinity through the medium of language, and they often do so in a formalized fashion.

These stories map out the tension, not just between past, present, and future, but also between the apparent particularity of the prediction and the uncertainty about how to get there. In most cases, the place where one can hear the enigmatic divine voice (the oracular institution) is not the place where one can understand its meaning. The process of interpretation frequently occurs far away from the institution that allegedly generated the response, highlighting the fact that interpretation of the divine sign is a deeply human affair, one with which all the inevitable problems, desires, and possibilities for human error are typically associated.

Overall, then, it is important to stress that to focus on the inspired voice in context is not to degrade it to a mere trope of literary fiction-making: this would be to misunderstand the fact that storytelling is one of the preferred ways in which ancient Greek religious thought articulated itself. Rather, to consider the enigmatic voice in the context of human–divine communication flags a whole series of themes that are worth considering in detail: the relationship of the inspired voice to certain real-life situations, its focus on knowledge and the process of knowing, and its claim to authority as a divine voice.

Enigmatic Realities

To start with the first point: a productive strand of scholarly inquiry currently explores the manifold links between the structures in which ancient Greek religion expresses itself on one hand, and the realities of life in ancient Greece on the other. Following Clifford Geertz's definition of religion as a cultural system, John Gould in particular has argued for Greek religion to be a symbolic

31. See Fontenrose (1978), 79–87.

system, a "language," which allowed those fluent in it to converse about the world they inhabit.[32]

Applied to the study of Greek oracles, the question arises what aspects of the human experience the oracular voice, imagined as ambiguous and enigmatic, reflects. To state that all oracular communication concerns the aspects of life in which humanity seeks to benefit from the omniscience of the gods would be to state the obvious. However, it is interesting to note that the enigmatic voice not only provides a way into the superior knowledge of the gods, but also, to some extent, preserves and extends human uncertainty and the general openness of the future, for example in the form of the question put to the oracle, or in the difficulty of interpreting the response.

Several scholars have researched the link between oracular tales and particular aspects of the ancient Greek experience.[33] Ambiguous responses feature particularly frequently in colonial narratives, for example, which, as etiologies, explain the foundation of a city in new and unmapped territory. A certain Locrus once received the response that he was to found a city where he was bitten by a wooden dog (*xylinē kyōn*).[34] Incidentally, the solution of the riddle required considerable botanical knowledge: the wooden dog came in the form of a rose (a so-called *kynosbatos*, "Dog Briar"), which scratched Locrus, finally leading to the foundation of Ozolian Locris.

In discussing this and similar examples, Carol Dougherty has shown the importance of the enigmatic voice in Greek portrayals of colonization.[35] She has argued that colonial narratives have much more to offer than a simple etiology in the form of an endorsement of the new city by an authoritative voice. The typical oracular narrative about founding a colony contains a riddle to be solved and its congenial solution by those in charge, thereby representing the challenges and rewards typically involved in colonial enterprises. She argues that "oracles within colonization traditions exploit the ambiguity of puns to create a new vision of reality, one that translates local phenomena into the Greek language just as colonization itself transforms foreign soil into a Greek city."[36] Note how the focus has changed from a conception of authenticity wedded to the question of "what really happened" to a much broader conception

32. Gould (1985), 5; Geertz (1973), 87–125; and the discussion of the relationship between their works in Kindt (2012), 57–82.

33. Note Malkin (1987), 17–91; Dougherty (1992); Dougherty (1993a), 18–21; Maurizio (2001).

34. Ath. 2.70c–d; Plut. *Quaest. Graec.* 294e–f; Dougherty (1992), 34–35.

35. Dougherty (1992); Dougherty (1993a), 15–60; Dougherty (1993b).

36. Dougherty (1992), 29.

of a "cultural authenticity" of oracular responses and the circumstances surrounding their purported delivery.

Lisa Maurizio applies this productive line of enquiry to reading of another kind of etiological story: tales concerning the birth of tyrants, which also frequently feature oracles speaking in the enigmatic mode.[37] For example, the birth of Cypselus, the future tyrant of Corinth, was apparently anticipated by the following oracle:

> An eagle in the rocks has conceived, and shall bring forth a lion,
> Mighty, ravening; and he will loose the knees of many.
> Give heed to these things, Corinthians, you who dwell
> About lovely Pirene and the rock-set town of Corinth.[38]

This is more than mere anti-tyrant propaganda. Tyrants, Maurizio explained, lacked the usual credentials of an authoritative lineage. Accordingly, oracles predicting their birth in enigmatic terms acknowledge the uncertainties and ambiguities of the political situation.[39]

Here as elsewhere, the plurality and richness of the world find expression in the infinities of language in which words can describe a seemingly unlimited number of things. The tropes and images of this language—its homonyms, metaphors, and general obscurity—circulate in time and space until they are substantiated, and the infinite number of possible realities collapses at the moment when the prediction is fulfilled. This is a world in which the ominous rain falling from a clear sky turns out to be the tears falling from the eyes of a crying woman named "Aithra," "Clear Sky";[40] a world in which the "five greatest contests" won by a certain Tisamenus refer, not to athletic competitions, but to five iconic battles.[41] Oracle stories explore the various ways the divine sign is linked with its referent and in which the human protagonist—through the act of interpretation and the detours of misinterpretation—comes to understand, not only the prophecy, but also the world as an agglomeration of interrelated words and their meanings (referents).

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37. Maurizio (2001), 43–46.

38. Hdt. 5.92.β3.

39. Maurizio (2001), 45.

40. Paus. 10.10.6. See also Plut. *De def. or.* 408a.

41. Hdt. 9.33.2.

Oracular Epistemology

To inquire into the future, however, is always also to attempt to control it. Oracle stories featuring enigmatic language raise—and partially at least deny—the question of whether humanity is able to navigate coming events with the help of the gods. In depicting the quest for the ontological relationship between words and things, oracle stories reflect the search for order and consistency in a world governed by accident and the contingencies of life. The Spartan king Cleomenes received the prediction that he would take Argos, but eventually he had to realize that the Argos in question was not the city he hoped to take, but merely a grove by the same name.[42] Another Spartan king, Archidamus (Agesilaos' son), received an oracle that he should beware of "Sikelia."[43] Staying away from Sicily did not help; the oracle referred to a hill by the same name in Attica, where Archidamus was killed in combat. More often than not, it seems, the desire to control the future collapses under the consequences of misinterpretation. It is in this sense, then, that oracle stories are indeed a site of both certainty and uncertainty, to take up Michael Wood's formulation from my introductory caption.[44]

This is to say that oracle stories are not so much about positive knowledge as the process in which this knowledge is gained. Frequently, the real referent of the prediction turns out to be rather trivial. For example, there is nothing terribly profound or divine about interpreting "the third harvest" not as three cycles of crops but as three generations of human offspring, as in the case of Hyllus, who had inquired how the Heraclids could return to the Peloponnese.[45] However, the insights at stake here exceed the numerical difference between three and three times twenty years (the average length of a generation at that time) inasmuch as they concern the very principles and practices by which we make sense of the world around us. What is interesting, then, is not so much the prediction itself, but how one gets there. It is the path that matters—the destination less so.[46] The focus of the story is decisively on

42. Hdt. 6.76–80.

43. Suda Σ 389.

44. It is an intrinsically historiographical gaze that (*a posteriori*) matches the prediction with its subsequent fulfillment—hence the affinities of the historiographic genre with the oracular; see Kindt (2006).

45. Apollod. 2.8.2.

46. See also the meditation on different pathways in the interpretation of oracular responses in Wood (2003), 63–73.

what happens between the enigmatic prediction and its subsequent fulfillment. Insight only ever emerges in hindsight.

Oracle stories, then, are not about any particular kind of knowledge. Instead, they encourage meditation about the nature of knowledge itself and about the processes in which this knowledge can and cannot be derived. Tales featuring ambiguous and enigmatic language do not tell people what to do in a straightforward fashion. They require interpretation and examination. Epaminondas of Thebes once received the response that he should avoid the "sea" (*pelagos*).[47] However—sure enough—the oracle did not refer to the ocean at all, rendering futile all of his efforts to stay away from it, but (as in the case of Cleomenes) to a wood of the same name. To benefit from divine knowledge requires one to consider alternatives to the current reality and paths other than the chosen route.

But not everybody fails, like Cleomenes and Epaminondas. Some indeed seem to be able to learn how oracles mean and can therefore use the knowledge gained to their advantage. To return to Tisamenus from Elis (the man slated to win the "five greatest contests"): when training and competition in games did not yield the desired result (although apparently he once came close to winning the pentathlon at Olympia), the Spartans understood that the oracle referred to warfare and not athletic contests. They eventually persuaded Tisamenus to serve as diviner in their army, but not before they had granted Spartan citizenship to him and his brother.[48]

This story—no matter whether real or imaginary, or both—nicely illustrates the fact that oracles do not give easy answers to easy questions, but, rather, confront the inquirer with a new question: Does he understand the meaning of the oracle? Enigmatic oracles propagate an interactive, conversational kind of knowledge. Oracle stories also encourage us to distinguish real knowledge from what we only think we know. They describe the blind spots that frequently obscure human vision and that, more frequently than not, bring about human failure, as in the case of the man who fell from his very own *hippos*.[49]

Take the case of Socrates, whose friend Chairephon, according to Plato and others, once asked at Delphi whether anyone was wiser.[50] Apparently the

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47. Paus. 8.11.10.

48. Hdt. 9.33.

49. See Kindt (2016), 55–86, for an example of how Greek tragedy draws on this aspect of the oracular.

50. Pl. *Ap*. 21a–c, with Kindt (2016), 87–112.

oracle responded that nobody was wiser than Socrates. Upon hearing of this response, Socrates set out to examine it. He challenged a number of experts well regarded for their knowledge in the hope that they would convince him of their superior wisdom, and thus disprove the oracle. In all instances, however, he found that people overstate their expertise.[51] What recommends Socratic knowledge (the knowledge of the philosopher) and distinguishes it from the expert knowledge of poets, craftsmen, or politicians, is the fact that he is aware of his own limits. Superior knowledge includes self-knowledge—an insight from which all those misinterpreting the enigmatic mode could have benefited.[52]

But it was not merely individual concerns that were put to the oracle; communal questions and problems feature just as frequently in the ancient evidence. According to Dio Chrysostom, the Athenians once received the oracle that if they wanted good citizens they should put the finest thing (*to kalliston*) into their boys' ears.[53] Misinterpreting the response, "they pierced one of the ears of each and inserted a bit of gold."[54] Of course, as Dio is quick to point out, they should rather have thought of *paideia* (education) and *logos* (reason). This story not only propagates and promotes the benefits of knowledge and learning for the community, but also compares and contrasts material and idealistic values in a way that reverberates with the moral universe of the so-called Second Sophistic (when Dio Chrysostom composed the *Discourses*, which featured this story).

Gods and Humans

At the core of this sometimes surprisingly self-reflective body of knowledge, however, is not just any voice, but a voice that is considered both inspired and divine. What does the enigmatic nature of this voice say about the relationship between those consulted and those consulting, between gods and men? Manetti has illustrated that what is at stake in human–divine communication is more than just a simple transfer of knowledge. The divine voice communicates the superior knowledge of the gods with regard to past, present, and future events, but at the same time, it does not close the gap separating humanity from divinity. Instead, it extends and maintains this gap by clothing

51. Pl. *Ap.* 22b–22e.

52. Arist. fr. 3 Rose, apud Clem. *Strom.* 1.351P.

53. Dio Chrys. 32.3, trans. J. W. Cohoon and H. L. Crosby.

54. Ibid.

the information it provides in language that requires (and sometimes defies) interpretation.[55]

In this model of oracular divination, the enigmatic mode signifies the ontological difference between the human and divine spheres. Gods are like and unlike humans, just as divine language is like and unlike human language. This language mediates between the human and the divine spheres, between human knowledge and ignorance, and between the past, the present, and the future. Elsewhere I have referred to this function of the enigmatic divine voice as a "mediation triple."[56]

The enigmatic mode resembles other forms of divine representation. The idea that the gods are like and unlike humans, for example, is also expressed in Greek statuary that endows the gods with human bodies, and thus implies that the supernatural is in some sense like humanity; to have the gods speak to us in human language (i.e., in the form of oracles) makes the same point. But in many ways, gods' bodies (no matter whether in literature or in the form of divine statues) are never entirely like human bodies. As Jean-Pierre Vernant has pointed out, there is always something that gives away the divine essence.[57] Analogously, the divine voice differs from human language by its reliance on the enigmatic.[58] To make sense of this voice, then, requires us to acknowledge the inseparable gulf between humanity and divinity—a nod to divine alterity that some human protagonists, in particular those of the oracle-testing variety, are not prepared (or able) to make.

Nevertheless it would be misleading to assume that the enigmatic mode, by adding a vocal dimension, merely complements common visual modes of divine representation, including statuary. Like a sort of reverse *ekphrasis*, enigmatic oracles present an image of a future that does not yet exist. Therefore, to interpret an enigmatic oracle successfully is to bring an image into being, to match the image against a real-life scenario. More frequently than not, this will involve an explosive act of revelation, as in the numerous oracle stories that highlight the surprising ways in which divine predictions become fulfilled. Oracle stories highlight the very moment at which divine anticipation and foreknowledge merge fully with (or turn into) human experience.

Ultimately, such stories depict the Delphic oracle as a location and institution of meaning that enables, structures, and formalizes human–divine

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55. Manetti (1993), 14–19.

56. Kindt (2008); Kindt (2016), 159–164.

57. Vernant (1991), 27–49, 151–163.

58. See Kindt (2012), 36–55, on divine representations in form of oracles and statues.

communication.[59] The importance of such an institution in a religious tradition that is largely devoid of traditional loci of religious authority cannot be underestimated: Greek religion knew no elaborate structure of religious organization ("a church"), no decisive formula of belief ("a creed"), no holy literature. But it did know a body of texts featuring a voice equally enigmatic, authoritative, and divine around which a vibrant conversation evolved. It is in this sense, then, that the search for oracular meaning is also a search for a religious center in a religious culture in which such centers were conspicuously hard to find.

Conclusion

The question what the enigmatic oracular voice means is really the question of how we deal with the uncertainty that characterizes the human condition. The oracular voice, imagined as both enigmatic and divine, ultimately confronts us with insight into the scope and limits of human knowledge in a very profound way. At the end of our investigation of oracular communication as enigmatic communication stands the strikingly paradoxical insight that, overall, the enigmatic oracular voice raises just as many questions as it is prepared to answer. Oracular knowledge is knowledge that is not absolute but dialogical.

The ancient oracles have long since gone out of business. Delphi, for one, was closed down by the Roman emperor Theodosius I in 391–392 CE after it had been in operation for over a millennium. The reason for this was not that something was wrong about oracular communication. To the Christians, it was simply the wrong god who was speaking at Delphi (Christianity, of course, had its very own prophets instigating human–divine communication).

Yet the desire to know, to control, and to possess that which is ultimately beyond human grasp still persists. Our time has its very own enigmatic voices, oracular institutions, and prognostic tools. Think of economic predictions, for example, or the much more mundane but equally fallible weather forecast, or the veiled language in which many of our politicians cast their vision (or its absence) of things to come. In the end, our efforts at anticipating the future remain just as challenging as those of the ancient world.

59. Its importance is further underlined by Ian Rutherford in Chapter 10 of this volume.

12

Christianity

Michael Kulikowski

ANCIENT CHRISTIANITY GREW as a set of beliefs, practices and varieties of comportment (a sequence of evolving *habitus* in Bourdieu's sense) shaped by the constant interaction of believers and potential authorities along networks of communication. At least at first, the network of those who thought of themselves as Christians was the most salient feature of the sect's ability to survive. Ramified along existing networks of Roman communication, Christians begat more Christians with a rapidity not noticeably common in other ancient cults. This growth meant that what at first was an identity structured by the very fact of its network became a subject of contestation and construction, developing as much through failures of communicative interaction as through successes.[1] The communicative tensions that underpin the history of Christianity in the Roman Empire are the central concern of this chapter, in particular the way that rival potential authorities attempted to construct and legitimize sets of beliefs and practices, and the degrees of self-consciousness with which they did so.

The rise and spread of Christianity as a world religion would have been impossible without the existence of the Roman Empire and its extraordinarily interconnected networks of trade, travel and official communications (Map 17.1). Origen of Alexandria had understood this at the end of the second century when, in the *Contra Celsum*, he explained that "God was preparing the nations for his teaching that they might be under one Roman emperor, so that the unfriendly attitude of the nations to one another, caused by the existence of a large number of kingdoms, might not make it more difficult for

1. Buell (2005), 35–94.

Jesus' apostles to do what he commanded them when he said 'Go and teach all the nations'."[2] That providential understanding of the Roman Empire had become a commonplace of Christian history, and until the sack of Rome in 410 by Alaric's frustrated soldiery, Augustine of Hippo had accepted it, as did so many of his contemporaries. Only thereafter, as he labored to refute those impious sceptics who blamed the conversion of the empire for the defeat at Adrianople, the sack of Rome, and sundry other horrors, did Augustine formulate an alternative vision where Rome became the incarnation of the earthly city with which the City of God stood in polar contrast.[3]

That the titanic intellect of Augustine should have wanted a path away from *bien pensant* commonplaces should not surprise us, but what might is the deep roots of that commonplace assumption: the same consciousness of the Roman Empire's significance is already there in the *Acts of the Apostles*. Despite their mistrust of the world as they found it, a surprising number of the very earliest Christians understood that the existence of an empire taking in every corner of the known world gave their god's salvific message an unparalleled chance of success. Learned humanists of the Counter-Reformation argued strenuously that Paul had preached not just to the Corinthians, Ephesians, and others attested in *Acts*, but that he had in fact carried out his express intention of traveling to Spain.[4] In the sixteenth century, this claim mattered, because it gave the Spanish Church the unimpeachably apostolic background enjoyed by Rome itself, where both Paul and Peter were believed to have met their ends in the Neronian martyrdoms. The humanist argument for Paul's Spanish journey has now been revived on more rigorous scholarly grounds. Paul probably did journey to Spain during the decade before his martyrdom in an attempt to spread the gospel there, and it is certainly possible that Spain, rather than Rome, was the site of his martyrdom.[5]

Paul, it is worth stressing, was a Hebrew convert to an obscure and eccentric cult—eccentric in that it believed not merely that a man could become a god, but also that an executed criminal was at the same time God's Son sent to redeem man. It was an obscure cult in that, until the Neronian persecution, the Roman authorities treated it as what it initially was, a minor permutation of Judaism, which Romans regarded as a peculiar ethnic cult,

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2. *Contra Celsum* 2.30, trans. Chadwick (1953), 92.

3. Markus (1970), 45–72.

4. *Romans* 15.28 for Paul's plans. The early evidence that this plan was made good is *1 Clement* 5.

5. Barnes (2010), 31–35; he infers Paul's martyrdom before a Spanish provincial governor on less adequate grounds than he does the journey to Spain itself.

ridiculous but best ignored. That such a man as Paul, with such a mission, should have been able to travel from one end of the world to another in the middle of the first century CE in order to preach what he believed to be a new revelation—and that he should thereby have turned himself into one of its most lasting authorities—is in itself a remarkable insight into the significance of the Roman Empire and the interactions it enabled. But what is in some ways more remarkable still is the fact that Paul could imagine such a journey, for such an end, to be possible.

What Paul very likely did, and at any rate had certainly planned to do, was different from the sometimes astonishing travels of earlier antiquity. We are not talking about such prodigies of adventure as Pytheas of Marseille's voyage to the North Sea in the fourth century BCE, but rather the commonplace, unconsidered assumption that one could go from one end of the earth to the other as a matter of course.[6] Paul was not unique, and Christianity was an unusually proselyte religion by ancient standards.[7] Most ancient religions, and most religions of the Roman world, were essentially local. To be sure, as Ian Rutherford illustrates in Chapter 10, some temples might have an international reputation, but that was because the god who lived there was an especially powerful manifestation of a widely worshipped divinity. Equally, the vast majority of cults were truly local, in the sense of being confined to just small regions in individual provinces. There are hundreds of African, Spanish, Gallic, and British gods whose names occur once or twice only, attested offhandedly in a text or more often in a lone inscription.[8] It is not that such cults were incapable of spreading, but rather that they did not, because the people who worshipped them traveled little. A few cults did spread widely or gained tremendous popularity—Jupiter Dolichenus, Mithras, and Cybele—but they tended to do so within relatively confined social strata of highly mobile citizens or soldiers. Christianity is the one example of an ancient Roman religion that spread to a mass audience with little regard for class or occupation.

The question of Christian numbers is highly vexed. The data are simply not good enough to allow for certainties.[9] What is certain is that outside its origins in the province of Judaea and the rural regions thereabouts, it was for centuries an urban religion, spreading from town to town along the network of roads that linked the *poleis* of the Greek East with the metropolitan centers

6. Cunliffe (2002); Roller (2006) for Pytheas.

7. Cf. Goodman (1994).

8. Salzman (2013) for a good recent survey.

9. Harnack (1924) is the classic text; see, more recently, Stark (1996); Hopkins (1998).

of the wider empire. We can trace this expansion only in limited ways. By the time of Nero's great fire in 64 CE, for example, there were few enough Christians in Rome that their concentration in Trastevere, beyond the reach of its flames, could plausibly aid in their scapegoating.[10] Roughly speaking, the new religion spread to the major cities of the Greek world in the course of the first and second centuries. By the end of the second century, there were Christians at Carthage and Rome as well as in most of the other big cities around the Mediterranean rim, and beyond it in all the main administrative centers of the empire, Lyon and León, Carnuntum and Cologne (Map 12.1).

The distribution of genuine "martyr acts" confirms this general impression, and is perhaps the best evidentiary index of the spread of the religion. Already in the Pauline period, churches had overseers and heads of the community. Over time, they would evolve into the bishops whom we meet as a meaningful element in Christian society by the end of the first century. It is the letters responding to doctrinal questions sent by such men as Ignatius of Antioch—in his case, on his way to execution in Rome during the reign of Antoninus Pius—that provide much of the early evidence for the development of Christian theology.[11] It is, however, in the third century that Christianity becomes an unavoidable part of Roman history. It was then that, for the first time, this theoretically illegal religion became the target of deliberate and organized persecution by the Roman state, although it had long had vocal critics, whose views we see most clearly in the work of Tertullian defending his religion against them.[12]

Nevertheless, since the time of Trajan, Christians were not to be sought out for accusation, nor were anonymous denunciations of them to be entertained; but if a person was formally accused of being a Christian, and failed to prove that he was not by sacrificing to the gods of the Roman state, he was to be executed. That much is uncontroversial. The question that continues to bedevil scholars is that of Christian numbers, and it matters to any interpretation of Christian persecutions. In the year 250, the insecure though technically legitimate emperor Decius ordered universal sacrifice for the health of the Roman state. Whether or not he did so with the aim of attacking Christians, he cannot have failed to realize the impact that his order would have on them.

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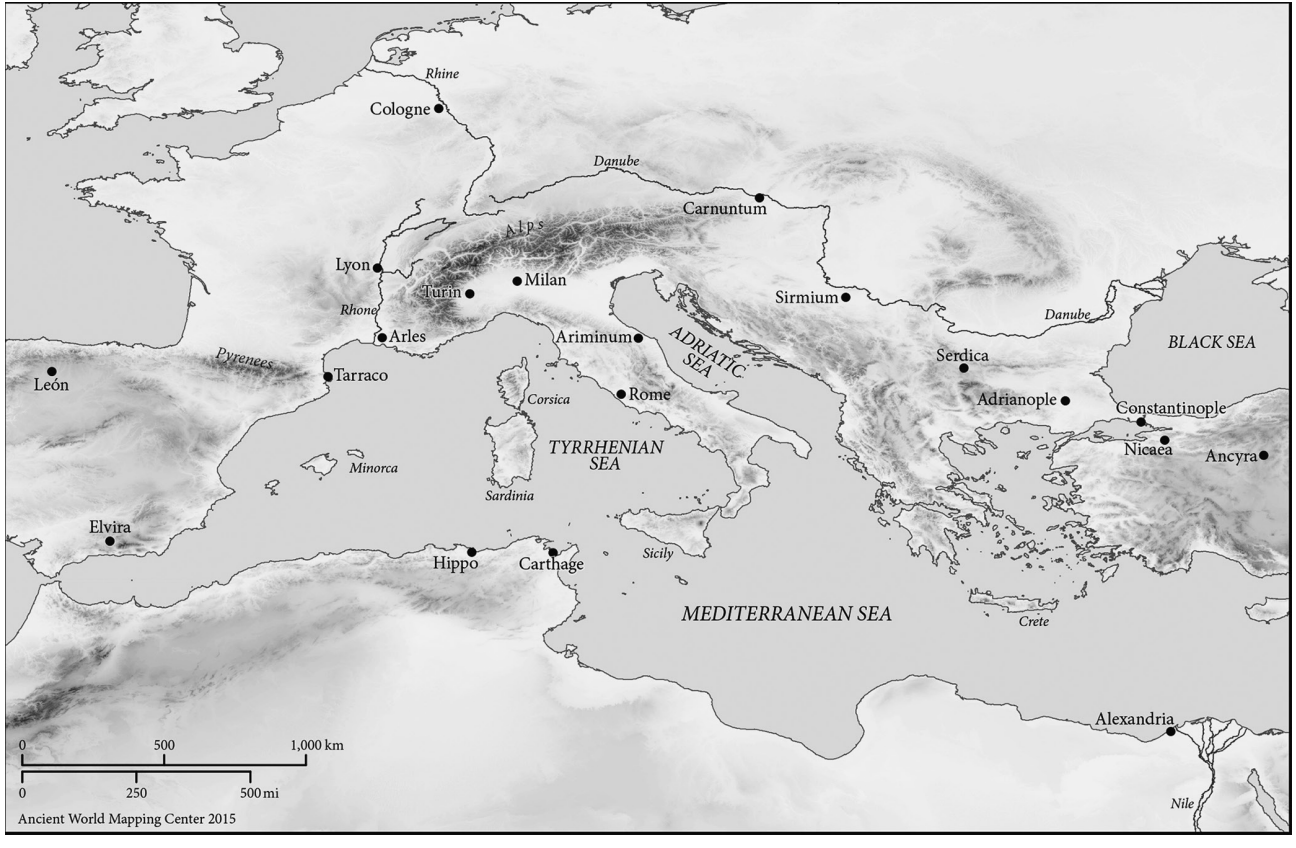
10. Lampe (2003).

11. Chadwick (2001), 65–83.

12. On persecution, there remains much to stimulate in the classic text of Frend (1965), although it has rightly been described as credulous. Bowersock (1995) is much sounder, and Barnes (2010), 43–150, austere in the extreme. For Tertullian, Barnes (1971), 130–142.



MAP 12.1 Sites mentioned in the text

Martyrs were duly created.[13] Not long thereafter, the emperor Valerian's similar insistence on universal sacrifice more deliberately targeted Christians, but his capture by the Persian *shahanshah* Shapur I (Figure 15.2), coming on top of Decius' death in battle against Danubian barbarians, persuaded Valerian's son Gallienus to essentially legalize Christianity in 260.[14]

Certainly it was in the course of the middle and later third century that Christianity became socially respectable; so, in that light, the ideological drive of the tetrarchy to destroy Christianity at the end of this century appears somewhat anomalous.[15] But how many Christians were there by then? Was it the sheer number of Christians that made them seem threatening to weak rulers whose own security could not be taken for granted? Or was it the religion's increasing social prestige and intellectual legitimacy that posed a threat? We cannot know. But the tetrarchs—rude soldiers, without intellectual pretensions, who had nonetheless pulled off the feat of staying alive and in power in a way that neither their senatorial nor military predecessors had managed—fetishized an imaginary Roman traditionalism to which Christianity might look antithetical. There is, moreover, some possibility that pagan philosophical circles, with their traditional base of support among the educated Greco-Roman élite now threatened by precisely the rising intellectual persuasiveness of Christianity, encouraged the tetrarchic persecution.[16] Thus, regardless of any claim that Christians represented a majority religion, their position in the mainstream of Greco-Roman life had made the tetrarchic plan a crude anachronism by the turn of the third to the fourth century. The persecution's utter failure to eradicate Christianity, and Galerius' decision to return to the Gallienan status quo, demonstrates as much.

By the time of Constantine's conversion, it is quite possible that the majority of the population in many cities, particularly in the East, had converted to Christianity in one form or another. It is clear that this was not the case in the West, but there were Christians at every level of society in both East and West, and the enthusiastic support that Constantine gave the religion no doubt encouraged self-interested as well as convinced conversions. The pace of the aristocracy's conversion is a matter of great controversy, based on intrinsically inadequate evidence; the pace of conversion in the countryside and on the

13. Frend (1965), 389–429; Rives (1999).

14. Eusebius, *HE* 7.13, with Chadwick (2001), 149–153; Frend (1965), 429, misses the full force of the edict, which is brought out by Barnes (2010), 97–105.

15. The literature is vast. See Frend (1965), 477–535; Barnes (1981), 1–27; Barnes (2011a), 53–62; Williams (1985), 173–186; Chadwick (2001), 176–189; Clark (2004), 38–59.

16. Provocatively argued in Digeser (2012).

great estates is even harder to quantify.[17] Interestingly, however, there is evidence that Christians and non-Christians had begun to self-segregate, so that, in some places, neighboring villages could be Christian and non-Christian respectively, while in others, Christians and non-Christians competed for the ear of the emperor. The mutual dislike of some pagan and Christian communities was exploited both by the persecuting emperor Maximinus Daia and, later, by the Christianizing emperor Constantine: each used traditional forms of imperial petition and response to enact their respective religious agendas.[18]

REGARDLESS, BY THE middle years of the fourth century, the framework of imperial cultural life was fundamentally Christian, or at least shaped by the political Christianity of the emperors. This shift introduced a radically intensified (though not entirely new) contest of potential authorities claiming to speak for the truth of the faith. In this chapter, however, rather than continue with further observations about the spread of the Christian religion, it will be more fruitful for us to concentrate on just two aspects of Christian communication that had profound consequences for the structures of the Roman state. Before proceeding to consider how educated lay Christians corresponded with the Christian leaders of their age—bishops, monks, and others—we can begin with a consideration of church councils, a fundamental aspect of communication as interaction in our period. In the Constantinian empire, councils became the primary means of regulating how Christians should conduct themselves and what they should believe, a means that was dependent upon the administrative structures of the Roman imperial state, but eventually provided a way to outlive those structures' demise.

The practice of governing (and communicating the ideologies of government) through councils was a basic feature of the Greco-Roman world, from the *consilia* of Republican magistrates and early emperors, to the formal *consistorium* of the fourth century, as well as from the Greek *boulai* and Latin *curiae* of the Roman Empire, to *collegia* and other community organizations of various sorts. It is completely unsurprising, then, that as Christian communities grew larger and more complex, their leaders should adopt the forms of governance and leadership that they already knew intimately from their experiences of life in the empire. Given the urban social strata from which many bishops

17. Haehling (1978); Barnes (1995); Salzman (2002).

18. For Maximinus, see Eusebius, *HE* 9.8–9 (a rescript to Tyre) and *CIL* 3.12132 (a rescript to Arycanda in Lycia). For Constantine, see the petition and response to the city of Orcistus in Phrygia, which he granted city status because of its Christianity: *Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua* 7.69–72, no. 305; Feissel (1999) offers an improved text, which implies that Orcistus is fully Christian.

emerged, it was always likely that the basic model of governance would quite naturally be that of the town council, the *boule* or *curia*. We can see this model in the canons of the earliest church council to survive, that of Elvira in Spain, held probably in the 290s, and certainly before the beginning of the Great Persecution.[19] These canons—mainly disciplinary, not theological—were grouped together in the manner of the ebb and flow of debate in council; a similar logic has been discovered in later councils much less local in their scope.[20] Indeed, several fifth- and sixth-century councils of Carthage record the full apparatus of episcopal debate, with the narrative of who spoke when and said what, rather than merely editing down decisions.[21]

In many ways, because their canons survive in such astonishing numbers, church councils are our single best evidence for the manner in which conciliar debate, communication, and governance took place in antiquity more generally, and not merely in the Christian context. While in the second and third centuries the main means of establishing correct belief and discipline seems to have been letters to and from churchmen of individually great authority, Elvira already showed the potential of doing this through a gathering of bishops. Their collective judgement, emerging from debate with the help of divine inspiration, could determine the rules by which the church should be governed, and could communicate those authoritative rules to such faithful as would listen.

Constantine's conversion gave new and decisive impetus to the church council as the central means of Christian governance. As soon as he came to power in Italy, having wiped out Maxentius' forces in northern Italy and defeated the usurper himself without difficulty, he found himself besieged by rival factions of African Christians, locked in fiery dispute over the way they had conducted themselves during the persecution.[22] Constantine's response was extremely telling: what would eventually become the Donatist schism (a lasting split in the African church between two mutually hostile church hierarchies) was initially dealt with in 314, at the emperor's direct instruction, by a council in the Gallic city of Arles, Constantine's favored residence at the time. In 324, having defeated Licinius and conquered an eastern empire that he then ruled with a far more rigorous Christianity than in the

19. Duchesne (1887) for the date.

20. Hess (1958); (2002).

21. See the councils of 419 (Munier [1974], 88–97) and 525 (ibid., 254–282), and the *Gesta conlationis Carthaginiensis* of 411 (Lancel [1974], 1–257).

22. Drake (2005); Gaddis (2005), 103–130; Shaw (2011).

West—confiscating temple treasures on a vast scale, and probably banning sacrifice—Constantine was confronted with an even more intractable battle among eastern Christians, the theological controversy over the teachings of the Egyptian priest Arius about the relationship of god the father and god the son to one another.[23] Again calling a council to confront and solve a Christian problem, Constantine himself took part in its proceedings at Nicaea—a signal to any who might have doubted that the emperor's interest in his faith was there to stay—and never wavered from his belief that he was qualified to sit among theologically expert bishops and draw his own conclusions. More important, however, was his decision to declare the ruling of the Nicene bishops against Arius and his supporters universally binding on Christians, and to place the force of the Roman state behind it.[24]

The ruling put a strain on the basic connective tissue of Christians' communal interaction. Communion—the agreement to communicate—was the way in which different Christian communities signaled their relationship to one another, the fact that they accepted one another's fellowship and the authoritative voices in the other's group. After Nicaea, however, the failure to communicate with churchmen whose theological teachings differed from one's own ceased to be a matter of conscience and became a matter of law and politics, all very publicly displayed. There would, of necessity, be failures to communicate. Christian theology is complex, the idea of a triune deity breathtakingly difficult to grasp, requiring immense subtlety to elucidate. To be sure, the same is true of many pre-Christian philosophical systems, as anyone who has attempted Plotinus' *Enneads* will attest. The difference, of course, is that the subtle gradations of belief were essential to the salvific efficacy of Christianity, whereas in non-Christian faiths, the religiously efficacious elements were rituals. By making the painful complexities of Christian belief enforceable under imperial law, and by assigning to church councils the establishment of the belief that imperial law would enforce, Constantine effectively guaranteed a self-perpetuating cycle of conciliar activity, one that had no natural end-point. No solution could win universal acceptance, no matter how authoritative its authors were asserted to be, and even such solutions as were widely accepted raised new questions that required answers to be formulated and disseminated.

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23. Wilkinson (2009) is the best evidence yet adduced for an actual ban on sacrifice by Constantine; for its relationship to other available evidence, see Barnes (2011a), 108–111.

24. The literature is practically infinite: see Chadwick (2001), 195–211, for a summary; Ayres (2004) for a challenge to old interpretations.

Constantine had come to realize this difficulty by the time of his death, but his son and successor Constantius II took an abiding, and even more intense, personal interest in the enforcement of orthodoxy. For better or worse, the orthodoxy that he wished to enforce was of a "homoian" form, which is to say that it rejected the homoousian formula for describing the relationship of God the Father and God the Son in the Trinity that had been settled upon at Nicaea. That formula had been carefully designed to reject the teachings of Arius, and all but three of the Greek bishops in attendance had acceded to it. It was, however, a very stark formulation that insisted that the Father and Son were of the same substance (*ousia, substantia*); a great many churchmen proved unhappy with this notion, preferring to see them as being of a "like" substance. While this homoian formula was acceptable to a very large group of eastern bishops, including those who found favor with Constantius, it was completely unacceptable to the Latin church, as well as to an eastern party led by Athanasius, the frequently exiled bishop of Alexandria in Egypt.[25]

Constantius expended a great deal of energy in trying to find some variation of a homoian formulation that could unify all the bishops of the empire. For this purpose, over the course of his long reign, he called what he hoped would be universal councils half a dozen times: Antioch (341), Serdica (342), Sirmium (351), Arles (353), Milan (355), Ariminum and Seleucia (359), and Constantinople (360).[26] In all of these instances, he personally intervened in the formulation of the theological statement and in the drafting of creeds that he intended to be universally acceptable and to enforce universally. He failed in his ambition every time, for a variety of reasons: the theological differences he was trying to paper over were too genuine and too deep for any bridge to span them, and voices of great authority existed on all sides; partisan politics among the episcopate had become very deeply entrenched in the decades after Nicaea. Moreover, Constantius himself persecuted the extreme Nicene party without much let-up, exiling non-conformist bishops and thus rendering the opposition ever less tractable.[27]

What concerns us here, however, is the structural impact of all this conciliar activity on Christian interactions and the larger empire. At one level, it is easy to mock it: Ammianus Marcellinus, the great pagan historian of imperial decline, did so mercilessly. In his view, Constantius, rather than looking after

25. Meslin (1967); Hanson (1988); Barnes (1993).

26. See previous note and, briefly, Chadwick (2001), 226–257.

27. Brennecke (1984).

the good of the Roman state and destroying its enemies, wasted his time shuttling bishops from one end of the earth to the other, clogging up the imperial postal system and continually throwing good money after bad.[28] It is a fact that ecclesiastical politics rode on the back of the imperial transport system, and the whole process of administering the church was patterned in practical terms on imperial models; but most important for the long term was the way in which the imperial subsidy of ecclesiastical politics embedded those politics in the provincial structure of the empire. Like the choice of councils as the means of addressing ecclesiastical differences, this no doubt came naturally enough as the default approach. The empire had long had provincial councils as well as local ones, and the structure of late imperial governance in particular was at this very time hardening into the hierarchy of province, diocese, and prefecture.[29] The repeated cycle of church councils, however, meant that imperial provincial networks of communication, both horizontal and vertical, were replicated in church hierarchies. Regional factions, so notable a part of court politics in the pages of Ammianus, are visible in similar groupings in the church, and nowhere near as simple as a division into Greek versus Latin, or East versus West.

Rather than that division—and again as in the factions at court—we find Gallic, Italian, Illyrian, Syrian, Egyptian, and other regional groupings whose networks shifted on the basis of both personal allegiances and theological persuasion. In the closely interlinked world of the fourth century, we find bishops reaching out into extra-provincial networks to prosecute their feuds, not just the intervention of Gallic or Italian bishops in African Donatism, or Athanasius' consistent reliance on a bloc of western bishops to support him against his eastern enemies, but also affairs like that of Priscillian, which passed over into Gaul when the Spanish church proved completely unable to contain it locally.[30] In each of these cases, however, it is worth noticing how the primacy of the regional communications structure—the ecclesiastical province patterned on the imperial province—was maintained. Only in very rare cases can we glimpse bishops from different provincial hierarchies meeting together without reference to the main episcopal sees of their provinces, as at Turin in the early fifth century, when bishops from North Italy and Alpine Gaul met to discuss a variety of issues without reference to their metropolitan bishops.[31]

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28. Amm. Marc. 21.16.18.

29. Jones (1964), 373–390.

30. Chadwick (1976) is the classic text; there is much new in Escribano (2005).

31. Kulikowski (1996).

The rarity of such episodes is a fact of some historical importance. It means that a powerful centripetal force worked within regional churches conscious of their close connection to one another in a network that paralleled the structures of the Roman state, because it was based on it. When that state began to fall apart, and the administrative structures sustaining it started to crumble during the middle years of the fifth century, the regional structures of the church proved more durable, because they were not fully dependent on any imperial center. During the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries, the imperial governmental structure that survived only vestigially in the flattened ruling hierarchies of the successor kingdoms was preserved almost intact in the church.[32] The Gallic, Spanish, African, and Italian churches remained able to communicate with each other very effectively, even when, both economically and governmentally, their worlds were smaller and far less interconnected than was the fourth-century world that had spawned them.[33]

IMPERIAL DEPENDENCE ON councils to regulate the church was an outgrowth of the empire's communication networks, one that helped institutionalize regional churches as sources of authoritative communication that then long outlasted imperial structures themselves. An entirely different aspect of Christian interaction was the way élite Christians learned to interact with the hierarchies of authority within the church. This interaction differed in important respects from the communicative practices of imperial life more generally, and it also had a corrosive effect on the power structures of the later empire. In particular, while the communication between provinces at the level of the church council created a locus of political strength based on the empire but independent of it, élite interactions with sources of Christian authority actually came to weaken that empire. We have already seen how the churchmen of the second and third centuries carried on epistolary relationships that helped them regulate their own local Christian communities. The legalization of Christianity by Gallienus, and then the expansion in the Christian population in the later third and fourth centuries, naturally meant that a larger percentage of the empire's élite inhabitants embraced Christianity and began to seek a role in the church appropriate to their social station. The very nature of Christianity allowed this development to have structural consequences for the empire.

32. Kulikowski (2012).

33. For the compartmentalization of the post-imperial world in economic terms, see Wickham (2005).

Outside the Christian context, when élite Greeks and Romans pursued their religious and philosophical interests—patronizing philosophers and wonder-workers, going on pilgrimages to incubatory temples in search of revelation, undertaking esoteric and salvific rituals like the *taurobolium*—they did so in a private sphere, even as they conducted those rituals in public. In the fully public sphere, their activities were civic, or they were imperial, or they blended those two roles, as in the conduct of imperial cult. The consequence was that the world of civic and governmental activity, even when highly local, nonetheless valorized a structural sense of belonging to the empire as a whole. This was true as far back as the early imperial period, when imperial governors served as interlocutors with civic administration, and offered itinerant Roman law courts to *conventus* of citizens in the provinces.[34] From urban councils to provincial ones, civic activity looked upwards and inwards, in the same way that the mechanisms of petition and response were relentlessly focused on the person of the emperor and the institutions of the imperial state.

We can see this focus in the efforts made by early imperial citizens to reach the physical vicinity of the emperor so as to have a chance to petition him in person; we can see it again in the letters of late Roman senators like Quintus Aurelius Symmachus in their constant effort to introduce their clients to those close enough to the emperor to exert influence.[35] The entire system of late Roman legal science, centered as it was on the rescript, was similarly designed to focus the attention of those who used it upon the idea of the empire and the imperial state.[36] Thus the public life of Romans was repeatedly channeled inwards and upwards into the structures of the state, even when they were attempting to avoid its provisions. To put it another way, organs of the imperial government had a monopoly on neither power nor authority, but they had a far greater share of both than did any alternative sources; in consequence, public life would ultimately always cycle back to imperial sources, at greater or lesser remove. The Christianization of the empire changed that, because it changed the psychological basis of how people communicated with authority.

Christianity rested fundamentally on belief more than on praxis. A great many practices might follow from belief, and a great many might be prescribed, or merely assumed, as external signs of Christian commitment. But it was belief that mattered most, and it was the regulation of belief that led to the massive expansion of conciliar activity in the course of the fourth century.

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34. Lintott (1993), 54–69.

35. Millar (1977), 465–549; Sogno (2006), 59–89.

36. Corcoran (2000); Kelly (2004); Dillon (2012).

That same activity—encouraged by the emperor, often conducted under his observation, sometimes compelled and herded by his representatives, and frequently subsidized by his *cursus publicus*—made the regulation of belief a matter of imperial authority, to be imposed if necessary by the use of imperial force. But there was a contradiction here, for the emperor's power and authority were both profoundly limited in matters of Christian belief. The imperial state might still have considerable power to enforce conformity of belief by means of violence, but, as the schism of the Donatists shows (as well as what is now recognized as their sheer gangsterism), Christian disorder was harder to control through violence than were many other forms.[37]

Moreover, if even imperial power could be challenged effectively over matters of Christian beliefs, then its authority over them was functionally negligible. Constantine had set himself up among the bishops, at Nicaea and afterwards, but he had not presumed to act without their authority. Constantius might think that he and his favored bishops had privileged access to Christian truth, but he deferred to episcopal authority to the extent that he would exile a bishop, but declined ever to execute one, even the most recalcitrant. Later, Theodosius, while willing to countenance the slaughter of thousands to avenge one dead *magister militum*, nonetheless submitted to a carefully orchestrated show of superior episcopal authority by Ambrose of Milan. Different times, different circumstances, and different degrees of significance—but all three of these experiences illustrate the publicly advertised limits of imperial authority in Christian matters.

Those limits served to underscore the availability of alternatives, something that was not true outside of Christian contexts. Christians seeking sources of authority for their beliefs and for answers to questions about belief and right conduct had a plethora of potential guides: bishops, monks, charismatic holy men, learned laymen like Jerome (who would have much preferred to remain a layman rather than suffer ordination). And yet this recourse could not help but be political, because Constantine's adoption of Christianity and the backing of the Roman state provided by him made it inherently political. Over a lingering dinner with a provincial governor, third-century *saloniers* might debate the respective merits of Plotinus and Porphyry, Mithras and Mani, for the moral health of the individual, and while the context was public it had no necessarily political element. Transpose the scene from the 270s to the 370s, replace Plotinus and Porphyry with Meletius of Antioch and Marcellus of Ancyra, and the same cannot be said. Although the issue is similarly a question of interior values belonging to the private sphere, to argue the virtue

37. Shaw (2011) for the para-religious aspects of Donatism.

of one over the other was to take a side in a matter which the emperor and his state tried to regulate, even while—as we saw above—emperors since Constantine had demonstrated that their authority in matters of Christian belief was not, and did not have to be, the defining one. They themselves had ceded a measure of that authority to bishops, particularly bishops in council.

Élite Christians knew that they could go to alternative sources of information and authority to understand and perform their own faith. At its most basic level, this opportunity meant that in the first fifty years of the Constantinian empire a whole sector of political life—the Christianity that Constantine had made political in the aftermath of Arles and Nicaea—ceased to focus subjects' minds on the person of the emperor and the imperial center. Whereas dissatisfaction with a law or custom in the secular and civic sphere was channeled into the emperor's hierarchy, and refocalized itself back onto that hierarchy even when in opposition to it, dissatisfaction with the imperial version of Christianity did no such thing. Rather than a fundamentally centripetal force that kept even oppositional interaction revolving around an imperial center, Christian communication at the élite level permitted and at times encouraged a multipolar approach to the search for authority. Christianity had opened up a political space in which the emperor and his system were present without being decisive, in which he had neither a monopoly nor a majority of power.

A very few examples will suffice. With the disappearance of martyrdom as an aspirational goal for the demonstration of the intensity of one's faith, asceticism became the primary outlet for such expressions.[38] But the growth of monasticism in the fourth century was almost entirely a lay phenomenon. The vogue for battling one's temptations in the desert might be promoted by a work like Athanasius' *Life of Antony*, but the clerical hierarchy followed such trends rather than led them, and the eremitical life was pioneered by inspired laymen long before any bishops strove to adopt the trappings of asceticism. Pachomian monasticism, too, was the brainchild of an ex-soldier who welded a group of like-minded laymen together in a form of communal piety that could be exported and imitated more easily than desert eremitism.[39] By reason of their visible holiness, both hermits and cenobites could provide alternative sources of Christian authority that were untouched, or less touched, by the now politicized authority of bishops, with all their ambiguous relationship to the imperial state.[40] While holy men provided an alternative source of power

38. Chadwick (2001), 394–410.

39. Chitty (1966); Rousseau (1985).

40. Brown (1992).

as symbols of the tension between desert and city, the theological and disciplinary questions of lay Christians were more often addressed by bishops. A glance through the pages of the great ecclesiastical letter collections of the fourth century reveals a world in which lay people, particularly the élite patron class that had always devoted a large part of its *otium* to the care of the self, wrote to an acknowledged authority—an Ambrose, Basil, or Augustine.

This sort of lay interest in theology, and in Christian self-improvement, was actively encouraged by the developing sense of Christian conscience, which thinkers like John Chrysostom and Ambrose of Milan articulated in the last decades of the fourth century.[41] They were giving theological shape to a sense of belief that was already present in the literate lay élites with whom they interacted, just as they preached to a much wider audience of different expectations and abilities. A new and socially disruptive attitude towards wealth and its place in Christian society grew in large part out of this interplay of ideas between bishops and pious lay people, who wanted to take an active role in their own salvation without necessarily joining the clergy.[42] The lay ascetic Pelagius aroused deep passions because his assertion of the role of free will in salvation found fertile soil in the élite social strata that wanted more control of their own Christian belief and the salvation it could bring.[43]

A similar sense of empowerment lay behind other individual initiatives. Indeed, laymen with an inflated sense of both their own righteousness and their own abilities might take it upon themselves to launch inquisitions and witchhunts of their own, without reference to any authority, be it episcopal or, still less, imperial. One of the Divjak letters of Augustine—no less interesting for being much studied—describes how a certain Consentius, an aristocrat from the island of Minorca, deputed a monk called Fronto to winkle out the heretics of Tarraconensis, whom Consentius had long suspected were being harbored by the corrupt local episcopate. In a thrilling tale of magic books, barbarian bandits, and a hair-raising inquisition in front of the *comes Hispaniarum*, Fronto manages to bring down on himself the wrath, not just of the Spanish episcopate, but also of a powerful and potentially deadly enemy in the hierarchy of the Roman state.[44] Augustine's reply to Consentius' self-satisfied account of his activities came in the form of the treatise *Contra mendacium*, one that offered no warrant for such stunts.

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41. Wiljer (2004).

42. Brown (2012).

43. Rees (1988).

44. Aug., *Ep.* 11*; Kulikowski (2002).

These various examples expose to us a part of the license that Christian citizens were offered by their religion to operate in a public sphere separate from the authority of the emperor. It is a nexus in which a traditional aristocratic preoccupation with the care of the self ran up against a Christian activism that could be justified both by the dictates of individual conscience and by appeal to whichever of the multiple sources of authority would license it morally, intellectually, and practically. None of these sources needed to be linked with the emperor, but all of them were potentially political—as both Priscillian and Pelagius found to their cost.

We have noted that these intersecting forms of lay Christian communication were corrosive to structures of empire. This was not simply because they produced a very large and important public context in which the imperial state had little authority, and that did not intrinsically redirect attention back to the structure of the state. In the fourth century, those state structures were robust and largely unchallenged. On the contrary, it was when the structures of governance came up against repeated and persistent challenges from the early 400s onwards that these Christian habits of communication in the public sphere became actively corrosive. Christian activity had created a political space in which Roman élites habitually turned to multiple, varying, and often mutually irreconcilable sources of authority. These habits, in turn, made the potential for other such political spaces less inconceivable. As the western empire, in particular, found itself dotted with leaders (including barbarian kings and chieftains) whose relationship to imperial authority was, at a minimum, ambiguous, the possibility of using whichever authority happened to be most suited for the particular task at hand was already deeply familiar from a Christian context. If one bishop told you "no," another might tell you "yes"; now, if the praetorian prefect would not give you justice, a Gothic or Suevic king might.[45] A sense of provincial region, as well as habits of élite communication, had been altered by the conversion of the empire to Christianity. Both, in their very different ways, had made the Latin West more susceptible to division and less dependent upon the imperial superstructure. There was nothing inevitable about this change, merely the accumulation of mutually reinforcing, fissiparous tendencies, and the specific habits of Christian élites was one of those.

CHRISTIANITY, AS THIS chapter has framed it, gains its primary significance as a religious and social phenomenon that could not have developed in the way that it did without the vast space that the Roman Empire had opened

45. Kulikowski (2012) for the stages by which the western empire fell apart.

up to networks of communication. Almost from the moment of its origin, Christianity transcended the basic localism of most ancient cults, conceiving itself as a network of congregations that communicated (or better, were in communion) with one another because they professed the same faith. The survey here has necessarily been somewhat cursory, but the essential point is that—if religious beliefs are among the very basic thoughts that humans try to communicate to each other and interact about—then the peculiarly proselytical impulses of Christianity were perfectly suited to the communication networks of the Roman world, allowing the religion to spread faster and more pervasively than had any other ancient cult. Success inevitably bred resistance, but the conversion of Constantine helped remake the public structures of empire. Meanwhile, interactions within the vast network of Christian believers came to resemble, and in some cases replicate, those imperial structures. One result of this development was that ecclesiastical structures proved more durable than did their imperial models. At the same time, the special sense of interiority of conscience and belief native to Christianity helped subvert the central and centralizing authority of the empire. A new and ultimately centrifugal attitude towards sources of authoritative judgement was created, one that was alien to the classical world. Christianity, that is to say, is as deeply implicated in the fate of the ancient world as is any other factor, be it economic paralysis or foreign immigration. Barbarism *and* religion: as in so many things, a large part of the question, and a large part of its answer, was already anticipated by Gibbon.

PART FOUR

Engagements

13

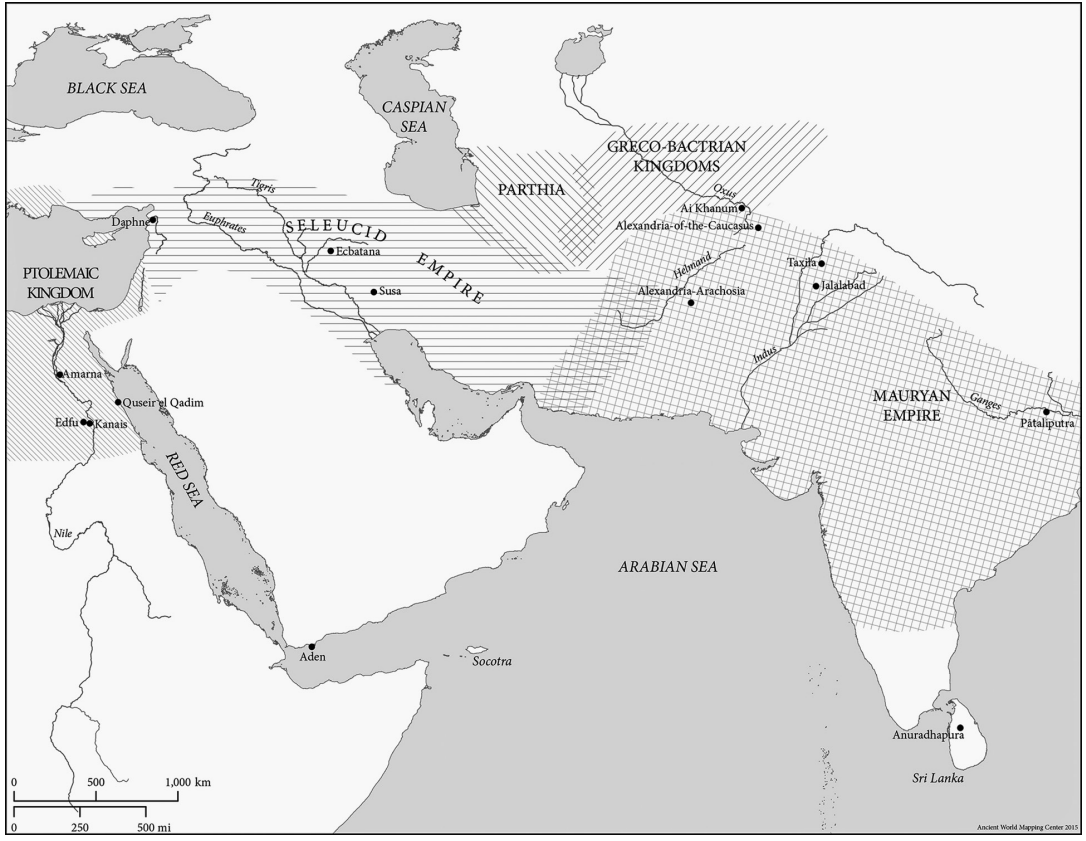
Cross-Cultural Communication in the Hellenistic Mediterranean and Western and South Asia

Matthew Canepa

THIS CHAPTER EXPLORES the dynamics of cross-cultural communication, primarily among the kingdoms and empires of Western and South Asia after Alexander the Great (Map 13.1). This period witnessed the rise, conflict, coexistence and fall of a succession of cross-continental empires, including that of the Seleucids (312–64 BCE)[1] and Mauryas (321–185), as well as powerful regional powers with larger ambitions such as the Ptolemies of Egypt, the Diodotids and Euthymids of Bactria (ca. 250–ca. 145), Śuṅgas (185–73), and a variety of Indo-Greek kingdoms (ca. 185 BCE–ca. 10 CE). Several new Iranian-speaking élites, including the Parni, Saka, and Yuezhi, descended from the Central Asian steppes and eventually formed the Arsacid, Indo-Scythian, and Kuṣāṇa empires, respectively. These Macedonian, Indian, and Iranian powers engendered an intensive period of diplomatic interaction and cultural exchange. While this chapter focuses first on peer–polity diplomatic communication, it also explores the relationship between direct, intentional communicative acts and the wider contexts of cross-cultural interaction in which they took place and to which they often contributed.[2]

1. Dates are BCE unless otherwise stated.

2. On the wider problems of studying cross-cultural interaction, see Canepa (2010b).



MAP 13.1 Major empires of the third century BCE

Diplomatic Communication and Cross-Cultural Exchange after Alexander

The ancient world boasted a long history of diplomatic exchange among the kingdoms and empires of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Anatolia, and the Iranian plateau.[3] Archives of diplomatic correspondence from the king of Mitanni and the Egyptian court at Amarna testify to these exchanges with direct evidentiary detail unmatched in many later Western Asian exchanges, even up to the Early Modern period.[4] Despite this long history of diplomacy in the eastern Mediterranean, and Western and South Asia, it is important to note that political upheavals and invasions ruptured these relations and traditions, with subsequent states continually being forced to improvise, reinvent, and reestablish diplomatic institutions and practices in response to prevailing geopolitical circumstances. The Persian empire subsumed what was left of the ancient Western Asian exchanges and the states that sponsored them. Between ca. 550 and 330, the Persian empire formed the center of gravity of Western Asia and the Mediterranean, with a number of smaller polities, such as mainland Greek city-states or the kingdoms of Northern India, constellated around it, at times cooperating with it and, at others, resisting it.[5]

Alexander's invasion and destruction of the Persian empire transformed ancient geopolitical dynamics yet again. A number of powers emerged from the fragmentation of his short-lived empire. Among these, the Ptolemies, Seleucids, and Mauryas initially established themselves as the most powerful in the eastern Mediterranean, Western Asia, and South Asia, respectively. They coexisted and conflicted with one another in various states of cooperative parity and fierce competition. The initial desire of Alexander's Successors to compete for the entirety of his empire forged a new idiom of Macedonian charismatic kingship, which became both a currency of power and a medium of competition in the Mediterranean and Western Asia.[6] At the same time, Alexander's Successors and their heirs engaged the local traditions of the regions they conquered, such as Egyptian or Babylonian kingship, which did not hold currency beyond those regions. The Mauryas were conversant with the traditions of the Greeks and Persians. As the Greeks became more and

3. Explored in detail by Podany (2010); see also Aruz et al. (2008).

4. Podany (2010), 186–216.

5. Sinopoli (2006).

6. For a nuanced treatment of Hellenistic court culture, see Strootman (2014).

more involved in South Asia, the idioms of South Asian kingship and religion rose in importance.

Amidst their ceaseless wars, the Successors and later Hellenistic kings developed an elaborate and careful system of diplomacy. It involved exchanges of envoys between the courts of the major kingdoms, which treated each other as equals even as they competed for dominion over the entire *oikoumene*. As the kings cemented alliances through marriages with their opponents' daughters, they attempted to outflank one another in establishing networks of patronage and protection for states of lesser importance. They competed for the loyalty and respect of the old Greek world by bestowing endowments on cities as well as by doing personal favors and giving gifts to local élites as means to influence events. In some respects, Hellenistic diplomatic practices reflected Achaemenid precedents, especially in the co-optation of local élites through the institution of guest-friendship.[7] However, the careful web of relations forged among the Macedonian élite through marriage alliances was a relatively distinctive feature of the Hellenistic age; so, too, was the central dynamic of equally matched states forced to come to terms and compete with each other through diplomacy as well as military force.

Hellenistic diplomacy was not a closed system. At the same time as the Ptolemies and Seleucids treated with what was left of the semi-independent Greek city-states in the Mediterranean, they both exchanged envoys with the Mauryan court.[8] Western literary sources record the names of a handful of such envoys. One of the most celebrated was Megasthenes, the envoy from the court of the satrap Sibyrtios to Poros and Chandragupta Maurya. He probably served as envoy to Chandragupta again in the time of Seleucus I, and was an important source of information on the subcontinent for the Greco-Roman world.[9] We know considerably less about Deimachos of Plataea, the envoy of Antiochus I, and about Dionysios, envoy of Ptolemy II: both were sent to Bindusāra, son of Chandragupta. However, it is clear that such cross-continental exchanges among the Ptolemies, Seleucids, and Mauryas persisted well into the next generation of these dynasties.[10]

The fragmentation of the Seleucid and Mauryan empires heralded a new diplomatic dynamic in Western and South Asia. As these empires fell apart,

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7. Strootman (2014), 145–160; Wiesehöfer (1980).

8. Kosmin (2014), 31–58.

9. Eratosthenes *FGrHist* 715, with Roller (2010), 138. Karttunen (1997), 69–76; reinforced by further arguments in Kosmin (2014), 261–271, *pace* Bosworth (1996).

10. Eratosthenes *FGrHist* 716; Plin. *HN* 6.58. Karttunen (1997), 69, 92–93, 264.

several smaller states competed for power, while new regional hegemons, Rome, the Arsacids, and the Kuṣāṇas, rose in the Mediterranean and Western and South Asia, respectively. The Roman Republic adapted Hellenistic traditions as it entered the Eastern Mediterranean in the second century, as did the Arsacids as they gained power on the Iranian plateau.[11] The practices of the previous century provided precedents and raw material, although the new power dynamics required new solutions as well. Despite initial hostilities, Roman and Arsacid relations eventually reached an equilibrium, which lasted until renewed hostilities during Trajan's reign in the early second century CE and the eventual decline of the Arsacid empire in the early third century CE.[12] Although they did not reach the intimacy of Roman–Sasanian relations later, these diplomatic exchanges were regularized enough that deviations from normal practice could communicate clear changes in policy. Even as the Arsacids and Rome dismantled the remnants of the Seleucid kingdom, and invasions of Iranian peoples destabilized Bactria, diplomatic exchanges continued to take place within South Asia between the various successor states. The Indo-Greek kingdoms of southern Bactria and northwest India were no longer "foreign" states, and in a sense, South Asian culture integrated Greek kingship and culture just as much as India transformed the Indo-Greeks.

While intensive court-to-court exchanges facilitated communications among sovereigns, movements of merchants, missionaries, craftsmen, and soldiers provided other channels for communication and exchange through the Mediterranean and Western and South Asia. The intensification of *entrepôt* sea trade between the Mediterranean and India and the eventual opening of direct trade to India were achievements that laid the groundwork for Sasanian and Islamic-period Indian Ocean sea trade.[13] The sea trade here, which first peaked in the early Roman Empire, had its start in the Hellenistic era. Alexander and the Hellenistic kings sponsored several expeditions to explore the sea-ways, though Arab middlemen served as the main conduit for trade with major *entrepôts* in the Arabian islands, such as at Socotra and Aden. Eventually a direct sea route was opened up linking the Red Sea with Sind and Gujarat. To facilitate such trade, the Ptolemies appointed a special officer who oversaw the Red Sea and Indian Ocean (*epi tes Erythras kai Indikes thalasses*).[14]

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11. Ma (2012); Canepa (2015a), 86.

12. Campbell (1993).

13. Sidebotham (2011), 32–54.

14. Karttunen (1997), 331.

These early links established a foundation for expansion along the west coast of India, and led to the growth of the west coast of the Deccan plateau as a particularly important site of exchange.[15] After the fall of the Seleucid and Maurya empires, traffic along the land routes to India and eventually to Central Asia and China resumed. The Indo-Greeks, Parthians, and Kuṣāṇas all attempted to control the Kabul and Peshawar valleys, which contained the main points of access to the eastern bank of the Indus and northern India.[16] Guidebooks for these trade routes, such as the *Periplus Maris Erythraei* and *Mansiones Parthicae*, preserved and communicated the practical experience of merchants who traveled portions of these routes and collected the experiences of their compatriots.[17] Moreover, information gleaned from envoys, soldiers, and other travelers contributed to a growing body of scientific literature as well as enriching the Hellenistic Asian literary imagination.[18]

Augmenting our fragmentary textual accounts, inscriptions attest to the circulation of people, ideas, and objects along these sea and land routes. For example, the acrostic inscription of Sophytos in Alexandria-Arachosia—a Greek city founded by Alexander in the eastern Iranian plateau, later absorbed into the Mauryan empire—provides evidence of an individual with a non-Greek name who writes in Greek and in a Greek epigraphic idiom.[19] The inscription celebrates his success in long-distance trade and in rebuilding his family's fortunes. In Egypt, the rock-cut temple of the nineteenth-dynasty pharaoh Seti I at Kanais was located on the eastern desert route between the Nile and the Red Sea, some 55 kilometers east of Edfu. Here, the nearby rock face became a favorite site for merchants and travelers to leave graffiti commemorating their dedications. Among its many inscriptions showing evidence of movement of people and objects between India and Egypt, this rock face carries one in the name of a certain Apollo, who offers "Indian myrrh," "having returned safely."[20] There is another Greek inscription cut by an individual identifying himself as "Indian" (*Indos*), named Sophon (reconstructed possibly as Sanskrit "Subhānu"). Regardless of whether he was an Indian who

15. Brancaccio (2007).

16. Dar (2007).

17. Casson (1989); *FGrHist* 781, with Schoff (1914).

18. Surveyed in detail by Karttunen (1997), 95–252. On the development of the ethnographic tradition, see Primo (2009), 20–24, 53–85; Kosmin (2014), 37–53.

19. P. Bernard et al. (2004); Mairs (2008); (2014), 102–145.

20. A. Bernard (1972), no. 72; Mairs (2010).

moved to Egypt and learned Greek, or an Indo-Greek who did the same, or a Greek from the Mediterranean who lived for a while in India, such inscriptions suggest that individuals who could operate in multiple cultural idioms flourished on these trade routes.[21] Some inscriptions in Indian languages dating from the early Roman Empire found at the port of Leukos Limen (Quseir el Qadim) further attest to the movement of individuals and goods from India to the Red Sea.[22] Although such inscriptions do not always specify what was communicated or moved, they are nonetheless important because they preserve evidence of individuals responsible for conveying knowledge and objects from east to west.

Diplomatic Theory, Diplomatic Practice

In the period after Alexander, both Indian and Hellenistic thought produced learned treatises on different aspects of statecraft and kingship. These texts stemmed from the tradition of academic Greek philosophy in the Hellenistic world and the scholastic Sanskrit tradition in South Asia. In both, these were reactive attempts to describe and make coherent the world in which the authors lived. Especially in the Greek world, their authors were motivated by an attempt to impose some measure of control over the absolute power of the new phenomenon of nearly omnipotent kings who ruled vast territories and could marshal huge armies.[23] Like works by Plato and Aristotle before them, these treatises are largely concerned with ideals rather than real-world governing. While the Hellenistic ones do not deal directly with diplomacy, their more practical Sanskrit counterparts do. Reflecting, at least in part, the process of building the Mauryan empire, the Arthaśāstra of Kauṭilīya approaches diplomacy as an extension of war.[24] Its ultimate goal, if not to facilitate direct conquest and expansion of the king's territory, was to expand his influence by any means necessary. This characterization of statecraft accurately describes Seleucid and Ptolemaic policies as much as it does those of the Mauryas.

The Arthaśāstra and a number of other classical Sanskrit works describe theories of statesmanship that took into account, not only the relations between a state and its friends and enemies, but also a wider *rājamaṇḍala*

21. Salomon (1991), 735; Mairs (2013).

22. Salomon (1991).

23. Murray (2007).

24. Kauṭilīya, *Arthaśāstra*, 7.13.42–44; Kangle (1960), 2: 322–323; Mishra (1993), 221–229.

extending far beyond them.[25] Often translated as "circle of kings" or even "confederation," the *rājamaṇḍala* is perhaps more accurately understood as "geopolitical spheres" or "political landscape." An interlocking web of diplomatic relationships based on calculations of potential advantage relative to a state's inferior or superior status animated the entire system. The Arthaśāstra prescribes actions for the king's proximate enemies, their allies, their enemies, the enemies of their enemies, the enemies of their allies, the allies of their allies, friends and allies to the rear, and *their* friends and allies, as well as distant, neutral kings (more powerful than the king or his close enemies) who could offer protection or arbitration—a role that Rome eventually played in the Hellenistic Mediterranean.[26] Describing essentially two hostile groups, the *rājamaṇḍala* prescribes actions to establish hegemony over one of these groups so that it can neutralize the other. In the Hellenistic Mediterranean and Western Asia, just as in South Asia, these groupings formed and reformed with remarkable alacrity and lack of concern for previous loyalty or familial bonds. Although the *rājamaṇḍala* reflects the concerns of a medium-sized kingdom, its ultimate goal was to establish and maintain the sovereign as imperial master over all.

Diplomatic practices and solutions take their place alongside active military operations among the Arthaśāstra's six types of foreign policy measures (*ṣāḍguṇya*): making a treaty (*saṃdhi*), engaging in open hostilities (*vigraha*), strategic inaction (*āsana*), active campaigning (*yāna*), seeking shelter with another king or in a fortress (*saṃśraya*), and making a treaty with one king and engaging in hostilities with another (*dvaidhībhāva*).[27] This text, and several other classical Sanskrit texts touching on statecraft, recommend four means (*upāya*) of overcoming opposition to enacting these policies: conciliatory negotiation (*sāman*), giving gifts or bribes (*dāna*), sowing dissention (*bheda*), and violent force (*daṇḍa*).[28] In South and Western Asia after Alexander, diplomacy was at once a method of communication and a means to further policy.

Diplomatic communications were conducted almost exclusively through envoys. Face-to-face meetings among these kings rarely occurred, and when they did, they occurred almost always in the course of a military campaign.

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25. This term appears in the fifth-century Tālaguṇḍa pillar inscription with the more restricted, local meaning of "district" or "unit of administration": Mishra (1993), 140, 252.

26. *Arthaśāstra*, 6.2.13–22. Kangle (1960), 3: 248. For Rome's role, see Chapter 15 below.

27. Kauṭilīya, *Arthaśāstra*, 7.1.6–12. Kangle (1960), 3: 251–255.

28. Kauṭilīya, *Arthaśāstra*, 7.1.6–12. Kangle (1960), 3: 255.

Such meetings took place in the aftermath of a battle or after a show of force, such as Polybius' report of Antiochus III's meeting with Sophagasenos (Subhāgasena), one of the petty kings who emerged after the dissolution of the Mauryan empire.[29] Anticipating the system that evolved later between Rome and Sasanian Iran, the Arthaśāstra describes three classes of envoy (*dūta*): the plenipotentiary (*niṣṛṣṭārtha*), the envoy with a restricted set of negotiating powers (*parimitārtha*), and a simple messenger (*śāsanahara*).[30] These empires all developed bureaucracies to manage the reception and accommodation of foreigners in their capitals, be they envoys or merchants.[31] The social standing of the individual would correspond to the importance of the mission with which he was entrusted and the relative stature of the state to which he was sent. The Arthaśāstra and Hellenistic historical sources indicate that the most important missions were entrusted to members of the upper echelon of the court. For example, Megasthenes, Seleucid envoy to Poros and Chandragupta, was a friend and companion of Sibyrtios, the long-serving and powerful satrap of Arachosia. Ambassadors were expected to have an understanding of the culture and, preferably, also the language of the court to which they were sent. Not surprisingly, in the time of Aśoka, Indo-Greek (*yona*) members of the Buddhist community were selected to conduct missions to the western Greek lands.[32] At the other end of the spectrum, sovereigns relied on a vast array of spies and secret agents from lower echelons of society to do much of the dirty work that fell into the category of *bheda*, including measures equivalent to those that the modern Soviet KGB termed "active": sowing dissention, bribery, sabotage, psychological warfare, and assassination.

It was a matter of equal importance for the Seleucid kings to come to terms with their powerful Indian neighbor just as much as with their Macedonian rivals in the Mediterranean. The Ptolemies' interest in India was more complex, because they hoped to establish an alliance and trade relations with the empire at their main competitor's eastern flank. Kauṭilya would have recognized and encouraged this course of action as a logical approach to the dynamics of the mid–third century *rājamaṇḍala*. Indeed, once Aśoka finished conquering his subcontinental empire, he pursued a very similar policy. In his thirteenth rock edict, Aśoka states that he sent envoys to several western

29. Polyb. 11.39. The name can also be reconstructed as Saubhāgyasena. Karttunen (1997), 271.

30. Kauṭilīya, *Arthaśāstra*, 1.16.2–4; Canepa (2009), 127–130.

31. Bose (1935).

32. Mahāvaṃsa 12; Karttunen (1997), 267.

kings, including Antiochus II Theos, Ptolemy II Philadelphus, Antigonus II Gonatas, Magas of Cyrene, and a king named Alexander, probably Alexander of Epirus (272–255).[33] Aśoka sent envoys, not only to the Seleucid court directly to the west, but also to the kingdoms directly flanking the Seleucids and those flanking the flanking kingdoms.

Diplomatic communications involved a complex spectrum of expressive elements. In addition to more explicit means of communication, such as letters and speeches from one sovereign to the other, an intricate and nuanced idiom of ritual, symbolism, and spectacle animated diplomatic exchanges and appealed to the senses and emotions of the envoy. In this regard, elements like food, exotic animals, gardens, women, and urban spaces were vital elements in the wider communicative process. While not necessarily independent statements in and of themselves, such elements contributed mightily to the web of communicative processes that wove together the kingdoms and empires of Hellenistic Asia.

Inspired by Persian example, under the Macedonian and Mauryan kings, royal cities, palaces, and surrounding royal districts gained great importance as symbols of authority and venues for powerful ritual and visual displays.[34] Seleucid palaces integrated Babylonian and Persian building types and institutions but adapted them according to the requirements of local building techniques and urban design (Figures 13.1 and 13.2). The archaeological evidence for Seleucid and Seleucid-inspired palaces indicates that they drew heavily from Western Asian traditions, creatively incorporating Macedonian elements such as a central peristyle court with areas reserved for men (*andron*). Even so, these features were just as often as not adapted to new functions.[35]

Mauryan palaces, too, were culturally plural, and they integrated aspects of Persian architecture into South Asian traditions. According to Megasthenes, the Mauryan palace at Pāṭaliputra was superior to those of Susa and Ecbatana, although it should be acknowledged that, by the middle of the Seleucid era, the latter pair were beginning to fall into disrepair as Seleuceia-Tigris and the Syrian Tetrapolis eclipsed them.[36] Evoking the Achaemenid Audience Hall (the so-called *apadāna*) in a way that no known Seleucid palace attempts, Pāṭaliputra reveals evidence of several

33. Karttunen (1997), 266. Edict Kandahar II translates part of this edict into Greek: see further below.

34. Nielsen (1999), 112–129.

35. P. Bernard (1976); Held (2002); Kopasacheili (2011).

36. Aelian, *NA* 13.18; Boucharlat (2006).

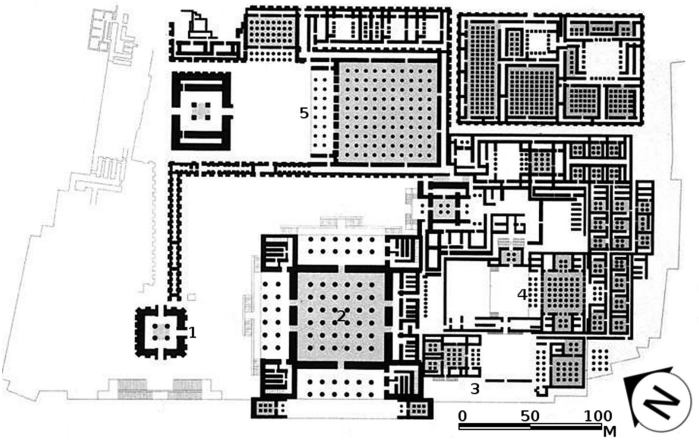

FIGURE 13.1 The Achaemenid palace of Persepolis, Iran (ca. 518–331 BCE) with: 1. Gate of All Lands; 2. Audience Hall (*apadāna*); 3. Palace of Darius I (*tacara*); 4. Palace of Xerxes I (*hadiš*); 5. Palace of 100 Columns.

(Courtesy of author)

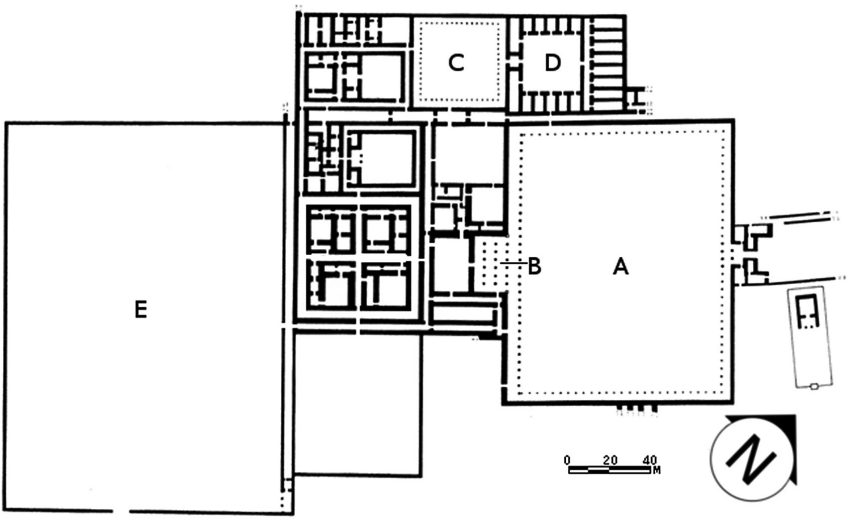

FIGURE 13.2 The palace at Ai Khanum, Afghanistan (ca. third century—mid-second century BCE). The early phase of the palace: A. Corinthian peristyle forecourt; B. hypostyle entranceway in the manner of the *tacara* or *hadiš* leading to a great room. The later Greco-Bactrian phase of the palace to the west of the great room (including the housing blocks to the west and treasury to the north): C. Doric peristyle court; D. Persian-style treasury; E. open-air enclosure, possibly used as a *paradeisos* garden or game park.

(Courtesy of author)

monumental structures, including remnants of the city's wooden palisades, and a grand hypostyle pavilion of eighty columns of polished sandstone, which supported an elaborate wooden superstructure (Figure 13.3).[37] Much like their treatment of Gandharan visual culture, colonial and post-colonial political narratives inflecting twentieth-century scholarship unconsciously emphasized or deliberately denied the hypostyle hall's "foreign" Persian "origins." However, these flawed interpretive frames completely ignore the processes behind its appearance. What we are witnessing here is an active process of selective appropriation and adaptation to local traditions in the service of Mauryan imperialism, not a simple question of technology transfer. While Megasthenes was impressed by the palace's exterior fortifications and moats, he was especially struck by the beauty of its gardens and animal parks (Greek *paradeisos*), which gathered specimens from all over the empire and the world. Both in content and in symbolism, these gardens evoked Achaemenid and Seleucid *paradeisoi*.[38]

Impressive as the royal cities and their palaces were in and of themselves, the Seleucid, Ptolemaic, and Mauryan courts also all staged elaborate spectacles for the benefit of both their internal audience and a variety of visiting

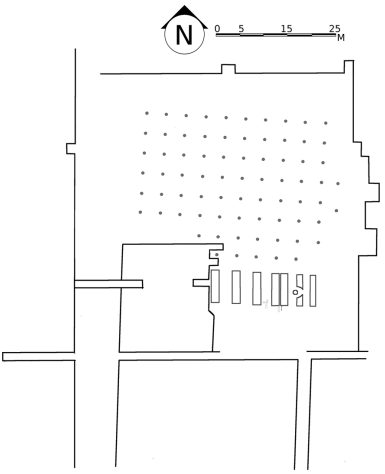

FIGURE 13.3 The excavated remains of the hypostyle palace of Pāṭaliputra, India, royal residence of the Mauryan dynasty (ca. 321–185 BCE).
(Courtesy of author)

37. Waddell (1903); Altekar and Mishra (1959); Sinha and Narain (1970); Mukherjee (2009).

38. Lincoln (2012), 1–19; Tuplin (1996).

foreign envoys.[39] These lavish spectacles animated the urban and architectural environments and presented a vision of an ideal world from their court's perspective. They presented a display of luxurious abundance that was "an expression of power that itself was instrumental in creating power."[40] By these means, such spectacles enveloped the envoy in alternating waves of sublimated expressions of violence, dominance, and power, and luxury, refinement, and prosperity.

Even as the Seleucid and Ptolemaic processions portrayed India with heavy Dionysian and Alexandrian connotations, its prominence was not confined to the realm of imperial imaginaries but was also reflected in its continued importance within Hellenistic geopolitical reality.[41] These massive parades and celebrations became one of the preeminent displays of power in the Hellenistic world, and an idiom that the Romans understood and eventually used themselves in the case of L. Aemilius Paullus in 167.[42] Strabo preserves Megasthenes' description of a royal procession that he witnessed in Pāṭaliputra. Like the Ptolemaic and Seleucid festivals, the Mauryan court organized processions to coincide with the visit of envoys and designed them to impress this foreign audience as much as their internal populace.

> And in the processions at the time of festivals many elephants are paraded, all adorned with gold and silver, as also many four-horse chariots and ox-teams; and then follows the army, all in military uniform; and then golden vessels consisting of large basins and bowls a fathom in breadth; and tables, high chairs, drinking-cups, and bathtubs, all of which are made of Indian copper and most of them are set with precious stones—emeralds, beryls, and Indian anthraces; and also variegated garments spangled with gold, and tame bisons, leopards, and lions, and numbers of variegated and sweet-voiced birds. And Cleitarchus speaks of four-wheeled carriages on which large-leaved trees are carried, and of different kinds of tamed birds that cling to these trees[. . .].[43]

39. Strootman (2014), 247–277.

40. Strootman (2014), 255; Kosmin (2014), 160–164.

41. Buccino (2013), 63–83; Strootman (2014), 251–253, 257–259.

42. Polyb. 30.25.1.

43. Strabo, *Geography* 15.1.69, trans. H. L. Jones.

Similarly, the Ptolemaia festival staged in Alexandria by Ptolemy II and the procession organized by Antiochus IV at Daphne (in response to that of Paullus) presented equivalent displays of natural abundance, material wealth, cultural refinement, and military strength, all with the intention of celebrating the dynasty.[44] These processions brought together animals, plants, and people from across Asia and, in the case of the Ptolemies, Africa.[45] They included Ethiopian tribute bearers, Indian captives, and, in the Seleucid procession, 300 sacred envoys (*theoroi*) inserted into the parade itself.[46]

The more frequently the courts exchanged envoys, the more refined and close these nonverbal or textual modes of cross-cultural communication could become. The supreme example is the increasingly intricate, regular, and intimate system of diplomatic communication that developed between Rome and Sasanian Iran.[47] Even in the more infrequent exchanges between the Hellenistic world and South Asia, the indigenous institutions of diplomacy and royal architectural, urban, and ceremonial traditions were poised to impress a new envoy.

Gifts were an expected part of every exchange of envoys, and gift exchange could serve as a ritualized and symbolically powerful mode of communicating and receiving messages from court to court. Such gift-giving traditions arose initially from local practices and were harmonized through repeated encounters. This economy of gifts could involve simple expressions of wealth; however, exchanges of learning, culture, and technology were equally important.[48] Chandragupta gave a powerful aphrodisiac to Seleucus I as a gift; a telling choice, since we also hear that the treaty between the two sovereigns involved some sort of marriage agreement, and possibly an exchange of women in addition to the exchange of territory for elephants.[49] In his rock edicts, Aśoka states that he made medical treatment available in the Seleucid empire and gave gifts of medicinal plants. For their part, the Seleucids showed a marked interest in medicine, and physicians could gain honor and influence in their court.[50] According to Pliny, the Seleucids cultivated Indian medicinal plants,

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44. Ptolemy II: Kallixeinos = Ath. 5.196d–203b. Antiochus IV: Polyb. 30.25–26.4; Ath. 5.194c–195d; Diod. Sic. 31.16. Walbank (1996); Bunge (1976); Virgilio (2003), 125.

45. Ath. 5.197–203.

46. See further Chapter 10 above.

47. Canepa (2009), 122–187.

48. Phylarchus, fr. 35b = Ath. 1.32.

49. App. *Syr*. 11.9.55 (*kedos*); Strabo 14.1.10; 15.2.9 (*epigamia*); Plut. *Alex*. 62.4.

50. Primo (2009), 45–49.

though if any originated from Chandragupta, they probably presented them as bounty of the earth yielded to the Seleucid king rather than as the cultural largess of a foreign emperor.[51]

While it is difficult to find examples of actual art objects given as gifts, it is even more challenging to recover how these were interpreted in their context. For example, we do not know the means by which the Indian ivories discovered in the treasury of Ai Khanum came into the possession of the Greco-Bactrian kings.[52] Were they a gift received within the context of diplomatic interaction? If that was the case, they could be seen as artifacts of a communicative event between two states. Were they acquired on the market and appreciated simply as a foreign luxury item? Did they lie "inert" in a treasury, or were they incorporated into the Euthydemids' courtly displays?

Displays of erudition and exchanges of philosophical and medical learning became a noteworthy component of Hellenistic diplomacy. Megasthenes reports on the diseases of elephants and their cures, learning that appears to be drawn entirely from a contemporary Indian manual on elephant care.[53] Deimachos of Plateia, the other recorded envoy of Seleucus I, has quite logically been identified with the homonymous author of several treatises, including one entitled *On Piety*. In the next generation, Bindusāra requested from Antiochus I Greek wine, dried figs, and a Sophist, choices that in ancient and modern retellings have been interpreted as an expression of oriental despotism or (more correctly) the delineation of new political boundaries.[54] While they certainly reflect the new Hellenistic world order, these intellectual exchanges were themselves an important instrument of diplomatic communication and competition. Antiochus I duly supplied the wine and figs, but was not able to provide the Sophist, a failure evidently exploited by Ptolemy II when he ensured that someone with intellectual credentials served as his envoy to Bindusāra.[55] Against this background, Aśoka's Buddhist envoys to the Macedonian kings come into focus, not just as isolated proselytizers, but rather as an extension of, and response to, an earlier cross-cultural conversation. Beyond these recorded official embassies, a great deal of

51. Plin. *HN* 16.135.

52. Rapin (1996). On the wider cultural, linguistic, and archaeological context, see Mairs (2014), 57–101; Martinez-Sève (2015).

53. The *Hastyāyurveda* of Palakapya.

54. Strabo 2.1.9; Ath. 14.652f–653a; Potter (2003), 421–422; Kosmin (2014), 35.

55. Plin. *HN* 6.58.

philosophical, medical, scientific, and technological expertise moved between the Mediterranean and South Asia.[56]

Aśoka's inscriptions provide an intriguing example of how the Mauryan court engaged the culturally-Greek communities within that empire as well as the Hellenistic courts to the west. The Mauryan empire subsumed the eastern portion of the Iranian plateau after Seleucus I ceded territories to Chandragupta Maurya in return for a treaty and war elephants.[57] The later Mauryan emperor Aśoka (r. 269–232) created a series of inscriptions carved onto monumental columns or into the living rock across his empire in pursuit of his policy of propagating Buddhism as an imperial religion.[58] Although most of these edicts were composed in Prakrit and inscribed in either the Brāhmī or Kharoṣṭhī scripts, a number of rock-cut inscriptions in regions that bordered the Greco-Bactrian kingdom incorporated Seleucid and Achaemenid traditions. In Alexandria-Arachosia (Kandahar), a Greek city founded by Alexander, Aśoka sponsored edicts in Greek (Kandahar II), Greek and Aramaic (Kandahar I; Figure 13.4), or Aramaic and Maghadi Prakrit transliterated with Aramaic script (Kandahar III).[59] The regions around Jalalabad to the north and Taxila to the southeast hosted a number of minor inscriptions in Aramaic that mention Aśoka or use his reign for dating.[60]

Although we do not always know the precise impact or reception of these inscriptions, it is clear that, in formulating this massive display of imperial power, Aśoka responded to a variety of precedents and cultural traditions and integrated them. His rock-cut inscriptions selectively integrated Greek, Persian, and Indian linguistic and epigraphic idioms, establishing a mixed precedent which the Kuṣāṇa sovereigns later adapted.[61] Previous modern interpretations—confounded by colonial and post-colonial political narratives—attempted to champion "native" or "foreign" influences, and thus reduced the significance of these elements to a problem of origins. However, there can be no doubt that the Mauryas and Aśoka simultaneously drew from local South Asian traditions, while strategically integrating Persian palatial

56. For Clearchus and the Ai Khanum Delphic maxims, see Robert (1968), (1973). Calanus, follower of Alexander, Arr. *Anab*. 7.3. For Zarmanochegas, envoy to Augustus, Strabo 15.1.4; 15.1.73; Cass. Dio 54.9.8–10. Other sources: Karttunen (1997), 55–64.

57. Kosmin (2014), 32–33; cf. Wheatley (2014).

58. Falk (2006).

59. Ibid. 242–246. On Kandahar I, see further Parker (2012).

60. Falk (2006), 247–253.

61. Canepa (2015b).

FIGURE 13.4 Rock edict of Aśoka, discovered in 1958. This is an almost completely bilingual inscription in Greek (14 lines) and, below, Aramaic (8 lines): Kandahar Edict I (258 BCE). 55 × 50 centimeters. A latex rubber cast ("squeeze") of the inscription is shown here rather than the block itself, which is now lost and probably destroyed. (H. Falk [2006)] 243, Figure 2)

architectural ideas and their adaptation by the Seleucids and the Greek Far East.[62]

Like the deliberate juxtaposition of Persian and Greek elements in Seleucid palaces, the Mauryan pillars and Aśoka's inscriptions deliberately adapt several Greek intellectual and epigraphic traditions to communicate their rather original message. At Alexandria-of-the-Caucasus (modern Begram in Afghanistan), Aśoka's inscriptions were in composed in *koiné* Greek and imperial Aramaic—that is, the Aramaic used in the Achaemenid and Seleucid chancelleries, which still incorporated certain Old Persian words. The very act of carving a monumental rock inscription was an imperial act in Western Asia. While the earlier

62. Stone (2002); Irwin (1973), (1983); Wheeler (1968), 127–145; Marshall and Foucher (1939), 1: 89–90; Smith (1911).

Achaemenid monumental inscriptions did not use the same scripts, the parallels with them could not have gone unnoticed by the patron or by educated viewers. More proximately, in these northwestern inscriptions, Aśoka commandeered Seleucid and Greco-Bactrian royal epigraphic practices that had spread the king's word discursively and visually throughout these regions previously.[63]

The impact of their form and medium aside, the language of Aśoka's inscriptions, and of the Greek ones especially, reveals a careful process of translation, ensuring that the religious and imperial concepts were communicated, not only accurately and clearly, but also in a culturally prestigious idiom. The *koiné* Greek provided a straightforward yet culturally nuanced translation.[64] Thus Aśoka's inscriptions communicated Buddhist concepts using terms drawn from the Greek philosophical vocabulary. For example, *eusebeia* was selected to translate the Prakrit word *dhamma* so as to capture its Buddhist connotation (Sanskrit *dharma*—"law, path of righteousness"). In addition, the translator deliberately and deftly exploited Greek cultural nuances, including allusions to the Delphic maxims, which were known throughout Hellenistic Asia and even inscribed in Ai Khanum.[65]

The decline of the Mauryan empire and the rise of the much weaker Śuṅga kingdom allowed Greco-Bactrian kings to push into northern India.[66] King Menander (ca. 165–130), a patron of Buddhism, established a powerful empire that momentarily stretched from the Kabul River basin to the Gangetic plain (Figure 13.5).[67] Menander, whose remains were divided among his cities and buried in stupas as befitting a Buddhist holy man, portrays himself iconographically as a Greek warrior king, while his Greek and Prakrit epithet "savior" alludes to his role as an enlightened Buddhist prince.[68]

Menander's empire did not survive him, and eventually it fragmented into numerous Indo-Greek and Indian states.[69] A later inscription attests to

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63. For example, the edict of 193 at sites spread across the Seleucid empire: at Eriza/Dodurga in Phrygia (discovered in 1884), Nehavand in Iran (ancient Laodiceia-Media, discovered in 1947), and a fortress in the region of Kermanshah, Iran (discovered in 1967); see Virgilio (2003), 239–241. On the South Asian context, note Rougemont (2012); Beckwith (2015), 226–250.

64. Halkias (2013), 82–90; Beckwith (2015), 125–135.

65. For a critique of earlier hypotheses, Karttunen (1997), 268–270; Yailenko (1990).

66. Coloru (2009), 197–230.

67. Ibid., 243–244.

68. Plut. *Mor.* 821 D–E.

69. Coloru (2009), 244–262.

FIGURE 13.5 Silver tetradrachm of king Menander I (ca. 165–130 BCE). On the obverse, his diademed bust wearing a crested helmet; on the reverse, "Thundering Athena." Greek and Prakrit *Kharoṣṭhī* legends: "Of the savior king Menander." Panjhir mint (Bactria).

(Courtesy of American Numismatic Society, inv. no. 1995.51.124)

diplomatic exchanges taking place between the court of one of these Indo-Greek kings, Antialcidas (115–95), and that of the Śuṅga king Bhāgabadra (Figure 13.6). Found near Besnegar in western India, it provides a view into the close and culturally integrated relationships between Indo-Greek and Śuṅga kings. A certain Heliodoros, son of Dion, was sent to the Śuṅga king Bhāgabadra by king Antialcidas. Heliodoros was the patron of an inscribed Garuda pillar set up before a temple where he appears to name himself as a *bhāgavata* (devotee of Kṛṣṇa) (Figure 13.7).[70] His conversion to a South Asian religion was far from unique. Buddhism gained, not just royal adherents such as King Menander, but also converts among the wider population of Indo-Greeks. We even hear of Greek monks from Alexandria-of-the-Caucasus making a pilgrimage to Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka for the foundation of the Great Stupa.[71]

Heliodoros' pillar provides an intriguing example of the complexity of the processes of cross-cultural communication. Its Greek patron created it within the context of interstate diplomacy. To an outside viewer—say, from mainland Greece—it might appear to be culturally hybrid, barbarized, or foreign. However, this cultural complexity would not have appeared aberrant to the inhabitants of North India. While classical Sanskrit epic or prophetic literature, such as the *Mahābhārata* or *Yugapurāṇa*, portrays *yavanas* (Indo-Greeks) and *kambojas* (Iranians) as unassimilated alien intruders, the numismatic and

70. Lüders (1912), no. 669. Mairs (2014), 102–145.

71. Mahāvaṃsa 29.

FIGURE 13.6 Silver tetradrachm of king Antialcidas (115–95 BCE). On the obverse, he wears a diadem; on the reverse, an enthroned Zeus holds a Nike with elephant below. Legends in Greek on the obverse, and in Prakrit (vernacular Middle Indic) in *Kharoṣṭhī* script on the reverse: "Of the victorious king Antialcidas."

(Courtesy of CoinArchives Pro; *MIG* 2 p. 148, Type 274)

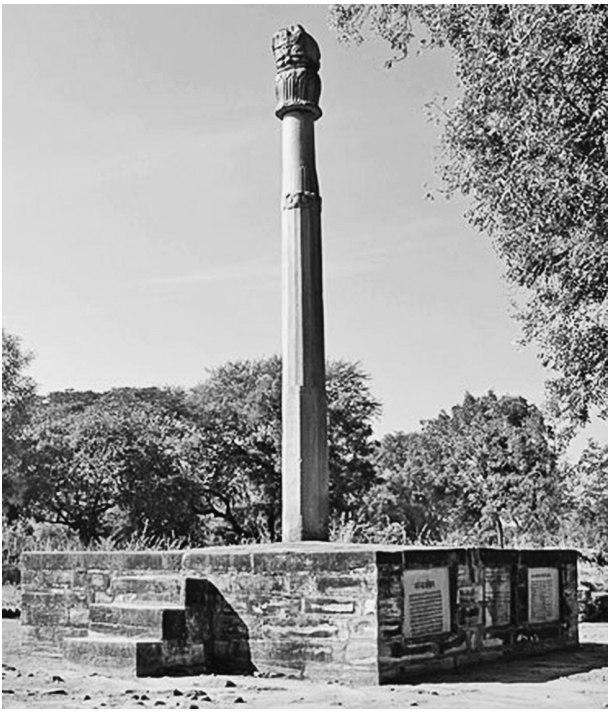

FIGURE 13.7 The Garuda pillar of Heliodoros, envoy of King Antialcidas, Besnagar, India.

(Courtesy of Asitjain/Wikimedia Commons)

archaeological evidence illustrates the deep and permanent changes that these peoples wrought in South Asia, and shows how integral they were to the fabric of contemporary Indian culture. As a physical monument, Heliodoros' pillar continued to communicate and signify more widely beyond the original moment of its creation and intent. In effect, it alludes to a chain of communicative acts: Heliodoros set it up to ingratiate himself with the god and with the host court. Note, however, a subtle but important point: after the pillar came into existence, the king, Bhāgabadra, evidently allowed it and its inscription to continue to exist. At that stage, the pillar in effect moved to a secondary communicative status that departed from the original patron's intention, but depended on it. The pillar showed the greatness of the king, with whom foreign envoys sought to curry favor; it also commemorated good relations between the king and the *yavana* king. Alternatively, it could have even signified the submission of the *yavana* to Vaiṣṇavism.

Buddhist philosophy appears to have impacted Greek philosophical schools. At the same time, the Greeks left a noticeable imprint on the philosophy, religion, mathematics, astronomy, astrology, and visual culture of North India.[72] While Babylonian astronomy might have reached India in the Achaemenid period, it is more likely to have done so during the Hellenistic period, given the intensive processes of exchange at that time. Similarly, the *Yavanajātaka*—an astrological treatise composed in late Hellenistic Alexandria, translated into Sanskrit, and adapted several times—preserves mention of a royal origin and its introduction into India by a Greek (*yavana*) king.[73]

Modern discourse on the development of both Greek philosophy and Gandharan art was at one time confounded by contemporary colonial and post-colonial political narratives: the former portrayed the Greeks as culture heroes; the latter denied any lasting influence, representing the Indo-Greeks as short-lived, unassimilated barbarian communities. Today, however, it is clear that later western Hellenistic philosophy owed a great debt to its encounters with Buddhist philosophy. Similarly, the phenomena of Gandharan Buddhism and "Greco-Buddhist" art were regional expressions of a Buddhism that developed from the early patronage of Indo-Greek élites and a cultural environment where Buddhism and Indo-Greek culture had mutually transformed each other.[74] The visual culture of Gandhara

72. For the multidirectional flows of knowledge, see Halkias (2013); Beckwith (2015).

73. Pingree (1973); (1978); Karttunen (1997), 316–320.

74. Halkias (2013), 103–108.

had a long and important impact on South and Central Asia. Flourishing under the Kuṣāṇas, Gandharan art became a prestigious medium of communication that contributed to Buddhism's expansion into Central Asia and beyond. The extraordinary intellectual foment in Western and South Asia after Alexander did not arise from a unidirectional flow of knowledge, nor did it result from a single "exchange," but rather from multiple sustained conversations among a variety of overlapping philosophical, scientific, political, and artistic communities.

As another medium of mass communication, coins illustrate the broader dynamics of the region's cross-cultural interaction and communication.[75] The coins of the Hellenistic kings, with their vivid, naturalistic forms and powerful, new iconographies, introduced a novel technology of power and propaganda into Western and South Asia.[76] The succeeding Parthian, Indo-Scythian, and Kuṣāṇa kings adeptly appropriated what was originally a Greek tradition, in some cases patronizing the same artists and die-cutters. Not only were Greco-Macedonian divine and royal iconographies displayed, but the Greek coinage tradition, once claimed by non-Greek peoples, also became a medium to express power and cultural affiliations. These coins communicated messages and conditioned, even educated, the viewer to recognize and associate certain images with power. Thus, despite its Mediterranean origin, the figure of a winged Victory, or of a god such as Zeus or Athena, became integrated into the visual and political cultures of Indo-Greek and Indo-Scythian South Asia as well as of the Iranian world under both the Seleucids and Arsacids (Figures 13.8 and 13.9). The "bilingual" coins of the Greco-Bactrian, Indo-Greek, and later Indo-Scythian kings—with their Greek and Prakrit legends, and in certain cases Greek and Indian iconographies—were a prestigious medium of communication that presented Greek and South Asian cultures as unified under the sovereign. In addition to the coins' specific messages of power, divine sanction, dynasty, or victory, their bilingual nature was a message in and of itself. The coins could be unifying symbols locally, but for the most ambitious kings, they also served as imperial statements that characterized the power of the sovereign in linguistic and iconographic idioms understood from the Atlantic to the Pamirs and throughout the Gangetic plain.

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75. Compare Chapter 16 below. For the literature on Greco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek coins, see now Glenn (2016).

76. Cribb (2007); Errington and Curtis (2007), 50–59.

FIGURE 13.8 Silver tetradrachm of Indo-Scythian (Saka) King Azes I (late first century BCE). On the obverse, the mounted and diademed king in lamellar Central Asian armor holding a whip. On the reverse, Athena with armor and motif that could refer to the Buddhist triratna or *tamga*. Greek and Prakrit *Kharoṣṭhī* legends: "Of the Great King, Azes." Taxila Mint (Punjab).

(Courtesy of American Numismatic Society, inv. no. 1944.100.60049)

FIGURE 13.9 Silver tetradrachm of King Phraates IV (37–2 BCE). On the obverse, his diademed bust; on the reverse, Tyche presenting a diadem to the enthroned king. At their coronation all Arsacid kings took the name Arsaces. Greek legend: "Of King Arsaces, the benefactor, the just, the (god) manifest, the philhellene." Mint: Seleucia-on-the-Tigris.

(Courtesy of CoinArchives Pro. David Sellwood Collection of Parthian Coins, no. 331. For the type, see *BMC Parthia* pp. 99–105)

Conclusion

This chapter has surveyed a wide spectrum of communicative processes and practices that developed in Hellenistic Asia. Deliberate communicative acts, especially diplomatic communications, could catalyze a wide range of cultural

encounters in their wake by facilitating the movement of art and architecture, as well as ritual, technological, and intellectual material, through multiple overlapping communities and logistical networks. Transported to new contexts, they could affect cultures in new and quite unexpected ways. While such exchanges often engendered wider processes of cross-cultural exchange that were not necessarily involved with communications, still, at the core of every communicative event lay a common idiom, be it linguistic, visual, or ritual. It could be, quite simply, the Greek or Prakrit languages, or in more complex expressions, the visual or spatial idioms of Greek royal or divine iconography, or Hellenistic palatial or garden design. In some instances, these idioms were appropriated and remodeled from a previous, long-established tradition of exchange, such as Persian diplomacy. However, new cross-cultural idioms could arise spontaneously from repurposed indigenous traditions. If sustained, the cumulative effect of multiple exchanges over many years could refine and hone them, remodeling the practices of all those involved in the process. Indeed, the process and practices of cross-cultural communication developed by the kings of Hellenistic Asia eventually transformed their own kingdoms' worldviews and cultural traditions. They provided the matrix and precedents for the subsequent interchanges across the Mediterranean and Western and South Asia that grew under the Romans, Arsacids, Kuṣāṇas, and Sasanians.

14

Cross-Cultural Communication in Egypt

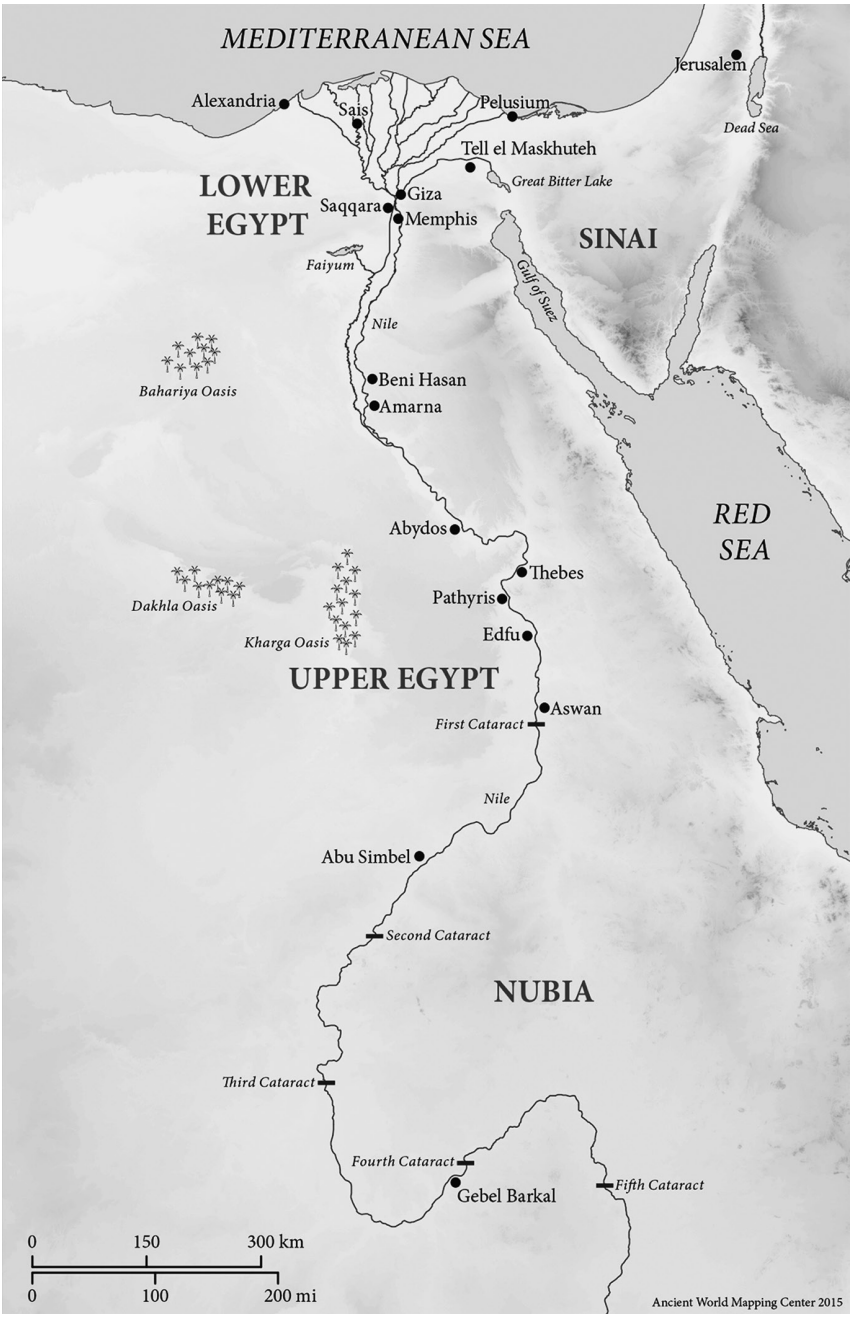
J. G. Manning

EGYPT HAS A long history of visual culture, attested to as early as the origins of the state in the late fourth millennium (all dates are BCE unless otherwise noted). Indeed, this visual culture, and in particular its efficient integration of written and visual forms of communication, was a bedrock for Egyptian state-formation.[1] Royal monuments and inscriptions, letters, imagery, and coins (especially during and after the Ptolemaic period) all contributed to this integration of forms. Broadly speaking, the state apparatus established or elaborated the forms of communication that unified the territory of Egypt (Map 14.1). To accomplish this task, the state used "signaling," a process that I shall briefly define and then apply to the topic of cross-cultural communication within Egypt.

As Carl Bergstrom points out in his introduction to signaling theory in biology, ideas about "signaling" in a social setting go back as far as Adam Smith's treatment, "Of the Origin of Ambition and of the Distinction of Ranks" in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*.[2] In recent decades, economists and biologists have taken up signaling and developed a theory to explain what is more or less the same phenomenon in various circumstances: the use of signals by either people or animals to convey particular kinds of information at particular costs. The economist Michael Spence, who won the 2001 Nobel Prize in economics for his work in this area, developed a theory to "capture

1. Baines (2007) offers an excellent introduction to Egyptian visual culture.

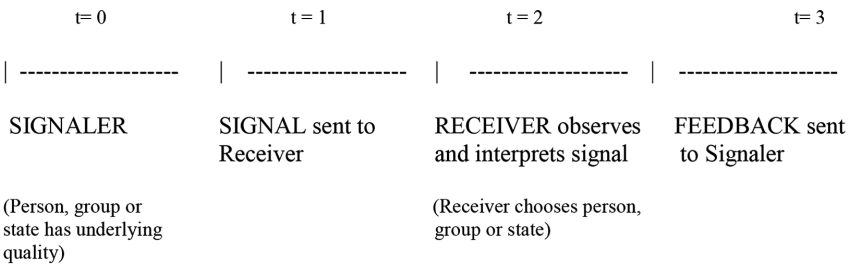
2. Smith (1759), 1.3.16, as at Bergstrom (2006).



MAP 14.1 Egypt

the informational aspects of market structures," in order to specify "costs to information-acquisition processes that resolve information asymmetrics."[3] Spence used the example of education signals in job markets.[4] A job-seeker who wishes to convey a particular bit of information—his or her qualifications for a position, for example—will "signal" his educational credentials to the potential employer. Such a signal conveys needed information to both sides in the exchange. It reduces asymmetry, and thus reduces the trouble or cost of communicating. As a result, there is more likely to be satisfactory feedback. Figure 14.1 outlines the rudiments of communication in these terms.

These signals—"I am qualified," I am powerful," "I am healthy," "I agree to pay you"—take many forms, not all of them economic. Examples appear in all sorts of human and natural phenomena, from signals of sexual reproductive fitness and signals of warnings (both found among animals), to certain human, religious rituals that enhance cooperation, to wearing expensive clothing and other forms of "conspicuous consumption," and even to the adaptations made by species of trees whose leaves change color in order to attract aphids.[5] Human signaling, particularly political signaling, is perhaps the most complex. It links rulers to the ruled, and individuals to groups and to each other. Some of it is verbal, some consists of speech acts, and some involves concatenations of symbols, images, and cultural traditions. As Michael Mann says, signaling of this complex type is a component of "social power."[6]



t = time

FIGURE 14.1 Signaling environment.
(After Connelly et al. [2011], 44, with modification)

3. Connelly et al. (2011), 42, a good survey of the theory and its application to management science.

4. Spence (1973), (2002).

5. Consumption: Veblen (1899). Trees: Archetti (2000).

6. Mann (1986), 1–34.

In ancient Egypt, the king sent signals that reflected and projected power, social hierarchy, and cultural values; individuals and groups received these signals and responded.[7] A simple example appears in one of the most famous Egyptian texts, the Rosetta Stone, which contains a decree from the priestly synod held at Memphis in 196 (Figures 14.2 and 14.3). Verbally and otherwise, the young king of Egypt, Ptolemy V, had sent signals to Egyptian society, and especially to influential priesthoods, with the following purpose in mind:

> I am a good ruler of Egypt. I am pious toward the gods, and beneficent to their temples and priesthoods. I guarantee the social order, and the safety of the Egyptians.[8]

This signal was received by the priesthoods, who in turn erected a decree before every temple in Egypt. In these decrees, they responded to the king substantially as follows:

> King Ptolemy is a good ruler; he is beneficent to the temples and to the gods of Egypt. Let us honor this god-king by erecting statues, and by establishing festivals in his name. Let priests wear rings honoring the ruling family, and let individuals erect shrines in their homes.

Exchanges of this sort occurred literally thousands of times in the course of Egyptian history, and dozens of times during any one reign.

Such communication was not peculiar to Egypt. Like any state, its kingdom needed to communicate with officials and with the population at large. Equally, like the Mesopotamian and Anatolian states, for example, addressed in this volume by Seth Richardson and James Osborne, the kingdom needed a set of images, an ideological lexicon that everyone living within its bounds understood. As Barry Kemp says, these visual, ritualistic, and literary vocabularies "reinforce the roles of the state's leaders as effectively as they do those of its people, and bear [the state] onwards in times of weak leadership."[9] In a phrase, they formed "intellectual foundations" of Egypt and states like it.

In Egypt, however, the monumental writing system of hieroglyphics was uniquely suited to communicate both linguistic and visual meaning simultaneously. The power of the state depended in large measure on inscribed and decorated stone monuments that verbally and visually expressed the king's

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7. Baines (2013).

8. For the text, see Bagnall and Derow (2004), no. 137.

9. Kemp (2006), 60–61.

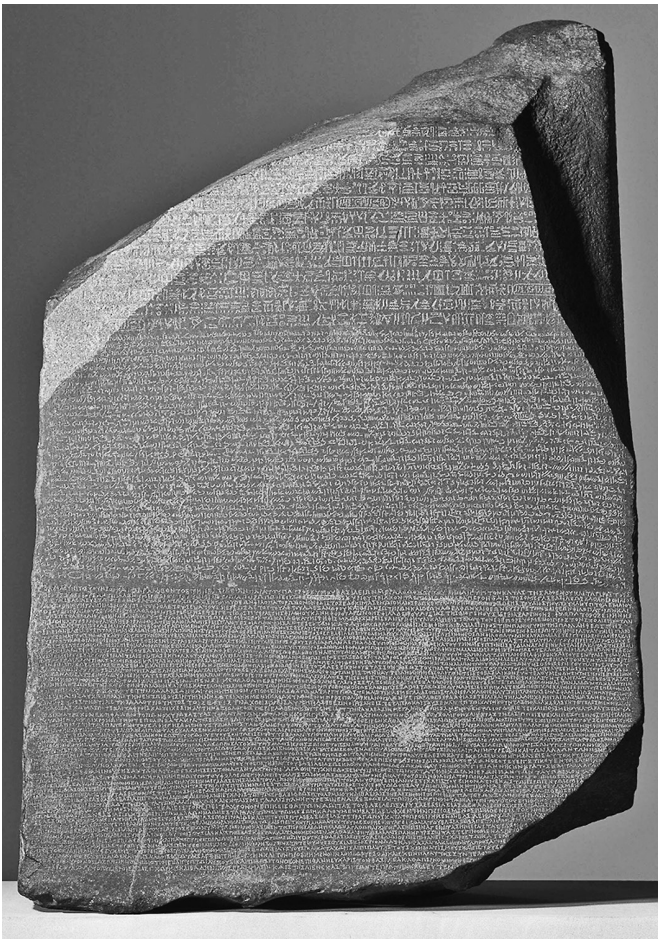

FIGURE 14.2 Rosetta stone (British Museum, EA 24).
(British Museum, AN6456004. Image courtesy of the British Museum)

relationship with the gods, his subjects, his enemies, his foreign partners and dependents, the cosmos, and the dead. At the same time, Egypt was a multicultural society from an early date. Ethnic groups who spoke languages other than Egyptian were commonly found here at all periods, and underwent various degrees of assimilation. The most famous example of ethnic assimilation into Egyptian society—although an extreme one—is the story of Joseph in the Old Testament.[10] Most ethnic groups were less assimilated than Joseph was, and they were both numerous and diverse. Nubians, Libyan and Semitic

10. *Gen.* 37–50.

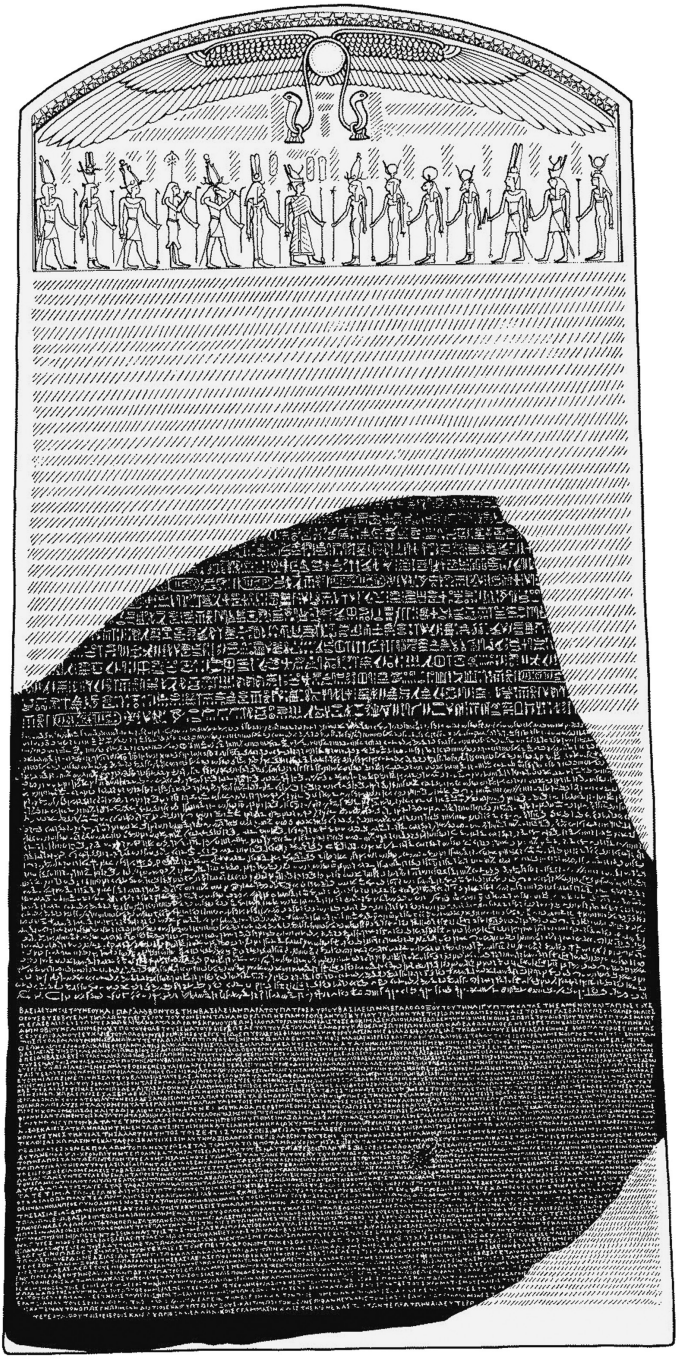

FIGURE 14.3 Rosetta stone reconstruction by Claire Thorne and Richard Parkinson. (Photo: Parkinson [1999], 26 Figure 8. British Museum, AN871967001. Image courtesy of the British Museum)

tribes, and Aegean islanders were part of the fabric of Egypt at all historic periods.

To explore ancient Egyptian signaling and cross-cultural communication, I shall select examples from several periods, presenting them in chronological order. First, a few words about the Egyptian setting, and Egypt's languages and scripts, may prove helpful.

AS ALWAYS IN Egyptian history, it is essential to begin with the Nile River, the main, and the most efficient, conduit of communication—one always under state control during periods of strong central authority. The Nile allowed the Egyptian state to enjoy what Mann calls "the best communications of any extensive preindustrial state."[11] Yet the long, narrow river corridor presented unique problems: among these was the difficulty of broadcasting information from the north, where political power was centered for much of Egyptian history, to other places in the country and to neighboring states. To the east, the Nile valley gave no easy access to the desert lying in that direction, and the same was true to the west. To the south, four cataracts slowed communications with Nubia or Ethiopia. Routes to oases in the western desert did give Egypt limited communications with Libyan settlements. The only route through the inhospitable Sinai peninsula was the coastal road to Palestine.

Leaving aside the dozens of other languages documented from Egypt, writing in the Egyptian language presents a complex picture of stages of development and of scribal traditions.[12] Although monumental writing was to be seen everywhere, literacy rates remained low through the Byzantine period.[13] In compensation, the visual nature of Egyptian monumental writing, and even of later, demotic Egyptian legal documents, allowed some information to be conveyed to illiterates.[14] As was already noted, the hieroglyphic inscriptions on public monuments, primarily in and around temples, were accompanied by images of rituals (kings making offerings to the gods, for example), but also by political images. Most important for this chapter is the image of the king smiting foreign enemies before the gods of Egypt. Along with the sheer size of certain monuments, especially the temple at Abu Simbel from the reign of Ramses II, it was this image above all that conveyed royal power. The message

11. Mann (1986), 110.

12. More than forty non-Egyptian languages are documented from the New Kingdom through the Arab Conquest, according to Ray (1994), 51.

13. For estimates (generally 1–5%), note the recent overviews by Zinn (2013) and Clivaz (2013), with earlier bibliography.

14. Thompson (1994), 69.

of that power would have been clear even for those not close enough to discern the hieroglyphic texts or unable to read them. From the age of the pyramids down to the Roman emperors, monumentality played a major role in signaling Egyptian state power.

Monuments and those who cared for them, notably priests, profoundly influenced one famous ancient account of Egypt and its communications—that of Herodotus, written after he visited Egypt in the 430s. The direct intellectual encounter between the Greek world and Egypt goes back earlier, of course—at least as far as Hecataeus in the sixth century—but Herodotus' text is unrivalled as a study of, and an example of, cross-cultural communication.[15] Some of Herodotus' informants and interpreters were Egyptian priests who spoke Greek; others were among the "Hellenomemphites" whose ancestors came to Memphis because Greek soldiers were recruited during the Saite dynasty in the seventh century. Translation of both speech and written matter was an old profession in Egypt, and it continued to be important as late as the Hellenistic period with its multi-ethnic Egyptian armies.[16] (Cleopatra VII would seem to stand alone among her Hellenistic royal peers in not requiring translators.[17]) There was perhaps no other ancient state with so great a need for translators and other intermediaries as Egypt in the first millennium BCE and the first half of the first millennium CE. In this respect, commonplace impressions of Egypt as unchanging or isolated are very misleading.

Given the diverse populations living in Egypt, it is no surprise that official and private cross-cultural communication is documented virtually from the origin of the state itself, ca. 3100. Even at an early date, foreign soldiers were vital to the Egyptian army, and many foreign slaves were at work.[18] As the Old Kingdom expanded into the Delta and Sinai, and colonized there, it interacted with foreign, nomadic peoples that it wished to pacify, exploit, or remove.

By the end of the Old Kingdom, when trade connections deep into Nubia are documented, Egyptian officials faced new communications tasks. For example, the Nubian trading expeditions recounted by the courtier Harkhuf (Sixth Dynasty, ca. 2200) on his tomb at Aswan must have involved a good deal more than merely silent exchange of commodities between Nubian chiefs

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15. For Herodotus' encounter with Egyptian priests, and the general problems of cultural interaction and exchange, see Moyer (2011), 42–83.

16. Polyb. 5.83, with Bell (1976); Mairs (2012). "Interpreter of the Troglodytes" (probably meaning Blemmyes) occurs in *UPZ* 227 (Thebes, 134 BCE): see further, Murray and Warmington (1967).

17. Plut. *Ant.* 27.4–5.

18. Leahy (1995) offers an overview of Egypt's ethnic diversity, with further literature.

and the pharaoh's agent.[19] These contacts with the Nubian kingdom of Yam were important diplomatically. In the famous Middle Kingdom trading scene recorded on the walls of the tomb of Khnumhotep at Beni Hasan (ca. 1890), both the Egyptians and the Semites identified as Hyksos must have used interpreters; it is no accident that an Egyptian scribe appears to be leading the group. As the Egyptian state of the Middle Kingdom continued to expand, especially southward into Nubia, Nubians became an important part of the Egyptian army. Official communication between Egyptian commanders and Nubian troops would have been required. Aside from the documents needed to manage large armies, there must also have been a vocabulary of characteristic gestures, and perhaps a bilingual military jargon, of which we are ignorant.

In the New Kingdom (1550–1069), the Egyptian state reached its greatest extent, from the Orontes River in Syria to the fourth cataract in Nubia. Widespread knowledge of foreign languages is abundantly documented. In the early days of the formation of the New Kingdom empire, the Egyptian commander Neshi's interception of a Hyksos communiqué proved to be a turning-point in the war to expel them from Egypt.[20] The Amarna letters found at the capital of the eighteenth-dynasty pharaoh Akhenaten (1352–1338) comprise one of the earliest diplomatic archives, and provide ample indirect evidence for official translation between Egyptian and Akkadian, the leading diplomatic language of this era.[21] The *maryannu*, an élite Semitic contingent of mounted warriors in the New Kingdom army, are one more example of foreign troops in the pharaoh's service. The New Kingdom evidence suggests that these foreign troops were not mercenaries, but units in the regular army of the Egyptian state. They received land and were settled in Egypt as farmers—an early, if not the earliest, example of land held by military tenure.[22] All of this evidence strongly suggests that bilingualism, too, was a regular feature of official communication.

Throughout historic times, non-Egyptian populations had always been present in Egypt, but in the first millennium their numbers probably increased as a result of the expansion of the Greek world beginning in the eighth century BCE. Throughout much of this period, Egypt was governed by outsiders, either as the base of an empire (Saite and Ptolemaic periods) or as a province of an

19. Text of Harkhuf's tomb biography: Sethe, *Urkunden des Alten Reichs* I, 12–31, translated in Lichtheim (1975), 23–27.

20. Spalinger (2005), 1–2.

21. Moran (1992); Cohan and Westbrook (2000).

22. Spalinger (2005), 8.

empire (Persian and Roman periods). These outside powers introduced their own languages and scripts, Aramaic and Greek among them. Other populations also began to settle in Egypt in significant numbers.[23]

In this multiethnic setting, cross-cultural communication was an everyday event that took place on intersecting levels. Political communication responded to the economic and military requirements for forming coalitions and extracting resources, and traditional pharaonic imagery continued in a temple context. Late in the first millennium, the new bureaucratic power of the Ptolemaic state led to a proliferation of royal decrees and official correspondence. A new range of official communications thus mingled with longstanding ritual. Bilingualism is better documented than before, a feature of our evidence that in all likelihood reflects the reality of life in Egypt from the Ptolemaic through the Byzantine periods.[24]

Temples, and in particular their main gates, remained an important locus of communication between the state and the population throughout Egyptian history. This was the location of marketplaces and trials; royal decrees were also promulgated here. Foreign rulers continued the crucial royal practice of communicating through Egyptian temples in various ways—by making donations to them, by visiting them on occasion, and by being depicted visually in reliefs of the important temple rituals.[25] Temple precincts were also the place for important royal decrees and declarations that took the form of stelae. Despite restricted literacy throughout Egyptian history, not to mention restrictions on access to shrines (normally open only to a select few), such texts served to broadcast information about a king's relationship to the gods and, by extension, to society. Outside political powers in the first millennium continued to use this ancient medium of royal communication, sometimes to a very high standard.

Perhaps the most impressive extant text of this kind comes from a surprising source, a Kushite (Nubian) king of Dynasty 25, who erected what is known as the Triumphal Stela of Piye at the temple of Amun at Gebel Barkal in Nubia. Commonly dated to ca. 727, this complicated text is notable for the description of Piye's military campaign through Egypt.[26] An accomplished Egyptian scribe

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23. The survey of foreign populations in Egypt during the first millennium by Winnicki (2009) is to be recommended.

24. Papaconstantinou (2010), 4.

25. Van den Boorn (1985).

26. Published by Grimal (1981); English translation and commentary in Eide et al. (1994), 62–118. See also the comments by Gozzoli (2006), 51–67. For a later date for the text, note the arguments of Depuydt (1993).

probably composed the text at Thebes. Such composition would account for the long-acknowledged traditional literary excellence of this piece of writing, and also for the size and scope of what is the longest extant royal inscription, as well as the longest poem, written in Egyptian. The purpose of the text is to stress the Nubian king's connection to the god Amun and the king's legitimacy against pretenders in Egypt. The unusual lunette scene at the top of the stela glorifies Nubian rule in ideological terms drawn from the New Kingdom, a period several centuries earlier (Figure 14.4).[27] Indeed, the entire text took its inspiration from (and perhaps was erected next to) a text of the New-Kingdom conqueror Thutmosis III set up in the same place, the Amun temple at Gebel Barkal.[28] The text derives from various sources, including perhaps daybooks that recorded the Nubian king's movements during his campaign northward. A detailed portrayal of royal ritual, some of it Nubian, combines with these reports of military action. Other elements in the text may, or may not, be historically accurate, such as the formal submission of four different leaders who held sway over sections of the Nile valley. The composer of the text aimed for a blend of old and new, the ideal and the actual.

Altogether, the text provides a manifesto for Nubian rule under the protection of the god Amun. Yet the text itself, written in classical Egyptian, was set up in the Nubian royal center, far from any large number of Egyptian viewers. What was its purpose, therefore, and who were its audience? One answer is that the text is devotional, and the audience is the Amun himself. Another is that the text is propagandistic, and the audience is Piye's entourage together with visitors to the shrine. A third is that the text sends a monumental signal, as in the theory of Spence. Both the literary quality of the text and the transportation of the stela from Thebes to Nubia display royal power. Like the text

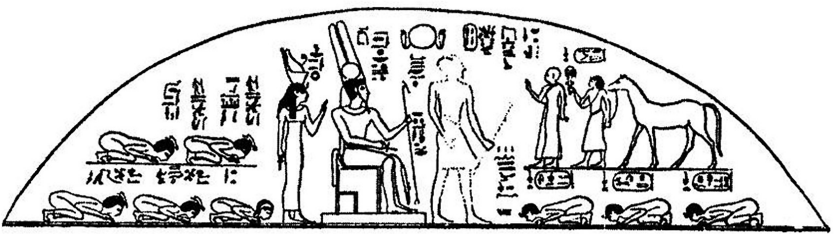

FIGURE 14.4 Lunette of the Triumphal Stela of Piye (Cairo Museum, JdE 48862 +). (Drawing: Budge [1912], Plate 51)

27. Gozzoli (2006), 56; Eide et al. (1994), 114.

28. See the discussion in Gozzoli (2006), 59–67, citing scholarship on the complex history of interpretation; for the possible placement of the text, ibid. 63, fig. 6.

of Thutmosis, which it is competing with (and which it is nostalgically imitating), this text is calculated to overwhelm, but not through sheer size, which was the most common way to achieve this purpose. The audience is everyone who cared to learn how the text was created, transported, and admired. The Triumphal Stela is an Egyptian, cross-cultural monument to be compared with those referred to in Osborne's Chapter 5 above.

Following the fall of the Kushite dynasty, and after the native Saite dynasty, the Persian empire came to control Egypt. Its dominion lasted from the invasion of 525 until 404.[29] Inevitably, the Persians established working relationships with key temples and their priesthoods. The first Persian ruler, Cambyses, took Egyptian royal titles and formed alliances with leading individuals who served as his intermediaries with Egyptian institutions. As the Egyptian priest Udjahorresne stressed in his famous autobiography, he not only "composed his (i.e., Cambyses') titulary," but he also instructed Cambyses about the important cult of Neith in the city of Sais in the western Delta.[30] A physician and naval commander as well as a priest, Udjahorresne spent some time at the Persian court of Darius I at Susa, and the statue on which his autobiography is inscribed depicts him wearing "Persian-style bracelets" on his wrists, perhaps gifts from the king himself.[31] This visual cue indicates both his status in Egypt and his assimilation into (or at least connection to) the Persian ruling élite (Figure 14.5).

Texts that document Persian canal-building illustrate how the new kings communicated with Egyptians in several languages.[32] Canals were major arteries of communication, transport, and trade, so Darius I set about building a water route from the Pelusium branch of the Nile to the Red Sea, via the Bitter Lakes and the Gulf of Suez. The Saite Pharaoh Necho I had started to build a canal on the same route but, to judge from Herodotus, had never finished it.[33] Behind a project like this one lay a tradition of the pharaohs as chief builders in Egypt. Darius did not neglect to publicize his undertaking. The stela that he erected at Tell el Maskhuteh is one of three existing texts about the canal (a fourth is now lost). Originally, it was one of two documents (one in cuneiform, the other in hieroglyphics), each inscribed on a stone 3.15 meters high that stood on a hill about 350 meters from the canal. Another of the three existing texts, known as the Kabret Stela, was also erected near the

29. The period of restored Persian control from 343 to 332 was too brief to affect the general picture of communications presented here.

30. Kuhrt (2010), 117–122.

31. Ibid., 121.

32. Lloyd (2007).

33. Hdt. 2.158.

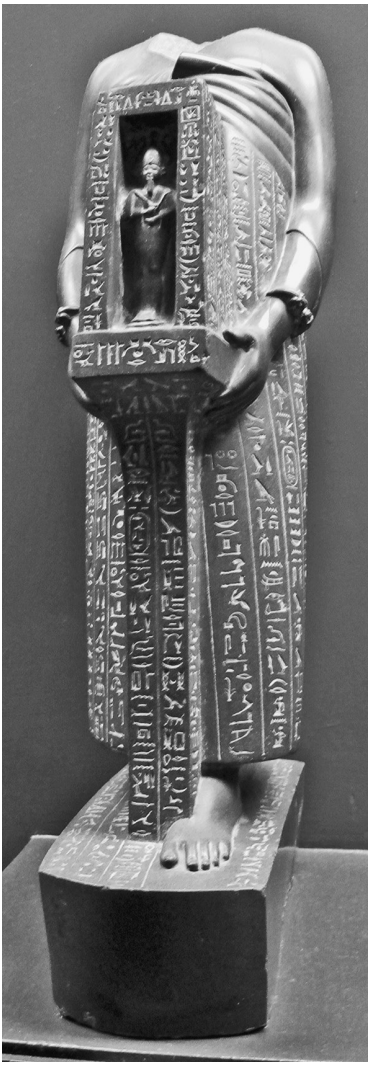

FIGURE 14.5 Naophorous statue of Udjahorresne (Vatican Museum, Cat. 22690). (Vatican Museum on-line collection)

canal: it has a hieroglyphic version on one side, and Old Persian, Elamite, and Babylonian cuneiform versions on the other side.[34] This stela is of typical pharaonic design: a round top, with Horus the Behdedite's winged disk, cartouches with Darius' name, and a depiction of two Nile gods symbolizing unity. These features, and the hieroglyphic text, present Darius as a traditionally effective pharaoh (Figure 14.6).

34. For the cuneiform versions, see Kuhrt (2010), 485–486.

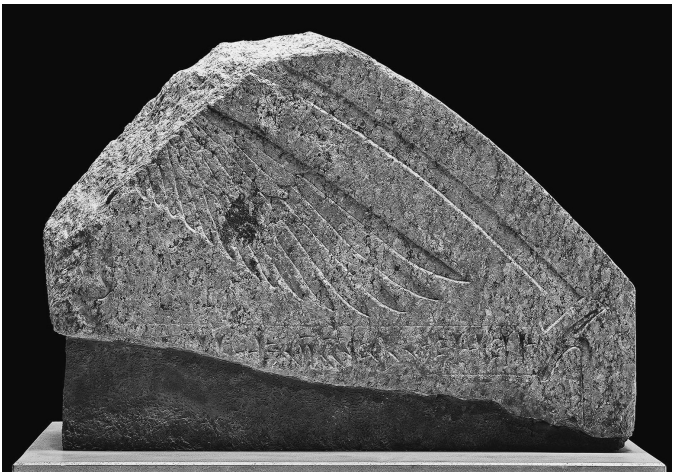

FIGURE 14.6 Fragment of the arch of the Kabret stela, showing the right wing of the Egyptian winged disk as a sign from heaven (Louvre, AO2251).
(Photo: Franck Raux, Musée du Louvre /Art Resource, NY, ART388450)

The cuneiform text of the Kabret stela, however, bears almost no resemblance to its hieroglyphic counterpart. As Alan Lloyd has observed, it is an Achaemenid, "Persocentric" document.[35] For example, it speaks of Darius as "... the Great one, the King of Kings ... [son of Hy]staspes, the Achaemenid, the Great One. . . ." Yet, as Lloyd also observes, the very fact that such a stela was erected along the canal was a concession to the epigraphic habit of Egyptian pharaohs. Moreover, the cuneiform side of the stela shows royal figures in typical Egyptian orientation, beneath the winged sun disk of Horus.[36] It is thus a statement of a Persian pharaoh. In consequence, the two sides of the stela reveal different political orientations and address obviously different viewers. Darius, however, wishes to straddle those differences. How did Egyptians view this attempt? We do not know.

Perhaps the most striking example of hybrid, Egypto-Persian signaling is a royal statue, found at Susa, that depicts a more than life-size Darius I in Persian royal dress. Cuneiform and Egyptian hieroglyphic texts encircle the base.[37] The stone is Egyptian, and there is little doubt that the statue was originally erected in Egypt, perhaps in Heliopolis.[38] The cuneiform text even

35. Lloyd (2007), 106–107.

36. Kuhrt (2010), 485, fig. 11.6.

37. For this remarkable text and discussion of the statue's location in Susa, see Kuhrt (2010), 477–482, with the important comments of Briant (2002), 963–965.

38. Inferring from a reference in the Egyptian text to the god Atum.

says that the statue was carved and inscribed in Egypt. At some point, it was moved to Susa and erected in the royal palace, the Apadana. The hieroglyphic text written on the statue and the statue base is a classic, rather lengthy statement deriving from New Kingdom ideology of a divine sanction for royal sovereignty over Upper and Lower Egypt. The cuneiform text refers to the god Ahuramazda and says that Darius I "holds Egypt." At the left and right side of the base is a list of lands subject to the Persian king. As to the meaning of moving the statue to Susa, this city—one of four Persian royal seats—was originally Elamite, and Elamite culture profoundly influenced the Persians. To judge from Greek authors, Susa was the chief center of the empire.[39] To move the statue here was a costly, ostentatious signal of royal power, comparable to moving Piye's stela from Thebes to Nubia.

The so-called "Pherendates correspondence" between Egyptian priests and the Persian satrap, was written in demotic Egyptian, but presumably was translated into Aramaic, the administrative language of the Persian empire.[40] A study of the syntax of the satrap's reply to the priests (one item in the correspondence) shows that the demotic text was translated from Aramaic.[41] Similarly, Amherst papyrus 63 is an Aramaic hymn written in demotic Egyptian script dated to the fourth or third century.[42]

The next step, bilingual texts, was taken during the Ptolemaic period, when the "need for mutual understanding," as Alessandro Roccati says, increased because the Ptolemaic state was centered in Egypt.[43] An influx of Greeks from all over the Mediterranean in the early third century also deepened the need for cross-cultural understanding. The well-known Satrap Stela, dated to 311, illustrates this state of affairs.[44] At this date, the first Ptolemy was merely the satrap of Egypt. Using traditional royal language, the text announces a military victory that established Ptolemaic control over Syria-Palestine. It also announces the return of property stolen from temples by the Persians and serves as a formal confirmation of land donations to temples in the Nile Delta.

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39. Susa was in fact the first important Persian center, antedating Ecbatana and Babylon, which were conquered by Cyrus I, and Persepolis, established by Darius.

40. See Kuhrt (2010), 852–854, with literature cited.

41. Hughes (1984), 77–78.

42. For discussion of this complex text, see the literature cited at http://www.trismegistos.org/ate/detail.php?tm=56121.

43. Roccati (1992), 291. On bilingualism, and the level of Greek knowledge by Egyptian scribes, see Evans (2012); on "linguistic interference" by Egyptian scribes writing Greek, see Vierros (2012).

44. Translation by Ritner (2003), 392–397.

At the end of the text is recorded a copy of the royal decree of donation, so it appears that the main purpose of the document was to publicize this pious donation of land. Ptolemy, a Macedonian official with a Persian title, used this hieroglyphic decree to communicate his piety to a public who were actually, but not officially, his subjects.

Unlike their coinage, which never adopted Egyptian motifs or symbols, the Ptolemies' decrees attempted to legitimize the new dynasty by traditional means. Perhaps the most famous examples of such cross-cultural communication are the Trilingual decrees.[45] These texts, mostly from the late third and early second century, resemble the Satrap Stela, but differ from it insofar as they emanate from Egyptian priestly conclaves held in either Memphis or Alexandria. Meanwhile, Greco-Egyptian intermarriages were among the many occasions for personal communication across cultures: marriages between Greek soldiers and Egyptian women are especially well-documented.[46] Whatever the language or circumstances, Ptolemaic rule created a bilingual linguistic environment.

The archive of "Ptolemy the recluse" from Saqqara—where Greeks and Egyptians (and others) lived side by side within the temple precinct—provides rich evidence for this environment. Several petitions to the king preserved in the archive were originally written in demotic and subsequently translated into Greek.[47] In the south of the country, especially in the town of Pathryis, Egyptian legal scribes wrote many documents in Greek, and acted as a "bridge" between linguistic communities.[48] Cross-cultural communication also occurred between an individual and the world of the divine, as we find in a small, private stela recording a prayer in hieroglyphics to the Persian king, who is depicted as Horus, the falcon patron of Egyptian kingship.[49]

The bureaucratic structure that the Ptolemies created in the third century is also notable. Although it had ancient precedents, it differed from earlier bureaucracy by being composed of two linguistic layers. Greek-speaking officials dominated the upper levels, and Egyptians dominated the village and temple levels. Such bureaucracy, seen in vigorous action in *UPZ* II 162, would have generated considerable legal work.[50] This papyrus is merely the

45. Listed in Simpson (1996), 1–6.

46. A good example of a bilingual family archive is that of Dryton and his wife Apollonia from Pathyris: see Vandorpe (2002).

47. For numerous examples, see Thompson (2012), 207–32.

48. Vierros (2012), 18.

49. Kuhrt (2010), 849.

50. For the text, see briefly the comments in Manning (2010), 197–198.

culminating document in an archive that deals with a decade of conflicting claims to a private house in Thebes.

Petitions written in demotic would have been routinely translated into Greek for Ptolemaic officials; legal texts were translated, too, and courts and trials were bilingual.[51] The important *Archive of Tefhape* gives many glimpses of the relationship between the Greek-writing bureaucracy and the Egyptian population during the Ptolemaic period.[52] This archive documents a family dispute over land ending in a trial at an Egyptian temple. Ptolemaic officials were present at the trial; before that, at the beginning of the dispute, they had responded to family petitions. In another case, Egyptian priests were seated side by side with Greek officials, presumably to act as interpreters of Egyptian law.[53] The bilingualism that is occasionally documented among Greek officials may have been more common than is usually believed.[54]

Enlargement of the inventory of hieroglyphic signs under the Ptolemies—nearly a tenfold increase compared to classical Egyptian writing—was a new feature of temple inscriptions of the Ptolemaic and Roman periods. Several explanations have been offered for this explosive increase. The most convincing of them points to the intellectual character of Egyptian priests, their preference for cryptographic writing, and literary refinements that François Gaudard terms "sportive."[55] Instead of advancing any kind of cross-cultural communication, however, this invention of new signs served as a means of internal communication among Egyptian élites and was thus perhaps a virtuoso display rather than a response to the growth of bilingualism.

CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION HAS a rich history in Egypt. It began in the Old Kingdom, and continued through the Ptolemaic and Roman periods. It became complex in the first millennium under foreign rulers, and still more so after the Greek immigration that accompanied the establishment of the Ptolemaic dynasty. Several languages always coexisted, but eventually Greek and demotic bilingualism emerged. At the same time, cross-cultural

51. Mairs and Martin (2008/2009).

52. P. *BM* 1029 in Thompson (1934), 12–33.

53. Manning (forthcoming).

54. In a witness-list to a demotic Egyptian contract dated to the third century, for example, a Greek man is documented as one of the witnesses. Although admittedly this is a rare phenomenon in Egyptian contracts of the period, his appearance in a purely Egyptian context (at Edfu, an important temple town in southern Egypt) implies that he knew at least spoken, if not written, Egyptian; see Manning (2002).

55. Gaudard (2010), 173.

communication did not depend on widespread literacy. Yet it did depend on, and also took for granted, a kind of visual literacy fostered by hieroglyphs and by Egyptian monumental art. As shown in this chapter, I consider signaling theory to be a productive way to trace these developments. It helps us explain how signaling by the kings of Egypt advertised their power and contributed to the ideological program of the Egyptian state. Signaling theory should be applicable to many other phenomena, too, such as the role of information costs in the formation and operation of markets in Egypt.

15

Diplomatic Communication in the Ancient Mediterranean

Sheila L. Ager

*Phaeneas, the general of the Aetolians, . . . decided to send an embassy to Manius Acilius to ask for a truce and a peace treaty. . . . The Aetolians decided to leave the whole matter to Acilius and entrusted themselves to the "good faith" (*fides*) of the Romans, not realizing what this meant but misled by the word "faith" to expect they would be granted a fuller pardon. But with the Romans "to entrust oneself to their good faith" is equivalent to "surrendering unconditionally to the victor." . . .*

Acilius answered the Aetolians, not so much because he was angry as because he wanted to make them realize their predicament and thoroughly frighten them: "Do you still presume to put on Greek airs and talk about what is right and proper, after entrusting yourselves to my good faith? I could throw you all in chains and arrest you, if I wanted." With these words he ordered a chain and iron collar to be brought and placed on the neck of each. Phaeneas and the others were thunderstruck and stood all speechless, as though paralyzed in body and mind by this extraordinary turn of events.[1]

THE INCIDENT DESCRIBED here by the Greek historian Polybius took place during the abortive peace negotiations of 191 BCE[2] between the Greek representatives of the Aetolian league and the Roman commander in Greece, the consul Manius Acilius Glabrio. Polybius argues that the Aetolians, by

1. Extracts from Polyb 20.9–10 (trans. Austin [2006], no. 85, slightly modified); cf. Liv 36.28.

2. All dates are BCE unless otherwise stated.

entrusting themselves to Glabrio in an act that the Romans called *deditio*, were deceived by their misunderstanding of Roman concepts: they were extremely disconcerted to learn that they had consequently lost all right to negotiate.[3] Polybius' account of this meeting between Glabrio and the Aetolians epitomizes a number of issues that will be addressed in this chapter: the wide range of diplomatic modes and purposes; the barriers of culture and language; the significance of symbolic and nonverbal communication; and the ever-present challenges posed by our sources.

It is commonplace to characterize the diplomatic framework of antiquity as rudimentary and underdeveloped, in large part because of the absence of permanent diplomatic institutions.[4] For many modern observers, this primitiveness is particularly noticeable when it comes to communication. In the absence of modern communication technologies and swift means of travel, it would seem that the inhabitants of the ancient Mediterranean world were immensely hampered when it came to the conduct of diplomacy. Even so, it is as well to remember that theirs was a world with no concept of instantaneous messaging or of overnight travel from one side of the globe to the other, and therefore with no reason to feel the lack of either. Its communication practices grew out of the available technologies of the time, and diplomacy was conducted with the expectation that it would be a protracted process. So, in spite of his peremptory words and actions, Glabrio twice granted the Aetolians ten-day truces to allow them to consult and deliberate.[5]

This chapter suggests that diplomatic relations in antiquity were in fact highly developed.[6] If our sources tell us anything, it is that over the centuries a great deal of talking, letter-writing, and sending of embassies occurred. More important than the sheer scale of this activity, however, is the question of what is actually meant by the term "diplomatic communication." The phrase tends to conjure up images of verbal or written negotiations, couched in blandishing words, with the aim of managing international relations in a peaceful manner. But if we allow that the term "diplomacy" covers a far broader set of communication styles than is conventionally supposed, and that "communication" may have purposes other than an unbiased transfer of information, then we will be able to see that Greeks and Romans were remarkably effective at getting their

3. On the issues surrounding *deditio* and Polybius' understanding of the incident, see Gruen (1984), 28; Rich (1989), 131; Barton (2007); Burton (2011), 116–119.

4. See Mosley (1973); Adcock and Mosley (1975); Eckstein (2006); (2008); Black (2010), 22.

5. Polyb. 20.9.5; 20.10.12.

6. Chapter 13 reinforces the point with special reference to Western and South Asia.

messages across, despite their primitive communication technologies and the dearth of diplomatic institutions.

My preferred working definition of "diplomacy" in this context is: "the mostly nonviolent means by which inter-polity relations are established and managed." I opt for "nonviolent" rather than "peaceful," because the latter adjective has an undertone of harmony not always apparent in acts of diplomacy. I include the qualifier "mostly," because the seizure of persons or the occasional execution of an envoy can be seen as acts of diplomacy in their own right. While the proximate goal of diplomacy may be the amelioration of inter-polity relations, its ultimate goal is always to protect or to better the position of the diplomatic actor; such a goal may not be met by the amelioration of relations, and is certainly not coextensive with it.

As for "communication," the popular interpretation tends to be the functional one: that it involves a transfer or exchange of information.[7] But diplomacy as a form of communication often has quite different purposes. It can be about lying, misleading, delaying, and posturing, or competition, aggression, ambiguity, obfuscation, and so forth; all of these are, of course, still forms of "communication" in their own way. "To say nothing, especially when speaking, is half the art of diplomacy," said Will Durant. An ambassador who blandly "says nothing" is indeed saying a great deal, as we shall see.

The Ancient Context

We have already noted the technological challenges to communication and travel in the ancient Mediterranean, along with the importance of not overestimating their impact on the diplomacy of the period. This said, in an assessment of ancient diplomatic communication, the impact of technological limitations should not be minimized unduly. They were most keenly felt, no doubt, in the areas of intelligence-gathering and consultation. Diplomatic representatives would have been unable to communicate swiftly or regularly with their home polity, and there is plentiful evidence to show that ambassadors often faced disapproval or worse upon their return after agreeing to conditions that proved unpopular at home. About 508, the *polis* of Athens, under threat from Sparta, dispatched envoys to Artaphernes, the satrap at Sardis, to ask for an alliance with Persia:

> Artaphernes put the Persian case in a nutshell by remarking that, if the Athenians would signify their submission by the usual gift of earth and

7. On communication theories, models, and practice, see Davison (1965), now somewhat dated; Craig (1999); Shepherd et al. (2006).

> water, then Darius would make a pact with them; otherwise they had better go home. Eager that the pact should be concluded, the envoys acted on their own initiative and accepted Artaphernes' terms—for which they were severely censured on their return to Athens.[8]

The story illustrates neatly the bind in which diplomatic envoys could find themselves because of their inability to consult with their home state. Much diplomatic maneuvering in antiquity occurred at a slow pace, precisely in order to allow for the movement back and forth of ambassadors who needed to present terms for ratification, whether by the assembly of a Greek *polis* or by the Roman Senate.[9]

A key goal of diplomacy—and of communication, at least in the functional sense noted above—is the acquisition of information.[10] From the point of view of diplomatic actors, acquisition generally trumps full and equal exchange, in that each party inevitably seeks to better its own position in relation to the other: if knowledge is power, then superior knowledge creates a power advantage. Information is crucial, but in the international system, each polity jealously guards its own, while seeking to maximize its knowledge of others. Diplomatic legations, such as the endless ones sent out by the Romans in the second century, were openly intended to gather information. But ancient states also engaged in gathering it secretly, although our evidence for such activity is naturally not so extensive as we might like.[11] Whether it was above-board or consisted of espionage, information-gathering in antiquity would also have been hampered by the lack of available technologies. The Athenians in 415 were drastically—and, as it turned out, tragically—under-informed about the Sicilian situation at the time they decided to launch their expedition there.[12]

In formal systemic terms, the inter-state world of Mediterranean antiquity was much like the modern one: a multiplicity of states with no overarching authority, literally anarchic. The expansion of the Roman Empire brought a great number of polities within the sphere of Roman control, but even at its

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8. Herodotus 5.73.2–3, trans. A. de Sélincourt.

9. The same can evidently be said even when a Greek ambassador was given the status of *autokrator*, a term we could roughly interpret as "plenipotentiary"; see Mosley (1973), 30–38; Missiou-Ladi (1987); Giovannini (2007), 96–97. Note Eckstein (1987) on the complex interplay between senatorial and military decision-making.

10. See Mosley (1973), 4–10.

11. Richmond (1998).

12. Thucydides 6.1, 6.8; Adcock and Mosley (1975), 175.

greatest extent, this empire was not all-encompassing. There remained ample scope for diplomatic—and hostile—relations between Rome and the migrating tribes of northern Europe and central Asia, as well as the more sophisticated Parthians and their successors, the Sasanian Persians. Moreover, even within the context and boundaries of the empire, the continuance of local ethnic, not to mention political, identity called for the maintenance of at least pseudo-diplomatic forms of communication. Roman emperors often corresponded with polities within the empire in much the same formal style that consuls during the Republic had adopted in their relations with independent entities beyond Rome's sphere of control.[13] Habits and styles of diplomatic communication clearly transcended political structures and systemic change.

Informally, the ancient Mediterranean world, in spite of its multiplicity of independent polities and the resultant systemic anarchy, was one of manifold overlapping networks.[14] Based on ethnicity, trade, kinship, ideology, profession, religion, friendship, and more, such informal networks provided channels of communication (open and secret) as well as opportunities for diplomacy in ways more or less similar to those of today. But one of the greatest differences between antiquity and today was the relative lack of formal, permanent, international institutions, such as embassies and consulates, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations (IGOs, NGOs), international courts, and so on. While ancient diplomatic delegations abounded—so much so that a Byzantine excerptor produced a compilation, *On Embassies*[15]—diplomacy in the ancient Mediterranean generally occurred ad hoc rather than within the confines of an embedded communication structure.

The one permanent institution often referenced in discussions of diplomacy in the Greek world is *proxenia*. A *proxenos* was a citizen who had a special relationship with another polity and represented its interests.[16] Thus the fifth-century Athenian statesman and general Cimon was a *proxenos* of the Spartans: an Athenian citizen, and domiciled in Athens, he nevertheless had special connections of friendship and trust with Sparta. Spartan envoys traveling to Athens would probably stay with him. In the Athenian assembly, he might be called upon to present information about the Spartans or their viewpoint. Equally, if Athens needed to send an embassy to Sparta, Cimon was

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13. Millar (1988); Hamilton and Langhorne (1995), 12–13; Goldstone and Haldon (2009); Eilers (2009b), 1–2.

14. Malkin (2011); Reger (2013).

15. *Excerpta de legationibus*: see Brennan (2009).

16. Adcock and Mosley (1975), 160–163; Herman (1987), 130–142; Giovannini (2007), 92–93.

likely to be made a member of it. Although being a *proxenos* was an honor, it entailed an inherent challenge: to be a citizen of one polity while having a special relationship with another was liable to invite suspicion from both. In fact, Cimon's position as a philo-Spartan Athenian could not survive increasing tensions between the two polities. Dispatched at the head of an Athenian force to assist the Spartans during a helot rebellion in the late 460s, Cimon was disgraced at home when Sparta dismissed these Athenians for fear that they—including even Cimon himself, conceivably—might prove too sympathetic to the rebels' cause.[17] Athens then rejected Cimon's philo-Spartan leanings, and ultimately he found himself ostracized.

Neither the Greek nor the Roman world offered lifetime careers for diplomats as such. Ambassadors were indeed chosen and sent abroad, but it was always for limited missions, with a specific goal in sight. Certain individuals might be in a position to garner special expertise on particular subjects, as the Athenian Demosthenes did on the Macedonian question in the fourth century, or the Roman Flamininus on relations with Greece in the early second. Such individuals might then be elected or appointed repeatedly to deal with matters in their area of expertise. But "ambassador" was still a temporary role, not a permanent title, and the fundamental status of a Greek *presbeus* or Roman *legatus* was not that of envoy, but rather of citizen or senator.[18]

From the perspective of communication, ancient ambassadors needed certain skills, although not necessarily ones matching those associated with diplomatic personnel today. To be sure, there were times when such talents might be in demand—among them, for example, the ability to engage with a different culture without giving offense. We tend to suppose that it is a sign of respect to a nation—and hence diplomatically desirable—for diplomatic representatives to speak, or attempt to speak, in its language: thus John F. Kennedy's famous "*Ich bin ein Berliner*" speech in June 1963. The common misconception that, with his phrasing, Kennedy inadvertently branded himself as a jelly doughnut, rather than a citizen of Berlin, underscores the pitfalls of intercultural communication. The Roman envoys sent to Tarentum in 282 did their best to speak Greek to the assembled Tarentines; but the reaction to their linguistic deficiencies was scornful laughter, and one Tarentine (so we are told) was even

17. Plutarch, *Cimon* 16–17; Thuc. 1.102.

18. Given the dominant role played by the Roman Senate in the conduct of foreign affairs, at least during the Republican period, it is no surprise that Rome's diplomatic representatives were almost invariably senators. Much diplomacy was carried out by consuls and other military commanders in the field: see Eckstein (1987).

crude enough to urinate on the leading Roman.[19] On at least some other occasions, it seems that Romans deliberately refused to speak Greek even when they could, in order to present themselves as the superior power.[20]

Throughout much of antiquity, the societies of the ancient Mediterranean were citizen-ruled: the *poleis* of Greece, whether democratic or oligarchic, and Republican Rome, dominated by the Senate, usually managed public business in at least semi-public venues. The art of rhetoric therefore dominated political and diplomatic discourse, as it did until quite recently and still in many contexts does. The ability to speak with skill was therefore an important one for ancient diplomatic representatives, though in all likelihood our sources give a rather exaggerated picture of the smoothness and grace of these occasions. An envoy to the Roman Senate who spoke only Greek or Punic no doubt had to pause repeatedly to allow a translator to render his words into Latin. Such renditions were perhaps not always accurate or eloquent, and differing cultural concepts may have been lost in translation.[21]

Speakers might also have to contend with heckling, as the Spartan ambassadors to Athens in 425 surely did. Sent to negotiate peace terms after the Athenian occupation of Pylos and Sphacteria, these men evidently addressed the Athenians in open assembly. Thucydides reports a lengthy and convoluted speech; the Spartans even begin by drawing attention to the fact that its length is uncharacteristic of their normal laconic style.[22] While Thucydides does not state outright that the ambassadors were jeered, he has the Spartans refer to the potential unpopularity of their words, and certainly the aftermath suggests that the assembly did not listen to the envoys in polite silence. Thucydides' *bête noir*, Cleon, stirred up the Athenians with demands for major concessions. When the Spartans suggested that it might be a good idea for them to conduct detailed negotiations with a committee, rather than with the citizen-body as a whole, Cleon accused them of deceit and duplicity and insisted that they speak before the people:

> The Spartans, however, saw that it was impossible for them to speak in front of the people. They saw that even if they did decide to make concessions in their present difficult position, they might well speak

19. Dionysius of Halicarnassus 19.5–6; Appian, *Samnite History* 7.2; Eckstein (2006), 156.

20. Valerius Maximus 2.2.2; Pina Polo (2013), 252 n. 24. Note by contrast the clear Roman efforts made during the Principate to communicate with the Greeks in their own language: Millar (1988), 362–366.

21. Pina Polo (2013), 249–255.

22. Thuc. 4.17–20; Hornblower (1996), 170–177.

> and still not get what they wanted, and find that what they had said would give them a bad name with their allies, and that, in any case, the Athenians were not likely to accept their proposals in a reasonable spirit. So they left Athens without having achieved anything.[23]

It is hard to imagine that the ancient Athenian assembly was routinely more courteous than the present-day British House of Commons: the Spartans were probably booed off the podium.

The predicament in which these Spartan envoys to Athens found themselves underlines the tension between public and private processes of diplomatic communication. As we have seen, it is a commonplace that—unlike today's typical practice—ancient diplomacy was conducted in open venues, particularly in the citizen-ruled, and still largely oral, societies that remained widespread throughout much of Mediterranean history. But this assessment raises a methodological point: our evidence for the innumerable diplomatic encounters of antiquity is of course skewed in favor of open diplomacy, because this is what became part of the public record. Royal letters, no matter how personal their tone, were inscribed on stone for deliberate publication. Senate meetings might supposedly be "closed," but what occurred there could hardly be kept confidential. Indeed, one of the most notorious diplomatic arrangements of Hellenistic history—the alleged clandestine pact between Philip V of Macedon and the Seleucid ruler Antiochus III to divide up the holdings of Ptolemaic Egypt—was such an open "secret" that everybody around the Mediterranean was talking about it.[24]

So, while the manners and *mores* of regular diplomatic communication probably did tend to favor the open and the public, whether oral or written, we must still recognize our inability to gauge just how much private diplomacy was carried on over the centuries—through informal networks in particular—simply because communication that is successfully private will by definition not appear in our sources. Marcus Aemilius Lepidus' private advice to the Ptolemaic envoys dispatched to Rome in 170 might have qualified as such. He advised them against making the slip of suggesting to the Senate that Egypt would be willing to mediate Rome's conflict with Perseus.[25] This private exchange between Lepidus and the Ptolemaic envoys somehow came to the ears of Polybius, and thus made its way into his history. But how many private

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23. Thuc. 4.22.3; trans. R. Warner.

24. Polyb. 15.20; Livy 31.14; Gruen (1984), 387–388, 614–615; Eckstein (2005); (2006), 269–275; (2008), 121–180; Burton (2011), 189, 222.

25. Polyb. 28.1.7–8.

deals, information exchanges, or other diplomatic conversations never came to the attention of historians? We cannot say.[26]

One last item relating to the context of diplomatic communication merits comment. In spite of the allegedly rudimentary nature of diplomatic processes in the ancient Mediterranean, there was clearly a strongly developed (if not always consistent) sense of *ius gentium* governing them. The sacrosanctity of heralds and (perhaps to a lesser extent) ambassadors is a good example.[27] When the Persian king Darius dispatched envoys to Greece in the late 490s, demanding earth and water, the Athenians and the Spartans murdered the men sent to them. All parties—Persians, Athenians, and Spartans alike—recognized that these murders transgressed international custom and common religious principles. Sparta, allegedly more scrupulous when it came to religious matters than Athens, later tried to make amends by offering up two Spartan heralds to the Persians as scapegoats, but it was not until many decades later that the Spartans finally succeeded in atoning for their crime.[28]

Ancient Diplomatic Communication—Style and Purpose

It bears repeating that ancient diplomatic communication had a wide range of modes and objectives, not all of which fit easily into our commonly held ideas about "the diplomatic." Such ideas tend to rest on assumptions that because diplomacy is (mostly) nonviolent, its aims are likewise peace-oriented, and that peaceful aims equate to courteous behavior. The actions of Glabrio described at the start of this chapter continue to strike modern sensibilities as "undiplomatic." Yet his response to the Aetolians was the epitome of what is known as "compellence diplomacy":[29] he was in fact fairly effective in his mission of making Rome's point and aggrandizing Rome's position; altogether, quite a successful diplomat. The "Aetolian question" was not resolved for another year or so, but that is beside the point. When the time came for the Aetolians

26. References to sealed documents point to at least interim confidentiality (or perhaps, rather, to safeguards against tampering), but in most cases, the documents we hear about were destined to become public sooner or later.

27. Mosley (1973), 81–92; Giovannini (2007), 94–95.

28. Hdt. 7.133–137; Thuc. 2.67. It is interesting that Frank Miller and Lynn Varley's book *300* (1999) and the movie that it inspired (2006) both glorify Sparta's murder of the Persian envoys, with no recognition that ancient societies—including the Spartans themselves—condemned this act.

29. Eckstein (2006), 58–72; (2008), 12–15; Black (2010), 21–22.

finally to submit in 189, they remembered the shock they had been dealt in 191, and behaved accordingly.

The previous section emphasized the live action of speechifying diplomatic embassies, whether addressed to the Roman Senate, to a Hellenistic king, or to small Greek *poleis*. Little was said of written communication, but such documents naturally formed a major part of diplomatic interactions in antiquity. In the regular absence of face-to-face communication between principals, it was essential that letters, decrees, *senatus consulta*, and so on, be delivered and proclaimed or verbally interpreted by intermediaries (be they couriers, heralds, or ambassadors); they constituted a very large proportion of ancient diplomatic activity. We may be prone to overestimate that proportion, given our reliance on written documentation, epigraphic or literary. But it seems to have been the case that, even where diplomatic communication was primarily oral, envoys generally spoke from written—or at least previously determined—instructions, such as *mandata* issued by the Roman Senate.[30] Subsequent to oral communication, the public inscription of a letter or a decree gave it publication and permanence, so that the communication could continue in future generations.

A courtier, such as a "friend" of a Hellenistic king, might be the individual who would deliver a letter or a proclamation, and he would often be thanked along with the monarch in a city's decree.[31] Such an individual in some sense constitutes a third party who "mediates" the relationship between the king and another polity. In cases where a courier simply delivered a king's polite letter, I would still categorize such communication as "direct"; that is, involving primarily two parties (or "nodes," to use the terminology of network theory). A great deal of diplomacy throughout history, however, has involved a more complex and more indirect chain or web of communication through multiple nodes, employing third parties for transmission, facilitation, good offices, mediation, advocacy, and a host of other purposes. The examples are too many to review in full, so it may be more instructive to return again to the case of the Aetolians in the early second century.

After the shock of the meeting between Glabrio and the Aetolian envoys in 191, relations between Rome and Aetolia remained tense. In 190, the consul Lucius Cornelius Scipio stopped in Greece on his way to Asia to deal with Antiochus III. With him was his famous brother Publius Cornelius Scipio "Africanus," the victor of the Second Punic War. Polybius informs us that an

30. Mosley (1973), 21–29; Torregaray Pagola (2013), 240.

31. See Paschidis (2008) for a catalog of individuals acting as intermediaries between cities and kings.

Athenian embassy, led by one Echedemus, met with the Scipios (or at least with Publius) in order to persuade the Romans to come to terms with the Aetolians.[32] This peace mission was gratifying to the Scipios for pragmatic reasons, and Echedemus was invited to sound out the Aetolians, who then dispatched delegates to meet with the Scipios.

Although Polybius stresses the friendliness of Publius' manner, in opposition to the brusqueness of his brother Lucius, the language he uses suggests that Publius in fact recommended—once again—that the Aetolians agree to a complete surrender (*deditio*).[33] Coming from Publius' mouth, the suggestion sounded attractive to them; it was not until Lucius summarized the situation more bluntly that they suffered the same sort of shock they had experienced a year earlier. Evidently the different communication styles employed by the two brothers were what confused them. Faced now with the choice between either a complete surrender—which they associated with the danger and degradation Glabrio had so vividly symbolized for them—or a full offensive and defensive alliance with Rome that came with a thousand-talent price tag, the Aetolians begged instead for an armistice to allow them to send an embassy to the Senate to plead their case.[34]

Aetolian envoys thereupon went to Rome, and the Scipios went to Asia, where they defeated Antiochus at the Battle of Magnesia. The Roman victory over their former ally made the Aetolians' situation even less tenable, and the news that the consul of 189, Marcus Fulvius Nobilior, was crossing to Greece with an army frightened them still more. Accordingly, the Aetolians turned to Athens again and also to Rhodes (two polities that had good relations with Rome), and requested their diplomatic help. Specifically, the Athenians and Rhodians were asked to "deprecate the anger of the Romans and to avert by some means the evils that encompassed Aetolia."[35]

Polybius' account of the subsequent diplomatic negotiations makes it clear that the Athenian and Rhodian intercessors were able to do what the Aetolians alone could not: they turned aside Roman anger and succeeded in obtaining a reasonable peace for Aetolia. The language that they used in speaking first with the consul Fulvius and later with the Senate was apologetic and flattering to Rome, begging peace for the Aetolians, not because they deserved it, but

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32. Polyb. 21.4–5; cf. Livy 37.6–7.

33. Polyb. 21.4.11. According to both Polybius and Livy, Publius made reference to earlier peoples who had placed themselves in his *fides*.

34. Over the winter of 191–190, the Senate had already outlined these alternatives to Aetolian ambassadors; Lucius was only reiterating what the Aetolians had already been told.

35. Polyb. 21.25.10; trans. W. R. Paton.

because Rome was in a position to be gracious and generous in victory.[36] This is a mode of third-party diplomacy that I term "deprecation"; it constitutes just one of many forms of indirect diplomatic communication and illustrates the importance of the international network in achieving diplomatic goals.[37]

When Glabrio made a show of putting chains about the necks of the Aetolian envoys, he did so in order to frighten them and shock them into an understanding of Roman power. The Romans' communication style, like that of the Spartans, was often associated with brevity and forcefulness, and the gesture of the chains was an effective nonverbal communication in itself. A little more than twenty years later, another Roman representative delivered an even more notorious nonverbal message. In 168, the legate C. Popillius Laenas met with the Seleucid king Antiochus IV in Eleusis, a suburb of Alexandria, with a mandate from the Senate to warn him to keep his hands off Egypt. Antiochus, who had spent his youth in Rome, may well have been acquainted with Laenas; he seems to have expected a warm greeting from him, and certainly tried to extend one himself. Laenas ignored Antiochus' outstretched hand and drew a circle in the sand about the king with his staff, insisting that Antiochus respond to the Senate's demands before stepping outside it. Antiochus, momentarily flummoxed but no fool, agreed and then received the warm greeting he had expected.[38] On one level, this encounter is comparable to the Rhodian and Athenian deprecation of the Aetolians: both episodes represent the patterns of third-party intervention on behalf of others that were so common in ancient diplomacy. But the two set side by side show the vast breadth of the spectrum of communication styles, and the divergent requirements of different contexts.

Symbolic messages, whether verbal or nonverbal, overt or covert, abound in international diplomacy, as they do in communication of any kind. Gesture, tone, expression, all play a role in rhetoric (and are for the most part lost to us with our purely literary accounts). Actions speak louder than words: neither Glabrio nor Laenas had to say much. Nor did Prusias II of Bithynia (although he did say rather a lot) when he paid the Roman Senate a visit in 167. Determined to demonstrate his friendship at a time when some of Rome's eastern friends were falling out of Roman favor, Prusias allegedly fell down and kissed the Senate-house threshold on his arrival.[39] He then went on to

36. Polyb. 21.29–31; cf. Livy 38.9–10.

37. Ager (2009).

38. Polyb. 29.27; Livy 45.12; Diod. Sic. 31.2; App. *Syr.* 66. For a fuller discussion of this incident by Gregory Aldrete, see Chapter 8 above.

39. Polyb. 30.18; Livy 45.44; Pina Polo (2013), 261.

greet the senators gushingly as "savior gods," but his actions (which disgusted Polybius) would already have made his point: he was very happy to be seen as Rome's faithful friend and indeed client.[40]

The structure and framing of international relations and interactions entailed much symbolic messaging. The Achaemenid rulers of Persia, as we saw, required earth and water from subjected nations and would-be allies: earth and water were symbols of life and also of the submission of both land and sea. Insofar as we can trust our sources, fetial procedure—for Romans, a necessary preliminary to "just war"—featured much that was symbolic and magical, including, in order, *rerum repetitio* (demand for satisfaction), *testatio deorum* (calling on the gods to witness the injustice of the enemy), and finally *indictio belli*—the actual declaration of war, for which (at least in Rome's early days) the fetial priest would travel to enemy territory and hurl his spear into it.[41] Diplomacy here becomes diplomancy. The fetial ritual (and the later developments that more or less replaced it, such as the non-negotiable ultimatum) involved no actual diplomatic negotiation, but very clear diplomatic communication: it was Rome's message to its enemies and to the gods that Rome's cause was just.

The language of personal relationships, common in diplomatic messaging, may also be seen as symbolic. Greeks and Romans alike repeatedly emphasized networks of friendship (*philia, amicitia*). Such international friendships could in fact be very real and very enduring, and personal relationships could play an important role: hence the amount of time foreign ambassadors spent in Rome visiting privately with various individuals and carrying out a program of informal lobbying prior to meeting with the Senate. In many cases, however, diplomatic friendship was highly attenuated and only symbolic; it is certainly possible to see Roman friendship in particular as on occasion very flexible.[42] Even stronger than ties of friendship were those of kinship. Kinship diplomacy long predated the classical period, though the level of diplomatic kinship was generally even more fictive than the level of diplomatic friendship. The rulers of the empires and other polities of the ancient Near East—the Egyptians, the Hittites, the Mycenaeans, the Assyrians—employed the language of brotherhood in

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40. On the debate about *amicitia* vs. *clientela* in Rome's international relationships, see most recently Burton (2011).

41. Livy 1.24; 1.32; Dion. Hal. 2.72. On fetial law and its diplomatic ramifications, see Ager (2009) and sources cited there.

42. Adcock and Mosley (1975), 206–208; Gruen (1984), 54–95; Burton (2011).

communicating with each other, as did Sasanian rulers and Late Roman emperors much later.[43]

At times, the tie of kinship was realized through the interchange of royal marriage. Royal weddings were diplomatic occasions and carried symbolic as well as pragmatic weight. When Seleucus IV dispatched his daughter Laodice to marry the Antigonid ruler of Macedon, Perseus, the naval procession from Asia to Macedon, conducted by the Rhodian navy, was a glittering affair, with much wealth on display.[44] The international message was one of power and amity between Seleucids and Antigonids—and Rhodes—and there was no lack of an audience to construe the message correctly. Eumenes II of Pergamum made haste to warn the Romans that their former enemies were getting a little too close for comfort:

> For, said Eumenes, all men in the cities of Greece and Asia revered Perseus' dignity. In consideration of what services or what generosity such respect was being paid him, Eumenes could not see, or say for certain whether this was happening by reason of a certain good luck or whether—Eumenes feared to suggest this—the ill-will felt for the Romans won men over to Perseus' cause. Even among the kings he was great in influence and had married the daughter of Seleucus, not having sought her but rather having been sought; he had given his sister to Prusias, who had begged and entreated for her; both marriages had been greeted with congratulations and gifts from countless embassies, and the nuptial processions were accompanied, as it were, by the noblest peoples as sponsors and attendants.[45]

Such messaging obviously may reach more than its target audience: it seems unlikely that either Seleucus or Perseus was actively trying to antagonize the Romans, although both were probably trying to assert (or reassert) their international status as Hellenistic monarchs in the grand style.

THE ISSUE OF visual displays of power and wealth prompts the observation that the material culture of antiquity provided numerous opportunities for symbolic communication. The Panhellenic sites of Olympia and Delphi were crowded with inscriptions and monuments memorializing international

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43. Podany (2010); Wiesehöfer (2007), 73–74; Matthew Canepa in Chapter 13 above. On kinship diplomacy in the classical Mediterranean, see Jones (1999). Elwyn (1993) notes that Romans were less wedded to this concept than Greeks; see also Battistoni (2009).

44. App. *Mac.* 11.2; Polyb. 25.4; Livy 42.12.

45. Livy 42.12.1–4; trans. E. T. Sage and A. C. Schlesinger (slightly adapted).

triumphs and compacts. Inscriptions detailing treaties and arbitrations served the very important pragmatic purpose of publication and maximum exposure, but their location also symbolized the protection provided by the god. As for monuments, a palpable example of symbolic communication is provided by the statue of Nike, the winged victory goddess, by the sculptor Paeonius, erected at Olympia in the late 420s by the Messenians, perhaps to celebrate the taking of the island of Sphacteria from the Spartans in 425 (Figure 15.1).[46] Such monuments were common at Delphi and Olympia, though Paeonius'

FIGURE 15.1 Nike of Paeonius, Olympia, Greece (Archaeological Museum of Olympia, 46–48).

(Photo: Art Resource, NY, ART392554)

46. Pausanias (5.26.1) mentions the Messenians' claim that this victory over Sparta in 425 inspired the monument, but adds that they omitted the name of their defeated enemy from the brief dedicatory inscription out of fear. That is certainly a possibility, but surely the erection of such a monument in the first place bespeaks bravado rather than caution.

monument is a particularly fine example; but what makes this one intriguing in the present context is the lengthy inscription added to the base almost 300 years later. It records the findings of a court of arbitration convened by the Milesians at the request of Rome to settle a land dispute between Sparta and Messenia around 138.[47] The Milesians found in favor of the Messenians, and the latter had the findings inscribed on the victory monument. In doing so, they magnified their triumph in the land dispute by linking it with the military victory three centuries earlier and very publicly disdaining the Spartans once again.

Coinage, with its political credentials, imagery, legends, and ubiquity, provided an excellent medium for semiotic messaging that would extend far and wide.[48] The Augustan types advertising the assertion of Roman dominance over the Parthians offer a striking example. It was through diplomacy that Augustus negotiated the return of the legionary standards held by the Parthians since Crassus' defeat in 53, but his presentation of this success in his *Res Gestae* implies Roman military superiority rather than diplomatic negotiations between equals:[49] "I forced the Parthians to return three Roman armies' spoils and standards to me and to beg as suppliants for the friendship of the Roman people. And these standards I restored to the inner shrine which is in the temple of Mars the Avenger."[50] The silver and gold coinage minted to celebrate the occasion features images of the standards (in the case of the denarius, proffered by a submissive, bare-headed Parthian); the legends read "standards recovered" (*SIGNIS RECEPTIS*).[51]

We do not know what the Parthians thought of Augustus' coinage, but they were certainly sensitive to their own international reputation. Several decades earlier, when Romans and Parthians first met on the diplomatic stage, the Parthian ruler allegedly executed his ambassador for allowing the Roman Sulla to take the central chair on the tribunal, thereby sending the clear message that the Armenian and Parthian representatives were subordinate to

47. *Syll.*[3] 683; Ager (1996), no. 159.

48. Cf. Chapter 16 below by Kenneth Harl.

49. Campbell (1993), 220–228.

50. *RG* 29.2; trans. Sherk (1984).

51. *BMCRE* Augustus, nos. 410, 412, 414–419, 421–423. Note also the central scene on the cuirass of the Prima Porta statue of Augustus: Rome VM 2290, with Zanker (1988), 89 and Figure 148b. Cf. the later coinage celebrating Trajan's campaigns in Armenia and Parthia: Sherk (1988), no. 135 A, B, C.

him.[52] This incident also illustrates the zero-sum nature of diplomatic posturing: for Rome to be the winner in this game, the other two had to be the losers. The Parthian/Persian East was a consistent challenge for Roman diplomatic positioning, as it was for Parthian and Persian: neither side was able to defeat the other, yet both had a vested interest in presenting themselves as superior. Sulla, Augustus, and Trajan all sought ways of affirming Roman preeminence through diplomatic messaging. The Sasanian ruler Shapur I had similar aims, and his capture of the Roman emperor Valerian in 260 CE, however temporary a setback for the Romans, enabled him to present his Persian realm as the ascendant power, memorializing his triumph on the great Persian monument at Naqsh-i-Rustem (Figure 15.2).[53]

TO RETURN NOW to the question of the purposes of diplomatic communication: In the final analysis it is always, as we have seen, primarily intended to achieve the best possible outcome for the individual diplomatic actor, not for the system as a whole (unless those two goals conjoin). The twentieth-century

FIGURE 15.2 The mounted King Shapur I of Iran takes the captive Roman emperor Valerian by the hand, while another Roman, perhaps the emperor Philip, kneels in supplication. Rock relief, Naqsh-i-Rustem, Iran.
(Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

52. Plut. *Sulla* 5; Campbell (1993), 214; Black (2010), 22.

53. Millar (1988), 345–346.

Italian diplomat and author Daniele Varè put it succinctly: "Diplomacy is the art of letting someone else have your way."[54] Even so-called neutrals—such as the Rhodians or the Athenians when they intervened on behalf of the Aetolians—generally have their own agendas when they intercede.[55] Diplomats' goals might indeed be met through the kind of polite discourse of negotiation that we tend to associate with the term "diplomacy." But they might not. Cicero has some telling remarks in his *De officiis*:

> In state policy justice in warfare must be strictly observed. For since there are two ways of fighting something out, one through discussion, the other through force (*nam cum sint duo genera decertandi, unum per disceptationem, alterum per vim*), and since the former is what is appropriate to men and the latter to beasts, we must resort to force only when it is not possible to use discussion.[56]

Cicero's Latin phrasing is noteworthy: discussion is to be preferred to force, but both are methods of contention, of fighting. The subtitle of Claudine Auliard's 2006 monograph reflects this observation: *La diplomatie romaine: L'autre instrument de la conquête*.

It was not only the Romans who saw diplomacy as a potential means of asserting power, control, and influence, nor were they were alone in practicing coercive diplomacy or simply employing frank, blunt language.[57] One of the most infamous and cynical manipulations of diplomacy in Greek history was Sparta's exploitation of the terms of the King's Peace of 387 to impose its will on other *poleis*. Even the weakest states in the international system could seek to aggrandize themselves through diplomacy; indeed, for many of those at the bottom of the ladder, diplomacy might be the only way to do so. The ancient record features dozens of territorial disputes between very small states pursued aggressively through the medium of third-party arbitration or mediation.[58]

Thus diplomatic styles in antiquity—while all sharing the same individualistic goal—ranged from wheedling flattery and blandishment through

54. Varè (1938), 24.

55. Bercovitch and Schneider (2000).

56. *Off.* 1.34; trans. Erskine (2010), 97.

57. Grant (1965); Missiou-Ladi (1987); Eckstein (2006), 58–72.

58. Piccirilli (1973); Ager (1996); Magnetto (1997).

conciliation, to posturing, to inflammatory provocation and downright coercion. This wide array of styles was dictated by various factors: the power parity (or disparity) of the actors; the nature of the issue at hand; the magnitude of the risk involved, whether in appeasement or in provocation; and so on. We have already seen examples of compellence diplomacy. At the other end of the spectrum, we find the behavior of many Greek *poleis* in the Hellenistic period, anxious to be on good terms with monarchs, and voting them various honors, including divine honors.[59] Polybius speaks with disgust of the Athenians' behavior in particular: they "indulged in flattery of all the kings, and especially of Ptolemy [III]. No decree or proclamation went too far for them, and they discarded all sense of decency."[60] But polite flattery of royalty—and its counterpart, gracious royal beneficences for the cities—was a standard part of the diplomatic discourse of the period.[61] More generally, such diplomacy was key to articulating the legally vague relationships between cities and kings, particularly in Asia Minor.

As a counterweight to the practice of placatory third-party diplomatic intervention intended to bring about peace between disputants, we also find a considerable amount of inflammatory third-party rhetoric aimed at provoking conflict between others. Eumenes II of Pergamum, as glimpsed above, felt threatened by the axis of Antigonid Macedon and Seleucid Asia, and he visited Rome personally in 172 to deliver his speech to the Senate, warning it of the dire consequences of allowing Perseus a free rein.[62] In tone and intent, Eumenes' speech recalls the famous speech of the Corinthians at Sparta in 432, instigating Spartan action against the increasingly troublesome Athenians.[63] This speech is one of Thucydides' masterpieces, and it is hard to imagine that the Corinthian speaker was truly as eloquent as Thucydides makes him. But if we accept, even with caution, Thucydides' own declaration about his efforts to maintain the original spirit of the speeches in his work, I think it would be fair to say that the tone of the real Corinthian speech may well have been as represented by the historian: urgent, hectoring, and provocative.

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59. For example, Austin (2006), nos. 39, 42, 43, 51, 162, 169, 191, 232, 237, 256, 265.

60. Polyb. 5.106.7–8; trans. Austin (2006), no. 73.

61. See further, with special reference to honorific statues, Ma (2012).

62. Livy 42.12–13.

63. Thuc. 1.68–71. Eumenes, however, was more cautious about insulting the Romans than the Corinthians were about insulting the Spartans.

Conclusion

This chapter has emphasized, perhaps unfairly, the styles and modes of ancient diplomatic communication that break the mold of modern popular conceptions about diplomacy.[64] The fact that so many diplomatic interchanges in antiquity strike us as undiplomatic should not blind us to the equally salient fact that a great number of them—probably the majority—featured all the blandness and conciliatory (if often insincere) language that we would expect. The literary record naturally tends to feature the remarkable over the unremarkable,[65] and we need to set against it the epigraphic record, which features its own bias of archiving the smoothly finished agreement rather than any of the disputations that preceded it. Our contemporary framework for understanding diplomatic communication is perhaps hampered by the hundreds of years of theoretical and pragmatic constructs that have combined to create a sense of what "diplomacy" is; our framework is also perhaps overly constrained by the very existence of a plethora of international institutions. The modern world still features examples of crude and forceful diplomatic messaging, behaviors often characterized as "undiplomatic." My contention is that, on the contrary, they are "diplomatic": it is just that diplomacy itself is not quite so polished as we suppose.

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64. It is impossible here to do more than scratch the surface of the vast scholarly literature on diplomacy in the ancient Mediterranean.

65. Such as the many failed embassies in the *Excerpta de legationibus*: Brennan (2009); Eilers (2009b), 6.

16

Coinage and the Roman Economy

Kenneth W. Harl

THIS CHAPTER DISCUSSES coins as a medium of communication as well as an economic instrument that facilitated—and, in my opinion, assured—the exchange and movement of goods and services across the Roman Empire. It is important to realize that coins function in several ways: through iconography (or symbolism), through circulation, and as a store of value. Historians have focused on the first aspect, debating the content of the messages on coins. However, discussion of the other two aspects, circulation and value, has been left to numismatists, who have diligently researched the second and largely ignored the third. This chapter reviews all three aspects, but concentrates on the third, concluding with a discussion of fiduciary coins of the Roman Empire during the third and early fourth centuries CE.

Some other ancient monetary instruments are ignored here. Bullion could both circulate and serve as a store of value, but it did not bear images as opposed to markings. Even as a store of value, it differed from coinage because its value was intrinsic and measured by weight, whereas the value given to coins was conventional, and measured according to number and amount. As a consequence, coins were more convenient as a means of payment or exchange. *A fortiori*, coinage differed from natural currencies such as cattle and cowrie shells. These could not bear images, let alone be valued by weight or amount as opposed to number; hence they were not only inconvenient, but also unreliable because of their lack of uniformity. Finally, coinage differed from ancient monies of account; that is, records of amounts of bullion (mainly silver) that were pledged in standard amounts such as the talents, mnae, and shekels of the Fertile Crescent, and the talents, minas, and drachmae of the Greeks. This kind of money did not bear images either, and,

although it commonly functioned as a medium of exchange, it served less often as a means of paying taxes and tribute. Despite its convenience and uniformity, it was not universally acceptable. It met the needs of merchant houses more than those of smaller enterprises or most individuals. Coins, in short, were the most serviceable kind of money.

Among the aspects of coinage, communication of messages is the one most often studied. Coins with their legends (inscriptions) and types (images) communicated many different types of messages, be they political, religious, cultural, or social. Scholarly debate has centered on this role of coins ever since Hugo Jones raised doubts over coins as a source of information, ironically in an essay in honor of the noted numismatist Harold Mattingly. Jones despaired of interpreting coin types and legends because, in his opinion: "In the absence of any allusion to the matter in ancient literature, one can judge only on grounds of general probability."[1]

In response, numismatists and historians have debated how various classes of people in the Greek or Roman world comprehended coin types. They have combed the literary and epigraphic sources for references to the intelligibility or comprehension of coin types.[2] Too often, they have advocated one of two positions, either extolling or dismissing coins as a significant medium. Today the debate lies between these two extremes. Among those upholding coins as a medium communicating messages, none would advocate that even the most overt types celebrating imperial victories were propaganda in a modern sense. Roman coin types and legends were far removed from, say, Leni Riefenstahl's movie *Triumph of the Will* (1934).

Instead, coin types and legends conformed to other artistic conventions and presented traditional values with a spin to the emperor's benefit. In his book *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus,* Paul Zanker has masterfully placed coins within the context of other media communicating such messages.[3] Anyone who has walked down the marble street of Perge through the Hellenistic Gate remodeled by the patroness Plancia Magna (Figure 16.1),[4]

1. Jones (1956), 14.

2. Harl (1987), 31–37, cites the earlier scholarship on the debate. The most significant new contributions are the essays in Howgego, Heuchert, and Burnett (2005), together with Noreña (2001); (2011), 190–200. Wallace-Hadrill (1986) offers judicious cautions about numismatic iconography. For reservations about the speed and ease of transmitting coin images, see Wolters (2003); (2006).

3. Zanker (1988). For comparable study on the iconography of later Roman coins, see Hedlund (2008).

4. Boatwright (1991).

FIGURE 16.1 Tridrachma. Perge, Pamphylia; Trajan (98–117 CE). Diam. 23 mm. (Sydenham, 190. All coins shown in this chapter are from the K. W. Harl Collection. For clarity, all are shown at the same size, with the diameter of each noted in its caption)

or past the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias,[5] is aware of how many public images and inscriptions assaulted a Roman's senses every day. Coins were miniature versions of these media of communication. Pergamum, for example, issued a series of medallion-sized bronze coins depicting the visit of the Emperor Caracalla to its Asclepieion in 214 CE (Figures 16.2–3).[6] Each reverse type has been taken from a panel of a relief sculpture narrating his visit. The impact of this Pergamene relief on the viewer would have been comparable to that of the frescoes depicting the cycle of Rama on the surrounding temenos walls of Buddhist sanctuaries in Thailand. The coins reminded the beholder of the grander relief.

The perception of messages by the viewers is still subject to debate. Recent efforts to quantify the types of messages disseminated on imperial coins, or to organize messages according to the specific audiences targeted, are far from conclusive.[7] Nonetheless, there is hardly cause to doubt the intention of the imperial government in disseminating messages on coins, even if the public

5. See Smith (1987) for the reliefs now on display in correct sequence in the Archaeological Museum at Geyre.

6. Harl (1987), 55–58, with plates 23–24.

7. Noreña (2011), 1–199, 326–359, and app. 1–10, makes a statistical analysis of the frequency of personifications by type based on 180,000 specimens in published hoards. These data are not a reliable guide to the number of coins originally struck, and thus not a sure means of counting the messages in circulation. A die study alone might provide reliable statistics (but is impossible, given the numbers of surviving imperial coins). Noreña's identification of personifications as imperial virtues and imperial benefits overlooks the religious aspects of what are goddesses, and often specific cult statues, plus sacrificial scenes.

FIGURE 16.2 Eight-assaria piece. Pergamum, Mysia; Caracalla (198–217 CE). Diam. 44 mm.
(*BMC Mysia*, p. 154, no. 321)

FIGURE 16.3 Eight-assaria piece. Pergamum, Mysia; Caracalla. Diam. 44 mm.
(*SNG France* 2244)

misunderstood or ignored them. Coins, along with other media, did convey news and cultural values, if not propaganda in the modern sense.

More important for the topic of communication, I suggest, is the wide circulation of coins, especially during Rome's imperial peace.[8] Circulation involves two factors, space and time. Distance is easily documented. Currently, numismatists each year publish reports of coin hoards, as well as formidable volumes cataloguing coins found in excavations. Coins were often carried far from their place of origin, so that they are an essential source for regional or

8. For the wide circulation of the Roman silver denarius, see Howgego (1994); Harl (1996), 231–249. For circulation of imperial bronze coins in the West, see Hobley (1998), 138–140; Kemmers (2009), 152–155. For civic and provincial currencies in the eastern provinces, see Harl (1987), 12–20; (1996), 97–124.

FIGURE 16.4 Bigate denarius. M. Junius Silvanus; 145 BCE. Diam. 18 mm. (Cr. 259/1)

FIGURE 16.5 Serrate denarius. Q. Antonius Balbus; 83–82 BCE. Diam. 17 mm. (Cr. 379/1b)

long distance trade. Because later Roman imperial coins carried mint marks, finds of such coins permit conclusions about how well the provinces were supplied with money.[9] Coins found beyond the imperial frontiers, notably in Germany (Figures 16.4–5) and India (Figure 16.6), document the extent of Roman commerce as well as the types of Roman coins that were preferred in foreign markets.[10]

9. Fulford (1978); cf. Greene (1986), 54–59. For a model study of coin circulation in the provinces, see Fitz (1978).

10. For finds in India, see Turner (1989). The finds from Germania are published in *FDA*. See further, Wheeler (1954), 63–68; Harl (1996), 292–313.

FIGURE 16.6 Denarius, ca. 2 BCE–4 CE. Lugdunum; Augustus (27 BCE–14 CE). Diam. 18 mm.
(*RIC* I², p. 56, no. 21.1)

Circulation also involves time: this aspect of the medium is often forgotten in discussions of coins in the next two roles to be discussed, namely iconography and value. Coins, even those struck in silver or gold, could circulate for very long periods, a fact affecting our understanding of money supply.[11] By counting surviving dies among a coin population, numismatists have employed probability formulae to calculate total dies, and then they have estimated production based on the assumption that 20,000 to 40,000 coins were struck from a single obverse die.[12] These figures, however, even if valid, are not indices of the money supply, because older coins circulated for a long time. Hence, any estimates of the number of coins struck based on die studies for any period are not a secure guide to total money supply.

This point can be illustrated by two examples. First, in my own collection, there are three unpublished silver coins bearing countermarks with the monogram of Vespasian (69–79), the imperial candidate of the eastern legions in 69 CE, the "Year of the Four Emperors." A countermark is applied to an existing coin by striking it with a small engraved punch die; this method

11. Duncan-Jones (1996), 163–168, and table 11, argues for an annual production of 22 million denarii between 64 and 235 CE. Silver and gold coins were subject to recall and recoinage whenever the standard was lowered; see Harl (1996), 11–16, 125–136. Whatever the validity of his method, Duncan-Jones' estimates of 443 million denarii produced under Antoninus Pius and 532 million denarii under Septimius Severus reflect major recoinages in these reigns.

12. Carter (1983). For the technology of striking coins, see Sellwood (1963), whose estimate of 11,500 to 20,000 coins per obverse die is now considered too low. Kinns (1983) estimates 40,000 coins per obverse die; Crawford (1974), 694–697 estimates 30,000. Buttrey (1993), (1994) expresses reservations about these statistical methods. Responses to Buttrey: de Callataÿ (1995); Lockyear (1999).

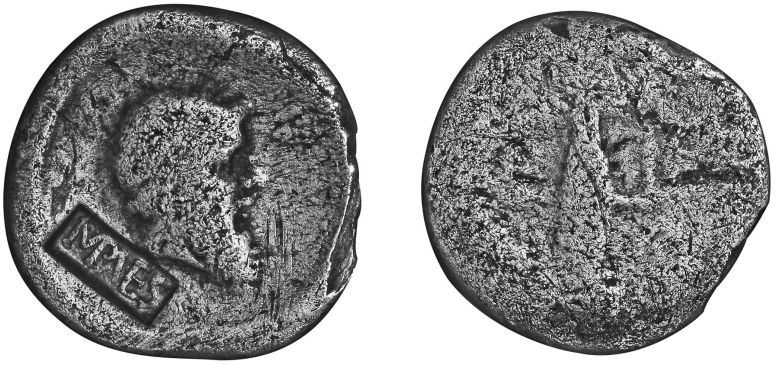

FIGURE 16.7 Denarius. Roman Republic; 86 BCE. Diam. 20 mm. (Cr. 350A/1b)

allows for rapid stamping of coins. In 74–79, Roman authorities at Ephesus ordered the countermarking of older silver coins in the name of the Emperor Vespasian.[13] Many of these comprised denarii of earlier emperors. What is significant are the large numbers of Republican and provincial silver coins that were still in circulation when the countermarking was ordered. My collection includes two unpublished denarii of the Roman Republic countermarked in this way: one was struck around 86 BCE, the other was minted at Ephesus in 49 BCE on orders of the Optimate consuls L. Cornelius Lentulus and C. Claudius Marcellus (Figures 16.7–8).[14] No less notable is a large silver cistophorus (equivalent to three Roman denarii) struck at Ephesus to celebrate the wedding of Mark Antony and Octavia in 39 BCE (Figure 16.9).[15] All three coins were between 100 and 150 years old, and had lost between 11% and 15% of their weight, when they were revalidated for use by the countermark of Vespasian.[16] Such countermarked denarii probably circulated for another fifty years until they were withdrawn from circulation and recoined by Trajan in 107.[17] Some cistophori so countermarked circulated even longer, because they

13. Howgego (1985), no. 839.

14. Crawford (1974), 365, no. 350B, and 462, no. 445/3b, respectively, for types.

15. *RPC* I, p. 377, no. 2201 = Syd. 119 for the types. For countermark, see Howgego (1985), no. 840. Discussion by Thiron (1963), and Sutherland (1964).

16. This amount of loss is consistent with the calculation of a coin's weight loss due to circulation by Duncan-Jones (1987).

17. Harl (1996), 92, 107.

FIGURE 16.8 Denarius. C. Claudius Marcellus and L. Cornelius Lentulus; 49 BCE. Diam. 17 mm.
(Cr. 445/3b)

FIGURE 16.9 Cistophorus. Ephesus; Mark Antony and Octavia; 39 BCE. Diam. 28 mm.
(Howgego ctmk 839 = Martini 100)

were overstruck during the recoinage under Hadrian in 123.[18] This same circulation pattern is confirmed by coin finds from Pompeii, where at the time of the eruption of Mount Vesuvius (79 CE), over half the silver denarii in circulation were Republican denarii 100 to 250 years old.[19]

Token or fiduciary coins circulated even longer, for between three and four generations. A cache of nearly 4,000 Roman bronze coins (*aes*) was recovered from a shipwreck in the Garonne River that occurred in 160 CE. Recent coins

18. Note Classical Numismatic Group, Auction 70 (September 21, 2005), no. 1001: cistophorus of Mark Antony and Octavia with the countermark of Vespasian overstruck for Hadrian at Sardis. For the type, see Metcalf (1980), type 47 (new dies).

19. Breglia (1950), with discussion by Harl (1996), 16–18; Duncan-Jones (2003).

were a tiny percentage of this cache; nearly half the coins were twenty to forty years old, another third sixty years old, and a sixth over a century old.[20]

In short, coins were ubiquitous in the Roman world.[21] There is no reason to conclude, as Moses Finley did, that, "Money was coin and nothing else, and shortage of coins was chronic, both in total numbers and availability of preferred types or denominations."[22] The wide circulation of coins in time and space invalidates arguments for a dearth of coins in the Roman Empire.[23]

THE THIRD AND foremost aspect of coins is as a store of value: coins are money. Unlike the other two aspects, this one has been underestimated. In his *Ancient Economy*, Finley assigned coins a minimal part in what many scholars would dub today the underdeveloped economies of Greek cities and the Roman Empire:

> The Greek passion, and for beautiful coins at that, was not shared by many of their most advanced neighbors, Phoenicians, Egyptians, Etruscans, Romans, because it was essentially a political phenomenon, "a piece of local vanity, patriotism or advertisement with no far-reaching importance" (the Near Eastern world got along perfectly well for millennia, even in its extensive trade, with metallic currency exchanged by weight, without coining their metal). Hence, the insistence, with the important exception of Athens, on artistic coins, economically a nonsense (no money-changer gave a better rate for a four-drachma Syracusan coin because it was signed by Euainetos).[24]

I sense here that Finley regarded coins as a nuisance. Even so, many historians have followed his lead. Those interested in the social history of Archaic and Classical Greece have envisioned a primitive economy as a background

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20. Harl (1996), 83–84 and 258, with Table 10.1, based on Étienne and Rachet (1984), 333–334, 421–422.

21. Harl (1996), 250–269; Reece (1984), Fig. 1. For circulation of coins in military camps, see Kemmers (2006); Howgego (1992).

22. Finley (1985), 166–167.

23. The case has been restated most recently by von Reden (2010), 18–125, arguing that local economies of the Roman Empire were based on bronze tokens and that credit was an index of chronic scarcity of coins; cf. Harl (1996), 15–18. Credit increased the velocity of specie in circulation and furthered monetization; see Braudel (1979), 390–397, for analogous use of credit in early modern Europe.

24. Finley (1985), 167.

for Herodotus or Pindar.[25] In the case of imperial Rome, Finley's successors seldom discuss coins as money, for they reduce them to fiscal instruments that benefitted only the imperial government and facilitated the collection of taxes.[26] Coins and markets are sidestepped.

Finley admits bewilderment about why Athenian tetradrachmae, "owls," were preferred in the Aegean world and Egypt. The reason is that the types of ancient coins made them a reliable store of value. Even the types of the earliest coins, those minted by the Lydian and Persian kings, communicated value (Figure 16.10). The Persian gold coin, bearing the portrait of King Darius, was dubbed by the Greeks a *daric*, which became the generic name of any gold coin. Hence, the first gold staters of King Philip II of Macedon (359–336), destined to displace the Persian gold coin, were initially called *darekoi philippeioi* (Figure 16.11).[27] In the Classical period, trade coins minted by Aegina, Corinth, and Athens were recognized and traded according to their types: turtles, colts, and owls (Figures 16.12–13). The value of coins of Hellenistic kings was also reckoned by type, especially gold staters and silver tetradrachmae struck in the name of Alexander the Great (and carrying the heads of Athena and of Heracles, respectively: Figures 16.14–15), or the tetradrachmae bearing the posthumous portrait of Alexander minted by

FIGURE 16.10 Lydia, electrum trite; ca. 650–625 BCE. Diam. 13 mm. (Weidauer Type XV)

25. Kurke (1991); (1999); Seaford (2004).

26. Von Reden (2010), 89–92 argues that imperial fiscal expenditure and trade were local or regional, and thus of limited economic impact; so also Wolters (1999), 233–234. Cf. Hopkins (1980) with Kessler and Temin (2008), whose study of prices bears out Hopkins' position.

27. Le Rider (2001), 187–196.

FIGURE 16.11 Gold stater. Macedon; Philip II (359–336 BCE). Diam. 17 mm.
(Le Rider, Group II; cf. 420/310 dies)

FIGURE 16.12 Didrachma. Corinth; ca. 345–307 BCE. Diam. 20 mm.
(SNG 72)

FIGURE 16.13 Tetradrachma. Athens; 454–404 BCE. Diam. 23 mm.
(Kroll 8)

FIGURE 16.14 Gold stater. Macedon; Alexander the Great (359–336 BCE). Diam. 17 mm. (Price 172)

FIGURE 16.15 Tetradrachma. Macedon; Alexander the Great. Diam. 26 mm. (Price 3202 variant)

Lysimachus (Figure 16.16).[28] All these coins were widely traded and imitated down to the Roman period.

Designating a coin's value by its type was a Roman practice, too. Tacitus, writing early in the reign of Trajan (98–117 CE), notes how Germans preferred the Republican denarii, nicknamed *bigati* and *serrati*, over imperial coins (Figures 16.4–5 above).[29] In the markets of the Near East, the silver

28. Price (1991), 29–34, 71–80; Boehringer (1972), 6–8, 32–64. For posthumous Lysimachi, see Mørkholm (1991), 35–36, 145–148; Stoljarik (1997).

29. Tac. *Germ.* 5, 46; finds of coins bear out his remark, as at Wheeler (1954), 54–60.

FIGURE 16.16 Tetradrachma, 297–281 BCE. Lampsacus; Lysimachus (316–281 BCE). Diam. 31 mm.
(Cf. Thompson, pp. 170–171)

FIGURE 16.17 Tetradrachma struck on the standard of Tyre, 63/64 CE. Antioch; Nero (54–68 CE). Diam. 25 mm.
(*RPC* I. 4186)

tetradrachma, originally of Tyre, bearing a striding eagle on the reverse, was long preferred as a coin "of good silver with the Tyrian stamp" (Figure 16.17).[30] In the late second and third centuries CE, the vast quantities of fractional bronze and copper coins minted by Greek cities of the Roman East illustrate this point. Often obverse portraits on these bronze coins designated value denominated in assaria, the Greek equivalent of the Roman asses (sixteen to eighteen of which were reckoned to the silver denarius). The largest coins of six assaria carried a portrait of the emperor; the four-assaria piece one of the empress or the Caesar; the three-assaria often a portrait of the Roman Senate

30. Harl (1996), 103–104.

(*hiera synkletos*); and lesser denominations, those of the city's *demos* (assembly), *boule* (council), tutelary divinities, or eponymous heroes (Figures 16.18–21).[31] The convention was so widespread that cities in Asia Minor often shared the same obverse dies bearing standardized portraits and cut by workshops of professional engravers operating in major cities. These obverse dies were matched with reverse dies bearing types relevant to each city.[32]

Such communication of a coin's value continues to this day. Anyone who has negotiated Krugerrands, Napoleon 40-franc pieces, and British sovereigns

FIGURE 16.18 Three assaria? (unmarked). Aphrodisias, Caria; ca. 238–241 CE. Diam. 26 mm.
(MacDonald, p. 153, no. 196)

FIGURE 16.19 Three assaria. Ancyra, Phrgyia; ca. 193–235 CE. Diam. 22 mm.
(*BMC Phrygia*, p. 59, no. 11)

31. MacDonald (1992), 17–20; Klose (1987), 103–114.

32. Kraft (1972), 13–21; engravers operated from a major city (called *Werkstätte* by Kraft), or traveled from city to city.

FIGURE 16.20 Two assaria? (unmarked). Aphrodisias, Caria; 200–260 CE. Diam. 19 mm.
(MacDonald, p. 107, 160/310 variant)

FIGURE 16.21 One assarion. Silandus, Lydia; ca. 200–250 CE. Diam. 19 mm.
(*BMC Lydia*, p. 80, no. 12)

knows that these coins, all recognized by their types, have retained their value over long periods. The most striking example is the Austrian thaler struck in the name of Maria Theresa and dated to 1780.[33] This coin is the modern counterpart to the Athenian tetradrachma of the fifth century BCE. It is still an international trade coin, struck by the mint of Vienna, that circulates in East Africa and the Middle East. Since 1936, Rome, Paris, Brussels, London, and Bombay have also minted these thalers. At least 389 million have been struck at Vienna and other Hapsburg mints, but the number should be more than doubled to 800 million when all those struck outside of Austria are included. Each thaler

33. For circulation and production, see Tschoegl (2001); Gervais (1982). For an introduction to the series, see Semple (2006).

is just under three-quarters of an ounce of pure silver, and carries the portrait of the empress on the obverse and a baroque coat of arms on the reverse.[34] The decorative types and the date 1780 convey the coin's value. In Aden, merchants known as Shroffs have long acquired these thalers and resold them to large Arab trading and banking firms.[35] The firms export them to ports along the Red Sea for purchase of hides, skins, coffee, incense, and honey. Clever speculators profit further by buying up thalers at lower prices in the hot season between May to September when sales go down and demand for silver falls. In the same fashion, Athenian tetradrachmae (Figure 16.13 above), and Roman imperial denarii (Figure 16.6 above) circulated in the markets of Arabia Felix and inspired local imitations of favored trade coins.[36]

The Romans, too, employed value marks on their coins. These were first applied to copper or bronze coins. Syracuse so marked its fractional copper currency in the late Classical era.[37] The Roman Republic utilized value marks and types together to designate its token bronze currency.[38] The principal denomination was the *as*, a proxy piece representing a pound of bronze; it carried the head of Janus on the obverse, and on the reverse the prow with a prominent value mark (Figure 16.22). These types of the *as* were fondly remembered in the imperial age when tossing coins with "heads" (*capita*) or "ships" (*naves*).[39] Twice, the Republic added value marks on the silver denarius; first after a debasement in 213–212 BCE (Figures 16.23–25), and second after the retariffing of the denarius upward from ten to sixteen asses in 141 (Figure 16.26).[40]

In addition, many Greek cities in the Roman East employed value marks on their bronze coins, which were exchanged against imperial silver coins (Figures 16.27–28). The rates of exchange changed with each debasement of the imperial silver antoninianus (or double denarius piece) between 238 and 260 CE.[41] In the 250s, cities on the Pamphylian littoral, notably Aspendus,

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34. The coins are 39.5 mm diameter, 2.5 mm thick, 28.066 grs; .0833 fine for silver content of 23.389 grs, or 0.752 Troy ounce.

35. Stride (1956).

36. Harl (1996), 298 with pl. 32, nos. 262–263.

37. Kraay (1976), 230–231.

38. Crawford (1974), 43–51; cf. Harl (1996), 28–29.

39. Macr. 1.7.22; cf. *Origo gentis Romanae* 3.5.

40. For the issues of 213–212 BCE, see Crawford (1974), nos. 4/1–11; Buttrey (1965). For coins of 141 BCE, see Crawford (1974), nos. 225–228, with discussion by Buttrey (1957).

41. Harl (1996), 139–140. For value marks on coins of Side, see Kromann (1989), but her suggestion of pieces marked IA as denominations of 9 or 11 assaria is implausible; they are 10-assaria pieces.

FIGURE 16.22 As. Roman Republic; 211–201 BCE. Diam. 35 mm.
(Cr. 56/2)

FIGURE 16.23 Denarius. Roman Republic; 214–211 BCE. Diam. 21 mm.
(Cr. 44/5)

FIGURE 16.24 Quinarius. Roman Republic; 214–211 BCE. Diam. 15 mm.
(Cr. 44/6)

FIGURE 16.25 Sestertius. Roman Republic; 214–211 BCE. Diam. 12 mm.
(Cr. 44/7)

FIGURE 16.26 Sixteen asses. Roman Republic; C. Alburius Geminus; 134 BCE. Diam. 19 mm.
(Cr. 244/1)

FIGURE 16.27 Five assaria. Side, Pamphylia; Valerian I (253–260 CE). Diam. 32 mm.
(Franke-Nollé 1924–1925)

FIGURE 16.28 Ten assaria. Side, Pamphylia; Gallienus (253–268 CE). Diam. 31 mm. (*SNG France* 887; *BMC Lycia*, p. 158)

Attaleia, Perge, and Side, countermarked their older coins with marks of value in assaria so that each coin's value was increased by one-third, one-half, or even double its original face value.[42] These older coins circulated at par with the coins struck on the same weight standard but valued at the higher tariff after 255. In 274, when the Emperor Aurelian conducted the first currency reform of imperial money in fifty years, cities in Asia Minor responded by again countermarking their bronze coins.[43] They devalued them, restoring them to their value prior to 255. At Side, many older, heavy coins struck between the reigns of Septimius Severus (193–211) and Valerian (253–260) had most likely circulated at values of ten assaria or higher in the inflationary period of the 250s and 260s. In 274, these coins were revalued downwards by countermarking with a value mark of epsilon denoting five assaria (Figure 16.29). Many light-weight ten-assaria pieces, which had been introduced to replace the heavy-weight five-assaria denomination in 255, were also countermarked as five-assaria pieces (Figure 16.30). Often the original mark of iota is still legible beneath the epsilon countermark (Figure 16.31).[44] Side was one of several cities that conducted a particularly thorough countermarking in 274, thereby bringing the bronze currency back to its original value before the price surges of the 250s and 260s.

42. Klose (1987), 110–114; cf. Harl (1996), 139–140.

43. Harl (1996), 145–147. In his Egyptian regnal year 6 (274–275 CE), Aurelian also reformed the billon tetradrachma of Alexandria that was revalued at parity with the new aurelianianus; see Metcalf (1998).

44. Specimen of Side (Gallienus; cf. *SNG v Aulock* 4841, 4848) so countermarked in K. W. Harl Collection.

FIGURE 16.29 Bronze coin revalued in 274 CE. Side, Pamphylia; Geta (209–212 CE). Diam. 32 mm.

(cf. reverse type, *SNG vAulock* 4845)

FIGURE 16.30 Ten-assaria piece revalued as five in 274 CE. Side, Pamphylia; Valerian II (253–255 CE). Diam. 30 mm.

(*SNG Pfälz Privats* 888)

FIGURE 16.31 Ten-assaria piece revalued as five in 274 CE (original mark of value still visible). Side, Pamphyia; Gallienus. Diam. 30 mm.

(*SNG vAulock* 4841 and 4844)

Officials of the Roman Empire inherited from Greek cities another means for informing the public of the value of its coins. This was the publication of decrees laying down regulations for exchange rates and fair prices enforced by market officials called *epimeletai* or *curatores*. The earliest, and one of the best preserved, is from Pergamum in the reign of Hadrian (117–138). In this imperial edict, we learn that disputes over exchange rates between the imperial silver denarius and local bronze coins (assaria) in the fish market forced a clarification of rates and prices.[45] At Ephesus, market wardens posted bread prices prominently on the gate of Augustus and Maecenas for all to see as they entered the commercial market.[46] Edicts from Cyzicus, Pisidian Antioch, and Mylasa regulated the value of coins to ensure fair pricing.[47]

LET US NOW turn to two of the most controversial coins of the later Roman Empire, the silver-clad fiduciary coins of Aurelian in 274, and of Diocletian in 293 (Figures 16.32–35). In issuing these, the imperial authorities employed all three means of communication to inform the public of the coins' value: type, value-marks, and regulation. The significance of the value-marks on these coins has been overlooked or misunderstood by scholars who have dismissed the coins as the debased currency of the Dominate.[48] European scholars writing in German during the 1920s and 1930s created a vision of late third-century coinage by making comparisons between the hyperinflation of the Great Depression and price surges and debasement in ancient Rome.[49] Later scholars have posited that the Late Roman imperial government returned to a natural economy (*Naturwirtschaft*), levying taxes in kind, collecting taxes in gold coins treated as bullion, and dumping on the public bronze coins with a deceptive silver coating.[50] Finley wrote: "Indeed, the time came, early in the

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45. *OGIS* 484 = *ESAR* IV 892–895 (T. R. S. Broughton); see discussion by Macro (1976).

46. *ESAR* IV 879–881, for bread prices at Ephesus (cited in obols) of the second century CE.

47. The edict of 38 CE from Cyzicus (*IGRR* IV 146) imposes maximum prices in the market there that might have been disrupted due to renovations; partial translation in Lewis (1974), 49 no. 18. See *OGIS* 515 (Mylasa) = *ESAR* IV 895–897 for regulations on exchange probably issued by Septimius Severus and Caracalla. For such regulations as precedents for the Edict of Maximum Prices, see Corcoran (2000), 213–215.

48. See Jones (1964), 438–48; MacMullen (1976), 96–128; cf. Potter (2014), 138–140, 268–270, 385–387; Corbier (2005).

49. See, notably, Mickwitz (1932), 80–178, for such a vision of inflation and collapse of imperial coinage in 235–284, one still widely accepted: note von Reden (2010), 54–55; cf. Depeyrot (1991).

50. Kent's argument (1956) that Roman gold coins were privilege bullion rather than true coins influenced subsequent interpretations.

FIGURE 16.32 Aurelianianus. Serdica; Aurelian (270–275 CE). Diam. 23 mm. (*RIC* V.2, p. 296, no. 279)

FIGURE 16.33 Aurelianianus. Serdica; Aurelian. Diam. 23 mm. (*RIC* V.2, p. 297, no. 288)

FIGURE 16.34 Nummus. Alexandria; Diocletian (284–305 CE). Diam. 25 mm. (*RIC* VI, p. 665, no. 32a)

FIGURE 16.35 Nummus. Antioch; Diocletian. Diam. 27 mm.
(*RIC* VI, p. 620, no. 34a)

Roman Empire, when the emperors could not resist taking advantage of their power and their coining monopoly to enrich themselves by debasing the coinage, a procedure that hardly contributed to healthy coin circulation."[51] Such a conclusion misses the point that later Roman coins had value. The fact is borne out by the widespread hoarding of them.

Late Roman coins were fiduciary money. For example, the denominations introduced by Aurelian and Diocletian used type- and value-marks to indicate each coin's value, plus control-marks indicating the series, mint, and *officina* (or workshop) within the mint. All these signs communicated the conventional, as opposed to intrinsic, value of the coin. To fail to see this act of communication between coin issuer and coin user, and then between one user and another, is to miss the point that coins are a medium of communication rather than merely a manufactured quantity of metal. The ancient public knew better, and refused to reject fiduciary coinage on principle. Their concern was not the basis of the coinage, but price inflation.

The Roman government manipulated the coinage with corresponding confidence. In 238–270, successive emperors rapidly debased the silver currency, based on an antoninianus or double denarius (designated by the radiate portrait of the emperor). In 274, Aurelian replaced this debased silver currency with a silver-coated fiduciary coin, the aurelianianus, tariffed at five denarii communes (a money of account used instead of coined denarii). The new coin was of improved manufacture and silver content. On the obverse, it carries the radiate imperial portrait and, on the reverse, clear value-marks XXI

51. Finley (1985), 166.

or KA (= 20 sestertii), or a denomination of 5 d.c. (Figures 16.32–33 above).[52] Even though we have almost no documentary records for the period from 274 to 293 when this coin was in circulation, hoards nonetheless indicate that it displaced the older money, and apparently proved a success.

In 293, the Emperor Diocletian enacted an even more ambitious currency reform, replacing all the money in circulation with a new currency for the entire empire. He, too, based his currency on a fiduciary coin, the nummus (often misnamed "follis" in the older scholarly literature), with three times the weight and over twice the silver content of the aurelianianus. The nummus carries a distinct laureate obverse portrait of the Tetrarchs and the new reverse type GENIO POPVLI ROMANI. Nummi are also sometimes marked with XXI or K/V, designating the coin as valued at 1 = 20 sestertii and 20 sestertii = 5 d.c. (Figures 16.34–35 above).[53] Diocletian's aim was to halt price inflation, which, he complained, had reduced the value of soldiers' pay.[54]

Thanks to these steps, the imperial government paid its fiscal obligations in silver-clad fiduciary coins for about a century. Emperors had already employed a similar provincial fiduciary currency in Egypt, where wheat prices held stable for centuries.[55] All these imperial fiduciary silver-clad coins were used to meet tax obligations, and they could also be exchanged against gold coins.[56] The coins were valid for all debts, public and private. The Roman government had done what the United States government would do when it abandoned the gold standard in 1933, and detached the dollar from silver in 1964 and 1968.

In the late fourth century, the government continued its work. In 362, the Emperor Julian recalled, melted down, and restruck older *billon* (alloyed silver)

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52. Zos. 1.61.3 is our only source for the reform; cf. Harl (1996), 136–143. The coin's diameter is 22 mm; weight 4.00 gr. (probably struck at 80 to the Roman pound).

53. The nummus circulated as the new denomination of 5 d.c., and the aurelianiani in circulation were perhaps revalued at 2 d.c.

54. Harl (1996), 155–157. The nummus is 29 mm in diameter; weight between 10.00 and 11.50 gr. (probably struck at 32 to the Roman pound). For the value of 5 d.c., see Harl (1983); cf. Hendy (1985), 452–462; *contra* an initial value of 10 d.c. argued by Erim, Reynolds, and Crawford (1971), 175–176. For inflation affecting soldiers, see *Edictum de Pretiis Maximis*, pref. 14; cf. 6.

55. See Rathbone (1996), 321–329; (1997); (2009); fundamental to his analysis is Duncan-Jones (1976). For a critique of his method and conclusions, note Bang (2008), 152–173. See Lendon (1990), 110–111, for fourfold inflation of wheat prices after 275; but he ignores two numismatic complications, the fiduciary nature of the Egyptian tetradrachma and the recoinage necessitated by the reform of the coinage in 274/275: see Harl (1996), 118–124.

56. See *CPR* V. 26. 604–605 (around 435 CE) for collection of two-thirds of the land taxes at Skar, in the Hermopolite nome of Egypt, in bronze fiduciary coins, even though the obligations were reckoned in solidi; see Harl (1996), 178–179.

FIGURE 16.36 Maiorina. Siscia; Julian II (360–363 CE). Diam. 28 mm. (*RIC* VIII, p. 381, no. 411)

coins as new currency based on a silver-clad maiorina that approximated Diocletian's nummus (Figure 16.36). In the process, the number of mints and *officinae* was halved, suggesting that Julian also aimed to bring down prices by lowering the number of coins in circulation.[57] Certainly, in 371 the emperors Valentinian I and Valens announced that they were reducing the number of fiduciary coins in circulation in order to bring down prices and promote exchange of goods in the market.[58] For comparison, we may note a much earlier instance during the Tetrarchy where we even know the response to such fiduciary coins. When vendors and consumers refused to accept the nummus at the value officially set for it, the Tetrarchs responded by raising its notational value. In early 301, the nummus was probably circulating at a value of 12½ d.c., and this was then doubled by a monetary edict issued on September 1, 301, a copy of which has been uncovered in the excavations at Aphrodisias.[59]

When revaluation failed to check price rises, the Tetrarchs responded in more ambitious fashion. In November or early December 301, they issued regulations known as the "Edict of Maximum Prices," and posted it in the markets of thousands of cities.[60] Since this price edict could not have been

57. *RIC* VIII pp. 46–47; the total number of *officinae* was reduced by 52% from 73 to 35.

58. *C.J.* 11.11.2; see Hendy (1985), 473. The law was probably issued in tandem with *C. Theod.* 11.21.1 (371 CE), which ended the striking of silver-clad coins (*aes dichoneutum*). See Harl (1996), 172.

59. Erim, Reynolds, and Crawford (1971), but the value of the nummus here should be restored as 25, not 20; see Harl (1983).

60. See Lauffer (1971); Giacchero (1974), with translation in *ESAR* V 305–420 (E. Graser). Rathbone (2009), 321, draws attention to the need for a complete new edition of the Edict

read aloud—even its prologue was far too long for that—the Tetrarchs ordered the regulations to be inscribed in stone and erected in public places. Copies have survived on the walls of the *tholos* in the central agora of Aezani and on the back of the *bouleuterion* of Stratonicea overlooking an axial street.[61]

These regulations appeared in both Greek and Latin, and all prices and wages were quoted in denarius communis, a unit of account by which everyone could reckon the value of their coins. As Sture Bolin first noted, the reckoning of prices was based on multiples of two and five—a reckoning that dated from 141 BCE when the denarius was revalued at 16 asses.[62] All the prices had to be converted into specific coins, notably the silver-coated nummus that was originally issued as a fiat coin of 5 d.c. (Figures 16.34–35 above), and its radiate fraction of 2 d.c. (Figure 16.37). In the price edict, these two denominations were worth 25 d.c. and perhaps 10 d.c., respectively.

How did the price edict work? Market officials referred to published copies when they settled marketplace disputes. The stated prices and wages set limits according to which officials and litigants adjusted prices, wages, quality of goods, and other issues. Every day in every market across three continents, in an empire of some 60 million people, a colossal if mundane commercial discourse took place—an all-important one tied to necessities. By this edict, the Tetrarchs communicated to their subjects the value of imperial money,

FIGURE 16.37 Radiate (coin of 2 d.c.). Cyzicus; Diocletian. Diam. 21 mm. (*RIC* VI, p. 581, no. 16a)

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accompanied by reevaluation of documentary papyri with price series, especially in the light of new inscriptions from Aezani; see Crawford and Reynolds (1979).

61. Naumann (1973), 28–35, and Fig. 13.

62. Bolin (1958), 302–303, identifying the 5 d.c. and 2 d.c. coins as the nummus and post-reform radiate, respectively.

but the public, too, had a means to communicate its reaction. Lactantius, who despised the Tetrarchs as persecutors of Christians, noted that vendors withdrew goods;[63] they and consumers widely ignored the regulations and engaged in a black market. Within months, if Lactantius is to be believed, the Tetrarchs rescinded the edict, thereby allowing the nummus, tariffed at 25 d.c., to be exchanged according to the prices dictated by the market.[64] The market thus had won. Prices and wages stabilized, and the value of nummus at 25 d.c. lasted at least until 313, when civil wars and debasements of the coin initiated by Constantine generated new price surges (Figures 16.38–39).[65] In 321–324, Licinius, too, responded to the market by lowering the official value of his debased nummus to 12½ d.c. in a move to roll back prices (Figure 16.40).

After 301, the imperial government continued to communicate the value of its money in edicts, several of which are preserved in the *Theodosian Code*. Most impressive of these later edicts is one of 354 in which the Emperor Constantius II (337–361) recalled obsolete and debased coins, along with coins of the usurper Magnentius (350–353), and imitations and counterfeits.[66] As with the price edict of the Tetrarchs, the market influenced his decision. Vendors and customers discounted or rejected these coins, and the emperor had to eliminate them in preparation for issuing a new set of values for the accepted coins. Such dialogue between government and markets continued into the Byzantine age, when the emperors Anastasius (491–518) and Justinian (527–565) reformed the base-metal copper coinage, based on a follis of 40 nummiae, to ensure price stability.[67]

All this material—a massive fiduciary coinage, recoinage affecting tens of millions of people, commercial regulations covering the entire Mediterranean basin—furnishes evidence for an intercontinental system of communication that invites comparison with early modern Europe or even the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As economic historians have noted, a massive fiduciary coinage came into existence in the United States only in the twentieth century.[68] As for the recoinage ordered by Diocletian, it was perhaps the largest

63. Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 7.7.

64. The date of the edict's withdrawal is uncertain: see Corcoran (2000), 232–233.

65. See Harl (1996), 163–167. For the prices recorded in Attic drachma from the dossier of Theophanes around 320 CE, see Matthews (2006), 138–179. Note further the collection of prices in Szaivert and Wolters (2005).

66. *Cod. Theod.* 9. 23. 1; Hendy (1985), 470–471.

67. Metcalf (1969); cf. Harl (1996), 193–195.

68. Standard studies: Timberlake (1993); Studenski and Krooss (1952).

FIGURE 16.38 Nummus. Lugdunum; Constantine I (306–337 CE). Diam. 27 mm. (*RIC* VI, p. 264, no. 289)

FIGURE 16.39 Nummus. Nicomedia; Galerius (305–311 CE). Diam. 25 mm. (*RIC* VI, p. 562, no. 54a)

FIGURE 16.40 Nummus. Alexandria; Licinius I (308–324 CE). Diam. 18 mm. (*RIC* VII, p. 682)

such measure until the nineteenth century.[69] There is certainly no measure comparable to the Edict of Maximum Prices until the national economic regulations of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and even these regulations affected only advanced nations in Europe. In Italy, the center of the Roman Empire, comparable regulations do not predate the nineteenth century.

THE ROMAN SYSTEM could not exist in the abstract, nor could it exist only in a commercial sense. Currency and regulation on this scale require an economy to match, with forms of communication described by Taco Terpstra in Chapter 3 above. Communication through coins was thus both routine and indispensable. It facilitated the exchange of goods and services, and with it, the prosperity of the Roman world. It is absurd to regard coinage merely as an expedient for paying soldiers and officials.

In the Roman Empire, coins and markets went together. The market was where the imperial government and Roman public communicated about, and through, a currency that consisted of coins. The market was where currency had to be used, and it was where currency was sometimes found wanting. The market was not only where goods and services were bought and sold, but also where many taxes were paid.[70] In a world without such financial instruments as bills of exchange, let alone paper money, the market was where coins predominated.

The conclusions put forward here about the coins of imperial Rome should also apply to other periods and other economies of the ancient world. There is a wealth of information in the coins themselves and in relevant regulations from the Archaic Greek through Byzantine ages, as well as a wealth of communicative relationships to be explored. It is apt, therefore, to close with a remark from Herodotus, who grasped the principle when he says that the Lydians struck the first gold and silver coins and so invented the market.[71] Coins and markets went together. The Roman contribution, which was a fiduciary coinage on a grand scale, was an important episode in a history that is still unfolding.

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69. For comparison, note Dowling (1972) on the United Kingdom's needs when it adopted decimal coinage in 1971.

70. As seen from the tax registers of Karanis: Harl (1996), 234–238.

71. Hdt. 1.94.1–2.

17

Communicating Through Maps: The Roman Case

Richard Talbert

FOR CERTAIN, ANY reasonably wide-ranging consideration of communications in classical antiquity would be incomplete if it were to overlook maps. However, to anyone today with a typical Western education and intellectual background the findings are liable to prove a source of puzzlement, as well as a sharp reminder of just how foreign a country the past can prove to be. Incredible though it may seem to us, throughout classical antiquity maps as we know them seldom attained more than marginal importance, and their potential value went largely unexploited.[1] A great variety was developed, to be sure, although the number of surviving specimens is frustratingly small. Even so, it is clear that standard conventions for the presentation of a map hardly came to be established. Thus for orientation, scale, and symbology (among much else), common practice was lacking. Hence in the notorious case of a recent discovery on papyrus—a map that admittedly was never finished—scholars' interpretations of what is being represented have ranged from a single estate to the Iberian peninsula, or even the entire Mediterranean.[2]

In neither Greek nor Latin vocabulary was there ever a term in use that unequivocally signifies "map," nor were the very concepts "atlas" and "cartography" articulated; in fact, the former only dates to the sixteenth century, the

1. For overview, see, for example, *OBO* s.vv. "Mapping" (2012); "Geography" (2013); and contributions in Talbert (2012).

2. See, for example, contributions in Gallazzi et al. (2012).

latter to the nineteenth.[3] There was seemingly no profession of "mapmaker," let alone much in the way of widespread, recognized uses for the range of materials that we today would broadly categorize as maps. If there was a role for maps in formal education (where literature and rhetoric dominated the curriculum), it is all but invisible to us.[4] In any case, nowhere in classical antiquity was instruction organized on the scale of the mandatory, publicly funded programs for children instituted in the West in the late nineteenth century; nor was there the mass circulation of materials that the invention of printing made possible from the sixteenth century. By its very nature, any map more complex than a mere sketch is liable to prove a severe challenge to reproduce accurately by hand; far more taxing than a text.

Some use of maps in administration can be detected, but even at best (it seems) this use remained minimal and highly localized. Harder still to detect is the use of maps in the conduct of a state's foreign affairs, or of its military campaigns by land or sea.[5] Private travelers and mariners appear not to have used them much either; their recourse was rather to itineraries in the form of lists.[6] Geographical and ethnographic knowledge was successively expanded by such developments as Greek colonization, Alexander's campaigns, and Augustus' expansion of the Roman Empire, northward especially.[7] Ironically, a succession of Greek scientific thinkers at Alexandria—from Eratosthenes in the third century BCE to Ptolemy in the second century CE—did successfully formulate principles (which remain standard today) for representing the earth's curved surface on a two-dimensional plane, and for attempting to fix and record specific locations by means of latitude and longitude coordinates.[8] On a technical level, however, not even these scientists were able to measure either distance or time with precision, and in consequence, accurate calculation of longitude in particular was beyond them. For several centuries, dissemination and exploitation of these methods and results barely extended

3. Grafton et al. (2010), 103; Harley and Woodward (1987), 12.

4. Gautier Dalché (2014); and, more fully, Racine (2009); Johnson (2015).

5. Mattern (1999), 24–80, with reference to Rome; although Gautier Dalché (2015) focuses on the Middle Ages, his approach and his comments on Veg. *Mil.* 3.6 merit notice.

6. *OCD*[4] s.vv. itineraries, *periploi*. It is sobering to reflect that itineraries (of variable accuracy) continued to form the basis of many travelers' maps into the twentieth century: see, for example, the appraisal of the first edition of Richard Kiepert's *Karte von Kleinasien* (24 sheets at 1:400,000, Berlin: Reimer, 1901–1907) by Guillaume de Jerphanion (1909), 373.

7. Roller (2015).

8. For Eratosthenes, see Roller (2010); for Ptolemy's *Geography*, see Berggren and Jones (2000); Stückelberger (2006); (2009); Jones (2012).

beyond the scientists' own very restricted circle, not least because widespread communication of their learning was of minimal concern to them. In a surprising development, their work may have become somewhat better known during the second century CE after Ptolemy developed a more concise, "user friendly" style for expressing coordinate figures; but, as will emerge below from a curious test case, this spread of knowledge was not enough to stimulate keener recognition for the value of maps.

From today's Western perspective, therefore—in our highly literate cultural environment where maps are a well-defined genre with familiar standard characteristics, and are taken for granted as invaluable sources of information, through digital media especially—this indisputably limited exploitation of maps is sure to seem a huge missed opportunity. The sense of disappointment (insofar as that is an appropriate attitude in this context) is only deepened by awareness that at least one other major ancient civilization did develop a remarkable map consciousness; namely, China, although its creative reliance upon maps was never matched by the establishment of fundamentals that Eratosthenes and his successors achieved.[9] Meantime, in classical antiquity, despite that achievement, whatever further conditions or mindset might have empowered a breakthrough to a more engaged level with maps never emerged; such a breakthrough could have occurred, but it did not.

We should bear in mind that similar inconsistency has long continued to occur elsewhere, too, even under otherwise favorable circumstances. For example, although Arabic scholars demonstrated immense enthusiasm for the methodology and coordinates in Ptolemy's *Geography*—a work known to them from the ninth century, it seems—this knowledge never led to latitude and longitude being made the basis for Arabic mapmaking.[10] Equally, as late as the start of the twentieth century, Britain's political agent and consul at Muscat could be cautioned against undue exertion to gather intelligence on his surroundings in the Persian Gulf. His informant wrote privately: "I know from experience that the FO [Foreign Office] has a distinct distaste for acquiring geographical knowledge."[11] Despite sporadic efforts by the War Office and the Admiralty to remedy the deficiency, lack of maps (or disregard for them in certain instances) had contributed to serious defeats suffered by British forces in the Crimean and Boer wars. On the outbreak of war with Germany in 1914,

9. See, for example, Harley and Woodward (1994), 35–231; Hsu (2010); and for comparison with China, Brodersen (2004), 183–184.

10. Harley and Woodward (1992), 93–101.

11. H. Whigham to P. Cox in 1902, quoted by Hamm (2014), 896; ibid., 886, for a similar complaint in 1904 by Capt. Francis Maunsell, British military attaché in Constantinople.

a mere century ago, the Geographical Section of the General Staff (formed in 1906) was able to supply large-scale maps of Belgium and France, but there was no index of what *The Times* later termed their "horribly unpronounceable place names," and no overall map of Europe available even at as modest a scale as 1:1 million.[12]

A striking feature of Roman mapmaking as we know it from what survives is the ingenious creation of maps whose varied character consciously transcends the scientific and factual. Such maps represent initiatives by anonymous artists who developed dynamic cartography of a type that perhaps had no counterpart earlier in the Mediterranean world except to a limited degree in Egypt.[13] These artists astutely perceived the appeal and potential of maps in the range of media that could be exploited to justify and celebrate the spread of Roman rule. The concern to communicate to Roman society through maps in this way is especially thought-provoking. While little enough relevant material survives, there happens to be more than for any other type of Greek or Roman mapping; hence my choice to focus this chapter on the Roman case. A further reason to do so is the relative novelty of an approach that considers these maps primarily in relation to their ancient makers and viewers, rather than preferring to pursue perspectives and questions that occur to modern viewers. They naturally enough expect maps to be factual, practical resources, and until the 1980s, there was scant concern even among scholars to question whether or not this was the assumption in antiquity, too. Only then did a decisive shift ensue in how mapping among pre-modern societies generally should be approached and evaluated. The shift was set in motion by Brian Harley and David Woodward with their launch of the transformative, ongoing *History of Cartography* project.[14] Inevitably, application of their approach has taken time to gain momentum, and the claims and conclusions stemming from it remain controversial and still in process of formation.[15] Issues of communication are central to this approach—both what mapmakers were meaning to convey, and the range of reactions we may fairly imagine to have been forthcoming from viewers or readers.

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12. The Royal Geographical Society was hurriedly ordered to produce the index, and it volunteered to begin work on the map at once: Heffernan (1996), 508.

13. O'Connor (2012), 55–58.

14. Publication by the University of Chicago Press to be completed in six (mostly multi-part) volumes: www.geography.wisc.edu/histcart.

15. For consideration of the challenges that had to be overcome in stimulating reassessment of Greek and Roman mapping, note Talbert (2008), 9–15.

ISSUES OF COMMUNICATION are plainly evident in a passage from a Latin panegyric delivered in the late 290s CE that refers to one or more maps (all now lost). The speaker, Eumenius, is the new head of a school of rhetoric at Augustodunum (modern Autun) in Gaul, which has suffered damage. He seeks the provincial governor's permission to rebuild it at his own expense. A feature of the school that is already in place, apparently intact, is a large map of the *orbis terrarum* (and possibly some regional maps, too); the governor has even seen it himself. In the climax to the speech, Eumenius expands upon the potential value of the large map:

> In [the school's] porticoes let the young men see and examine daily every land and all the seas and whatever cities, peoples, nations, our most invincible rulers either restore by affection or conquer by valor or restrain by fear. Since for the purpose of instructing the youth, to have them learn more clearly with their eyes what they comprehend less readily by their ears, there are pictured in that spot—as I believe you have seen yourself—the sites of all locations with their names, their extent, and the distance between them, the sources and mouths of rivers everywhere, likewise the curves of the coastline's indentations, and the Ocean, both where its circuit girds the earth and where its pressure breaks into it.
>
> There let the finest accomplishments of the bravest emperors be recalled through different representations of regions, while the twin rivers of Persia and the thirsty fields of Libya and the convex bends of the Rhine and the fragmented mouths of the Nile are seen again as eager messengers constantly arrive. Meanwhile the minds of those who gaze upon each of these places will imagine Egypt, its madness set aside, peacefully subject to your clemency, Diocletian Augustus, or you, unconquered Maximian, hurling lightning upon the smitten hordes of the Moors, or beneath your right hand, Constantius, Batavia and Britannia raising up their grimy heads from woods and waves, or you, Maximian Caesar [Galerius], trampling upon Persian bows and quivers. For now, now at last it is a delight to examine a picture of the world (*nunc demum iuvat orbem spectare depictum*), since we see nothing in it which is not ours.[16]

For all his rhetoric, Eumenius' description of the map leaves no doubt that its maker had aimed to make it a large creation, geographically accurate and

16. 9[4].20.2–21.3 Mynors; for commentary, Nixon and Rodgers (1994), 171–177.

comprehensive, extending—with its orientation unknown—north to Britain, south far up the river Nile, and at least as far east as Mesopotamia (the land of the "twin rivers of Persia"). There is no knowing the map's origin: whether it was in fact a copy of a map already to be found elsewhere, or whether it was a product tailor-made for the prescribed needs of the Augustodunum school and for the specific location where it was displayed there. The natural inference is that its representation of physical geography derives from the Alexandrian cartography instituted by Eratosthenes. This cartography as we see it reflected most fully in Ptolemy's *Geography* maintained a scientific, objective approach: it aimed to span the world and avoided close linkage with any political power or specific period of time. In consequence, a user of the *Geography* is barely made aware of the existence of the Roman Empire, or of the relative size and importance of the principal cities within it, including Ptolemy's own Alexandria; the feature that happens to be central in Ptolemy's rendering of the world's geography is the Persian Gulf.[17]

Others, however, had grasped the potential for them to derive added or alternative significance from a map of this accurate, comprehensive type, because it offered an ideal medium through which to encapsulate the Roman imperial achievement. Seemingly, the earliest Roman patron to realize such potential was Augustus' close associate Agrippa, who commissioned a now-lost world-map, whose design has attracted endless scholarly speculation.[18] At least there is no cause to doubt that it was large in size and scope, as well as geographically accurate in character, and that it remained on permanent display to the public in the Porticus Vipsania at Rome: *orbis urbi* [or *orbi*] *spectandus*.[19] As envisaged by the panegyrist Eumenius, the map in his school was to serve a similar dual communicatory role—to be informative about physical and cultural geography, and to raise pupils' awareness of Rome's imperial achievement and their pride in its revival by Diocletian's Tetrarchy.

In terms of communication, the large display-maps of Agrippa and Eumenius reinforced a traditional Roman taste (extending far back into the Republic) for publicly displaying objects or documents or images that both informed Romans and boosted their pride. The variety of expressions developed for these displays expanded with the consolidation of the Principate and the conscious sense of empire fostered by Augustus and so confidently

17. Points stressed by Jones (2012), 125–127.

18. Arnaud (2007–2008).

19. Boatwright (2015).

projected in his *Res Gestae*.[20] The duration of the displays, too, expanded from ephemeral (as in the case of many objects and images carried in triumphal processions)[21] to long-term or permanent (as most obviously with texts inscribed on metal or stone). Among display-maps, variation in the balance between the "informative" and "boastful" elements is to be expected. The large-scale bronze or stone map of its "centuriated" land that each Roman community was expected to keep on public display doubtless had the capacity to boost the pride of, say, a Roman colony planted in a newly subdued region; but still it is appropriate to regard these land-maps as designed primarily to serve legal and fiscal purposes.[22] As its primary purpose, Eumenius' map was evidently intended to be a resource for fostering awareness of geography on an expansive scale, although the associated prospect of boosting Roman pride in the process was far from being a negligible secondary aim.

TWO LARGE ROMAN display-maps, substantial parts of which survive, each offer in their own different way powerful instances where it can be argued that the makers have been sufficiently bold and creative to swing the balance decisively in the opposite direction, rendering the communication of Roman pride the primary purpose and relegating the map's informative element to a subordinate role. We lack testimony for how either map would have been referred to in antiquity. Today they are typically called the "Forma Urbis" or "Rome's Marble Plan," and the "Peutinger Map." In each case, the emphasis adopted is a deft accomplishment, insofar as the informative element remains very substantial. As a result, only when the communicatory impact of each map is considered within the context intended for its display does the maker's priority become clear. In each instance, it may be said, failure to attach sufficient importance to the matter of intended context has been a serious flaw in modern scholars' interpretation of these maps.

In the case of the Marble Plan, in my view this shortcoming has been fully remedied by fresh studies made first by David West Reynolds and more recently by Jennifer Trimble.[23] Both these scholars in turn have taken careful account of the ancient context, which is fortunately well established. The very wall in Rome that the 150 marble slabs composing the giant city-plan (scale

20. Especially chaps. 25–33; see Cooley (2009), 36–37, 213–256, for comment.

21. Östenberg (2009).

22. For the "centuriation" of cultivable land into square or rectangular divisions by professional surveyors (*agrimensores, gromatici*), see *OCD*[4] s.v. "centuriation, *gromatici*"; *OBO* s.v. "Land-Surveyors."

23. West Reynolds (1996); Trimble (2007); (2008).

1:240) were once clamped to survives as the exterior back wall of the Church of Saints Cosmas and Damian, and the clamp-holes remain visible. This wall, we know, formed one end of a long interior space in the Templum Pacis complex, renovated around 200 CE after a fire. Viewers could stand well back, therefore. They needed to do so in order to see anything of the Plan erected there then, because its base was positioned at least 4 meters above floor level; from that point, the Plan extended upwards for more than 13 meters, across a span of approximately 18 meters. Altogether, therefore, this immense inscribed monument covered about 235 square meters, stretching as high as a modern building of four to five storeys. Lighting conditions within the interior space are unknown. All the same, there can be no question that most of the astonishingly rich detail shown of the city at ground level, which we can easily marvel at today from viewing the fragments close-up—noting even individual columns, as well as the smallest rooms with their doorways—could seldom, if ever, have been appreciated by ancient viewers (Figure 17.1).[24]

Thus the Plan's placement rendered it impossible to communicate its detail adequately to the viewers at floor level. Without doubt, its makers were fully aware of that limitation from the outset. However, they never intended the Plan to serve any practical use, although its data must have been derived (with

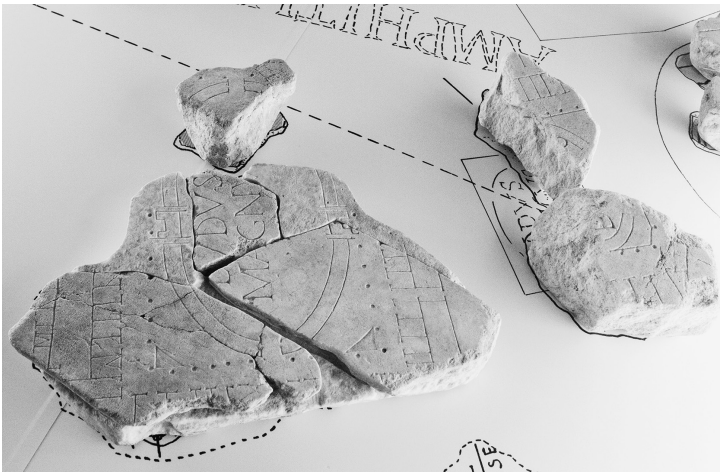

FIGURE 17.1 Marble Plan fragments reassembled for display at the Museo della Civiltà Romana, Rome, Italy. The V-shaped symbol (as in the left foreground here) marks a staircase.

(Photo courtesy of Jeffrey R. Bondono)

24. To date, approximately 1,200 fragments can be documented, representing around 12% of the entire Plan: visit formaurbis.stanford.edu.

some simplification) from painstaking official surveys of the city presumably preserved on papyrus and never intended for circulation. Rather, the makers' main intention was to communicate messages of a broader nature, and above all to fire Roman pride. At the same time, it may not have escaped them or their high-ranking sponsor (conceivably the emperor Septimius Severus himself) that quite the opposite responses might be stirred, too: for example, fear and loathing at such arrogant Roman control of the environment, both built and physical; the command of extensive resources, both human and natural; and the extraordinary level of urban so-called civilization. But possible rejection of this type was likely to be dismissed as merely irrelevant mis-communication of no concern to the Plan's makers.

THE CASE OF the Peutinger Map (named after its sixteenth-century owner Konrad Peutinger) is more awkward and delicate.[25] It is awkward because not just the left-hand end is lost to us (leaving the extent of that loss a matter of conjecture); lost, too, is any trace of the original Late Roman map itself. All that survives is an incomplete medieval copy made on parchment around 1200 (Figure 17.2). Inevitably, therefore, uncertainty and argument persist about the extent to which the map in this form has been "improved," as well as miscopied, by an irrecoverable succession of alternately well-meaning or careless scribes over almost a millennium. To add to all this awkwardness, our copy offers no pointer to the context for which the original map was produced, let alone to the nature of the surface on which it was presented; and clues to determining at all precisely the date of the map's original production are minimal at best.

The case is made delicate by the fact that, although lively scholarly interest in the Peutinger Map has been maintained ever since its undocumented "rediscovery" around 1500, this interest has remained narrowly fixated on the land routes shown—a distinctively prominent and colorful feature—and the factual accuracy of their presentation. Accordingly, in recent work of my own, I have sought to widen the focus by addressing fundamental issues concerning the map's design that traditionally have been taken for granted or accorded only minimal attention. It is also vital in my view to imagine the context in which the map was to be presented originally, along with the impression that it was intended to communicate there to its viewers. In what follows, I draw upon my conclusions already published elsewhere without any pretension to claiming that they are definitive.

25. Talbert (2010).

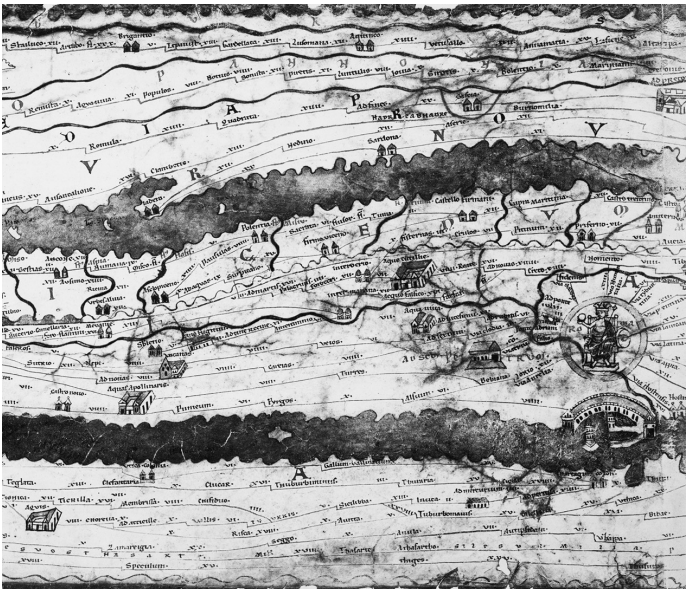

FIGURE 17.2 Peutinger Map, part of Segment 4 (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. Vindob. 324).

(*Tabula Itineraria in Bibliotheca Palatina Vindobonensi Asservata Nunc Primum Arte Photographica Expressa*. Vienna: Angerer and Göschl, 1888)

Interpretation is called for to account for the shape and content of the map: in particular, its extreme length (as we have it, a little under 7 meters) contrasted with marked squatness (about 33 centimeters tall);[26] its spanning of the entire known world as a seamless whole without boundaries anywhere; the privileging of land over sea, with much open water removed; and the placement of the city of Rome. I see Rome as purposely sited at the center of the map—a most conspicuous placement, therefore, but also a very disruptive one for the mapmaker (Figure 17.3). It calls for equalizing coverage westwards from Rome to the Atlantic (presumably, at the now-lost left-hand end), with the same length eastwards from Rome for the much greater distance (on the ground) to Sri Lanka. The mapmaker's ingenious solutions to these challenges are first to present Italy (Rome's heartland) as uniquely large, and then to subject the presentation of Persia and India to severe compression. A notable consequence is that the Mediterranean dominates the map.[27] Moreover, the tracing of land routes everywhere, while it may indeed appear informative

26. Talbert (2010), Map A.

27. Compare Grant Parker's characterization of the classical world in Chapter 1.

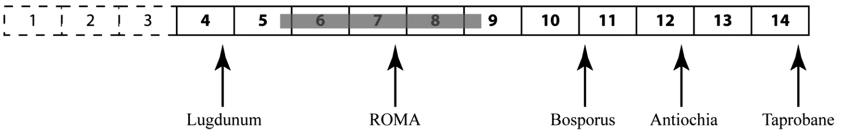

FIGURE 17.3 Proposed outline layout of the original, complete Peutinger Map (assuming that the equivalent of three parchments is now missing from the left-hand end).

(Courtesy of Ancient World Mapping Center)

and without doubt must derive from factual sources (itineraries especially),[28] is at best of limited practical value, given the virtual elimination of a North–South dimension and the extraordinary distortions required to accommodate the placement of Rome.[29] Needless to emphasize, the map lacks a consistent scale; in consequence, the length noted for any stage of a route bears no relation to the distance to be traversed on the ground for that stage.

In my estimation, it follows that the traditional literal-minded reading of the map as a practical route guide for land travelers, and nothing more, is a mistaken one; the map simply does not fulfill scholars' eager wish to recover such a document from the Roman empire. Rather, the map is to be regarded as closer to the Marble Plan in its nature and purpose, although the map's design demanded far bolder cartographic creativity and adaptation than did that of the Marble Plan. The Peutinger Map was meant to reinforce claims—likewise advanced in literature and other artforms, including coinage—promoting Rome's rule of the world and even of the cosmos.[30] For communicating that aim, general impression mattered most, and the detail (as on the Plan and on monuments like Trajan's Column) had no more than secondary importance; it does not even relate consistently to the same period. This is certainly not to deny that care was taken over the gathering and presentation of detail, nor that it could make an impact. Viewers able to inspect it and understand it on the map, for example, could marvel at the remarkable inclusiveness generated by the marking of well over 1,000 settlements too minor to attract the scientific attention of Ptolemy (whose *Geography* in any case overlooked routes altogether).

The date and context of the original Peutinger Map can only be matters for speculation.[31] I consider it most appropriate to associate them with the

28. Talbert (2007); (2010), 206–286, Maps E and F.

29. Talbert (2010), 108–117.

30. See, for example, Nicolet (1991), 29–56.

31. Talbert (2010), 142–157.

recovery of the empire by Diocletian's Tetrarchy around 300 CE (the same period in which Eumenius stressed the value of the map in his school), although a production date somewhat later in the fourth century—in 336, for example, when Constantine celebrated thirty years of rule—is not to be ruled out.[32] The map's extraordinary shape seems our best clue to the context for which it was designed. It may conceivably have formed only part of a larger artwork now otherwise lost—the surviving "landmap," for example, being one of a set of three that also included counterparts for the sky and the sea. Or perhaps what survives is the *oikoumene* part of a tall globe image divided (according to traditional Greek thought) horizontally into "zones." The representation of this habitable part (*oikoumene*) of the northern hemisphere between the frigid Arctic and the torrid equatorial zone (both barely habitable) would act to highlight the thriving peace, civilized urbanism, and secure connectivity maintained by Roman rule here, in stark contrast to impoverished barbarism, isolation, and conflict elsewhere.[33] The formal court procedure newly instituted by Diocletian's regime required payment of groveling homage to a Tetrarch: ideally, the ceremony occurred in a hall (*aula*) where his throne was set in an apse at one end. A tall globe image of the type just envisaged (painted on panels, say) would loom as a powerful backdrop in such an apse, especially when the city of Rome at the center of the *oikoumene* would then appear most prominent directly above where the Tetrarch sat (Figure 17.4).

Matthew Canepa's study *The Two Eyes of the Earth: Art and Ritual of Kingship Between Rome and Sasanian Iran* (2009) gives reason to suspect a further possible dimension to the Peutinger Map's all-encompassing communication of Rome's claim to world rule. He draws attention to assertions by the Sasanian dynasty that its empire, too, conceived of itself as "a universal domain that ruled the entire civilized world under a divine mandate,"[34] with "the Sasanian king of kings reigning at the center of Iran, Iran at the center of the empire, and the Sasanian empire at the center of the earth."[35] Given that the Tetrarchy was a period of active diplomacy and warfare between Rome and Persia, with

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32. This specific possibility is raised by Barnes (2011b), 378.

33. Cf. Plutarch's reference (*Theseus* 1.1) to the habit of filling out the remotest parts of maps with such notices as "Beyond are waterless deserts infested by wild animals," "Murky bog," "Scythian cold," "Frozen sea." Appian (*Roman History*, Pref. 7) claims to have witnessed envoys from impoverished, unproductive barbarians begging the emperor—in vain—to bring them under Roman rule.

34. Canepa (2009), 101.

35. Canepa (2009), 102. According to Iranian cosmology, the earth was divided into seven continental sections, of which only the central one (the largest) was originally inhabited by humans.

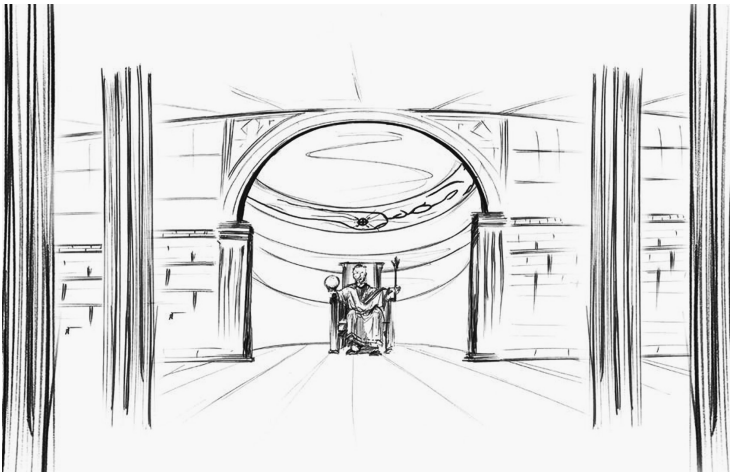

FIGURE 17.4 Globe-map image imagined within the apse of a Late Roman *aula* where a ruler sits enthroned.
(Courtesy of Daniel Talbert)

Rome decisively gaining the upper hand, the map could be regarded as an item in the "agonistic exchange" (Canepa's phrase) between Roman and Sasanian rulers. For certain, Sasanian envoys who saw it would only be provoked to find Persia diminished in size and marginalized, while Rome occupied the center and dominated the world. Altogether, the map communicated Roman imperial reach, power, and values even more ambitiously than the Marble Plan.

THE MORE OR less severely distorted forms in which the shape of the Peutinger Map required the known world's landmasses to appear can hardly have been how its informed makers regularly envisaged them. Rather, they must have adapted representations that reflected the scientific Alexandrian ideas and methods initiated by Eratosthenes. These ideas and methods unquestionably also underpin a neglected group of objects that communicate geographical knowledge and Roman values, one that might even have stimulated wider appreciation of maps, but evidently did not. This group is a type of portable sundial. The optimal functioning of any sundial demands some grasp of the concept of "latitudes" or parallel lines imagined by Eratosthenes as encircling the globe; each such line is situated at its own distinct angle in relation to the sun, with the angle varying according to the time of year.[36] So, for its satisfactory operation, a fixed sundial's design takes into account the latitude at

36. Hannah (2009), 116–144; Houston (2015).

which it is to be installed. Without doubt, by the first century CE, fixed sundials were commonly to be found across the Roman Empire in both public and private settings, and served as the main instruments in use for telling the time. Portable Roman sundials were also developed, which can be adjusted to tell the time at whichever latitude the owner happens to be, over a considerable range.[37]

It has so far escaped scholars' attention that one group of such portable sundials offers us the prospect of gaining insight into the worldview of some individual Romans, because on the reverse of these sundials is inscribed a list of city- or region-names (up to as many as thirty-six), each with its latitude figure (Figure 17.5). Hence, in principle, when the owner wants to tell the time in any of the locations listed, he or she will at once be informed of the latitude to which the sundial should be set without the need for further reference or inquiry. One dozen or so portable sundials with lists of this type are known. As representative examples,Tables 17.1 and 17.2 offer four lists inscribed in Greek and five inscribed in Latin.

It is immediately evident that the names chosen are an eclectic mix. On the one hand, they include major, prominent cities, regions, and provinces—Alexandria, Constantinople (former Byzantium), Italy, Gaul, and Spain, for example—that seem predictable choices when coverage of a wide span is intended (Map 17.1). On the other hand, some less predictable choices occur that most probably reflect the particular movements or links of the individual who compiled or commissioned the selection, presumably for personal use. Consider, for example, Neocaesarea in the British Museum, London (Greek) list,[38] or the many cities in the Aegean area in the Memphis (Greek) list.[39] Equally, inclusion of both Pannonia Inferior and Pannonia Superior in the Mérida (Latin) list[40] suggests a deliberate personal preference; when the latitudes of these two provinces differ by so little, the inclusion of both names is in effect rendered redundant.

Did whoever compiled such a list of names and figures have some awareness of the geographical relationship of the locations chosen for inclusion?

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37. Winter (2013), 77–84. Even so, to tell the time by means of such sundials—fixed or portable—remained an inexact exercise. The hours recorded were merely twelve equal divisions of the period of daylight, which varies according to the latitude and the season. At Rome itself, for example, in late December one such "hour" is no more than three-quarters of a modern fixed hour, but in late June it extends to one and a quarter modern fixed hours.

38. Bevan et al. (2013).

39. Winter (2013), 424–425.

40. Winter (2013), 313–314.

Table 17.1 Lists of Names Inscribed in Greek on Four Portable Sundials (Courtesy of Author)

British Museum, London	
ΜΕΡΟΗC Ις	Meroe 16
COHNHC ΚΔ	Syene 24
ΘΗΒΑΤΔ ΚΔ	Thebaid 24
ΛΙΒΥΗC ΚΔ	Libya 24
ΑΙΓΙΠΤΟΥ ΛΑ	Egypt 31
ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔ ΛΑ	Alexandria 31
ΠΑΛΑΙCΤ ΛΒ	Palestine 32
ΠΕΝΤΑΠ ΛΒ	Pentap-olis/-oleis 32
ΑΦΡΙΚΗ ΛΔ	Africa 34
ΚΡΗΤΗC ΛΔ	Crete 34
ΚΥΠΡΟΥ ΛΕ	Cyprus 35
ΚΟΥΛΗC Λς	Coele (Syria) 36
CΙΚΕΛ[.]Α Λς	Sicily 36
ΠΑΜΦΥΛ Λς	Pamphylia 36
ΑΧΑΕΙΑC ΛΖ	Achaia 37
ΤΑΡCΟΥC ΛΖ	Tarsus 37
CΠΑΝΙΑC ΛΗ	Spain 38
ΑΝΤΙΟΧΟ [.]Θ	Antioch [3]9
ΠΕΛ[..]ΠΙΟ [..]	Peloponnese [39/40/41?]
ΘΕCCΑΛΟ Μ[.?]	Thessalonica 40? 41?
ΡΩΜΗC ΜΑ	Rome 41
ΘΡΑΚΗC ΜΑ	Thrace 41
ΒΙΘΥΝΙΑ ΜΑ	Bithynia 41
ΑΒΥΔΟC ΜΑ	Abydos 41
ΔΑΛΜΑΤ ΜΒ	Dalmatia 42
ΚΑΠΠΑΔ ΜΓ	Cappadocia 43
ΙΤΑΛΙΑC ΜΓ	Italy 43
ΚΩΝCΤΑ ΜΓ	Constantinople 43
ΓΑΛΛΙΑC ΜΓ	Gallia 43
ΑCΙΑ ΜΓ	Asia 43
Ν[.]ΟΚΑΙCΟ ΜΔ	Neocaesarea 44
ΑΡΜΕΝ[.]Α ΜΔ	Armenia 44
CΑ[.]Μ[…]Α ΜΕ	Sarmatia 45
ΠΑΝΝΟΝΙ ΜΕ	Pannonia 45
ΜΕΔΙΟΛΑΝ Μς	Mediolanum 46
ΒΡΕΤΤΑΝ Ν[.?]	Britannia 50[+?]

Time Museum	
ΜΕΡΟΗC Ις	Meroe 16
COHNHC ΚΔ	Syene 24
ΘΗΒΑΙΔΟC ΚΗ	Thebaid 28
[.]ΙΓΥΠΤΟΥ ΛΑ	Egypt 31
[..]ΝΤΑΠΟΛC ΛΑ	Pentapol-is/-eis 31
ΑΦΡΙΚΗC ΛΒ	Africa 32
ΠΑΛΑΙCΤΙΝ ΛΒ	Palestine 32
ΜΑΥΡΙΤΑΝΙΑ ΛΔ	Mauretania 34
ΚΥΠΡΟΥ ΛΕ	Cyprus 35
CΙΚΕΛΙΑC ΛΕ	Sicily 35
[.]Ο[illegible] Λς	? 36
ΠΑΝ[.]ΥΛΙΑC ΛΖ	Pamphylia 37
ΕΛ[.]ΑΔΟC ΛΖ	Hellas 37
CΠΑΝΙΑC ΛΖ	Spain 37
ΤΑΡCΟΥ ΛΗ	Tarsus 38
ΑΝΤΙΟΧΙΑ ΛΘ	Antioch 39
ΜΑΚΕΔΟΝΙΑ Μ	Macedonia 40
ΓΑΛΑΤΙΑC Μ	Galatia 40
ΘΕCCΑΛΟΝΙ Μ	Thessalonica 40
ΘΡΑΚΗC ΜΑ	Thrace 41
ΡΩΜΗC ΜΒ	Rome 42
ΙΤΑΛΙΑC ΜΒ	Italy 42
ΔΑΛΜΑΤΙΑC ΜΒ	Dalmatia 42
ΓΑΛΛΙΑC ΜΒ	Gallia 42
ΚΑΠΠΑΔΟΚΙ ΜΓ	Cappadocia 43
Κ[.]ΝCΤΑΝΤΙ ΜΓ	Constantinople 43
[.]ΡΜΕΝΙΑC ΜΔ	Armenia 44
ΠΙ[.]ΝΝΟΝΙΑC [.]Δ	Pannonia 44?
[..]ΘΥΝΙΑC ΜΔ	Bithynia 44
ΓΕΡΜΑΝΙΑC Ν[.?]	Germania 50[+?]

Memphis	
ΙΝΔΙΑ Η	India 8
ΜΕΡΟΗ ΙξΕ	Meroe 16.5?
COHNH ΚΓ<	Syene 23.5
ΒΕΡΟΝΙΚΗ ΚΓ<	Berenice 23.5
ΜΕΜΦΙC Λ	Memphis 30
ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΙ ΛΑ	Alexandria 31
ΠΕΝΤΑΠΟΛΙC ΛΑ	Pentapolis 31
ΒΟCΤΡΑ ΛΑ<	Bostra 31.5
ΝΕΑΠΟΛΙC ΛΑΓ_0	Neapolis 31.66
ΚΕCΑΡΙΑ ΛΒ	Caesarea 32
ΚΑΡΧΗΔΩΝ ΛΒΓ_0	Carthage 32.66
[illegible] ΛΒ<	? 32.5
[illegible] [illegible]	? [32.5-33.66 range?]
[illegible] ΛΓ$_0$	? 33.66
ΓΟΡΤΥΝΑ ΛΔ<	Gortyn 34.5
ΑΝΤΙΟΧΙΑ ΛΕ<	Antioch 35.5
ΡΟΔΟC Λς	Rhodes 36
ΠΑΜΦΥΛΙΑ Λς	Pamphylia 36
ΑΡΓΟC Λς<	Argos 36.5
CΟΡΑΚΟΥCΑ ΛΖ	Syracuse 37
ΑΘΗΝΑΙ ΛΖ	Athens 37
ΔΕΛΦΟΙ ΛΖΓ_0	Delphi 37.66
ΤΑΡCΟC ΛΗ	Tarsus 38
ΑΔΡΙΑΝΟΥΠΟΛΙC ΛΘ	Adrianople 39
ΑCΙΑ Μ	Asia 40
ΗΡΑΚΛΕΙΑ ΜΑΓ_0	Heraclea 41.66
ΡΩΜΗ ΜΑΓ_0	Rome 41.66
ΑΓΚΥΡΑ ΜΒ	Ancyra 42
ΘΕCCΑΛΟΝΙΚΗ ΜΓ	Thessalonica 43
ΑΠΑΜΙΑ ΛΘ	Apamea 39
ΕΔΕCΑ ΜΓ	Edessa 43
ΚΩΝCΤΑ`ΤΙΝΟΥΠΙ ΜΓ	Constantinople 43
ΓΑΛΛΙΑΙ ΜΔ	Galliai 44
ΑΡΑΒΕΝΝΑ ΜΔ	Ravenna 44
ΘΡΑΚΗ ΜΑ	Thrace 41
ΑΚΥΛΗΙΑ ΜΕ	Aquileia 45

Aphrodisias	
COHNHC ΚΓC	Syene 23.5
ΜΕΜΦΙC ΚΘC	Memphis 29.5
ΠΕΛΟΥCΙΟΝ ΛC	Pelusium 30.5
ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡς ΛΑ	Alexandria 31
ΠΕΝΤΑΠΟΛΕς ΛΒ	Pentapoleis 32
ΧΑΡΤΑΓΩΝ ΛΓ	Carthage 33
ΚΡΗΤΗC ΛΕ	Crete 35
ΑΘΗΝΩΝ ΛΖ	Athens 37
ΘΕCCΑΛΟΝΙΚ ΜΓ	Thessalonica 43
ΚΥΖΙΚΟΥ ΜΑ	Cyzicus 41
ΝΙΚΟΜΗΔΙΑ ΜΒ	Nicomedia 42
ΚΩΝCΤΑΝΤΙς ΜΑ	Constantinople 41
ΓΑΛΑΤΙΑ ΜΒ	Galatia 42
ΚΑΠΠΑΔΟΚΙΑ ΛΘC	Cappadocia 39.5
ΤΑΡCΟΥ ΛςC	Tarsus 36.5
ΑΝΤΙΟΧΙΑ ΛΕΓ	Antioch 35.33
ΦΟΙΝΙΚΗC ΛΙΤ	Phoenice 33.33
ΠΑΛΕCΤΙΝΗ Λς	Palestine 36
ΚΥΠΡΟΥ ΛΔ	Cyprus 34
ΛΥΚΙΑC ΛΕΓ	Lycia 35.33
ΠΑΜΦΥΛΙΑ ΛςC	Pamphylia 36.5
ΡΟΔΟΥ Λς	Rhodes 36
CΙΚΕΛΙΑC ΛΗ	Sicily 38
ΡΩΜΗ ΜΑC	Rome 41.5
ΓΑΛΛΙΩΝ Μς	Galliai 46
ΒΟΥΡΔΙΓΑΛΑ ΜΕ	Burdigala 45
CΠΑΝΙΑC ΜΒ	Spain 42
ΗΜΕΡΙΤΑ ΛΘC	Emerita 39.5

Table 17.2 Lists of Names Inscribed in Latin on Five Portable Sundials (Courtesy of Author)

Museum of the History of Science, Oxford	
AEGYPT XXX	Egypt 30
LYCIAE XXXI	Lycia 31
CILICIA XXXI	Cilicia 31
ASIAE XXXI	Asia 31
GAL XLVIII	Gallia 48
CAPPAD XXXI	Cappadocia 31
INSVRIA XXXVI	Syria 36
QVIRINE XXXVIIII	Cyrene? 39
SARDIN XL	Sardinia 40
NARB XLIII	Narb-o/-ensis 43
SICILI XLI	Sicily 41
AFRCA XLI	Africa 41
MAVRT XL	Mauretania 40
ISPAN XLII	Spain 42
BRIT LV	Britannia 55
ITAL XLIII	Italy 43
NARB XLIIII	Narb-o/-ensis 44
BELG XLVIII	Belgica 48
GERS XLVIIII	Germania Superior 49
GERI LI	Germania Inferior 51
ROMA XLII	Rome 42
DACIA LII	Dacia 52
PANONI XLVI	Pannonia 46
MACEDO XL	Macedonia 40
LVGD XLV	Lugdun-um/-ensis 45
TRACIA XLI	Thrace 41
GALATI XLV	Galatia 45
PHRYGI XXXVI	Phrygia 36
BITVNI XXXV	Bithynia 35
ITAL XLII	Italy 42

Vignacourt/Berteaucourt-les-Dames	
ALEXAND XXX	Alexandria 30
ASIAE XXXIII	Asia 33
CAPPAD XXXIIII	Cappadocia 34
IVDEAE XXXV	Judaea 35
SYRIAE XXXVII	Syria 37
AFRICAE XL	Africa 40
MAVRETA XLI	Mauretania 41
ITALIAE XLII	Italy 42
S[.]ANIAE XLII	Spain 42
NARBON XLIII	Narbon-is/-ensis 43
CALLECIA XLIIII	Callecia 44
AQVITAN XLV	Aquitania 45
LVGDVN XLVI	Lugdun-um/-ensis 46
BELGIC XLVIII	Belgica 48
NORICI XLVI	Noricum 46
RETIAE XLVI	Raetia 46
ILLYRICI XLVI	Illyricum 46
PANNON XLIX	Pannonia 49
GERMAN L	Germania 50
MOESIAE LI	Moesia 51
DACIAE LI	Dacia 51
SARMATIA LIII	Sarmatia 53
BRITANN LV	Britannia 55

Crêt-Châtelard	
AETHIOPIAE XXX	Ethiopia 30
AEGYPTI XXXIII	Egypt 33
HISPANIAE XXXV	Spain 35
BABYLONIAE XXXV	Babylonia 35
ILLYRICI XXXVII	Illyricum 37
SYRIAE XXXVIII	Syria 38
ARABIAE XXVIIII	Arabia 29
AFRICAE XLII	Africa 42
MAVRETAN XLS	Mauretania 40.5
BITHYNIAE XLI	Bithynia 41
ITALIAE XLII	Italy 42
NASVMIEN XXIIII	=Nemausus? 24
ANCONIS XLIV	Ancona 44
GALLIAE XLVIII	Gallia 48
GERMANIAE L	Germania 50
BRITANNIAE LVI	Britannia 56

Rome	
AETIOPI XXX	Ethiopia 30
AEGYPTI XXXIII	Egypt 33
HISPAN XXXX	Spain 40
BABYLON XXX	Babylon(ia?) 30
ILLYRI XXXVII	Illyricum 37
SYRIAE XXXVIII	Syria 38
ARABIA XXVIIII	Arabia 29
APHRICE XXXX	Africa 40
MAVRE XXX	Mauretania 30
BITHYNI XLI	Bithynia 41
ITALIAE XLII	Italy 42
NARBON XLIII	Narbon-is/-ensis 43
ANCON XLV	Ancona 45
GALLIAE XLVIII	Gallia 48
GERMA L	Germania 50
BRITAN LVII	Britannia 57

Mérida	
ALEXAND XXX	Alexandria 30
BETICA XXX IIX	Baetica 38
LVSITAN XL II	Lusitania 42
ILATIA XL II	=Italy? 42
MOESIA XL III	Moesia 43
SARMAT XL IIIS	Sarmatia 43.5
TARRAC XL IIII	Tarrac-o/-onensis 44
NARBON XLIIIS	Narbonensis 43.5
AQVITAN XL V	Aquitania 45
PANN I XL V	Pannonia Inferior 45
PANN S XL VS	Pannonia Superior 45.5
RETIA XL VI	Raetia 46
LVGDVN XL VI	Lugdun-um /-ensis 46
NORICV XL VII	Noricum 47
DA[.]IA XL VII	Dacia 47
BELGI XL IIX	Belgica 48
GERMAN L	Germania 50
SVPERIOR LIIII	[Britannia ?] Superior 54
BRITANN INF LVII	Britannia Inferior 57

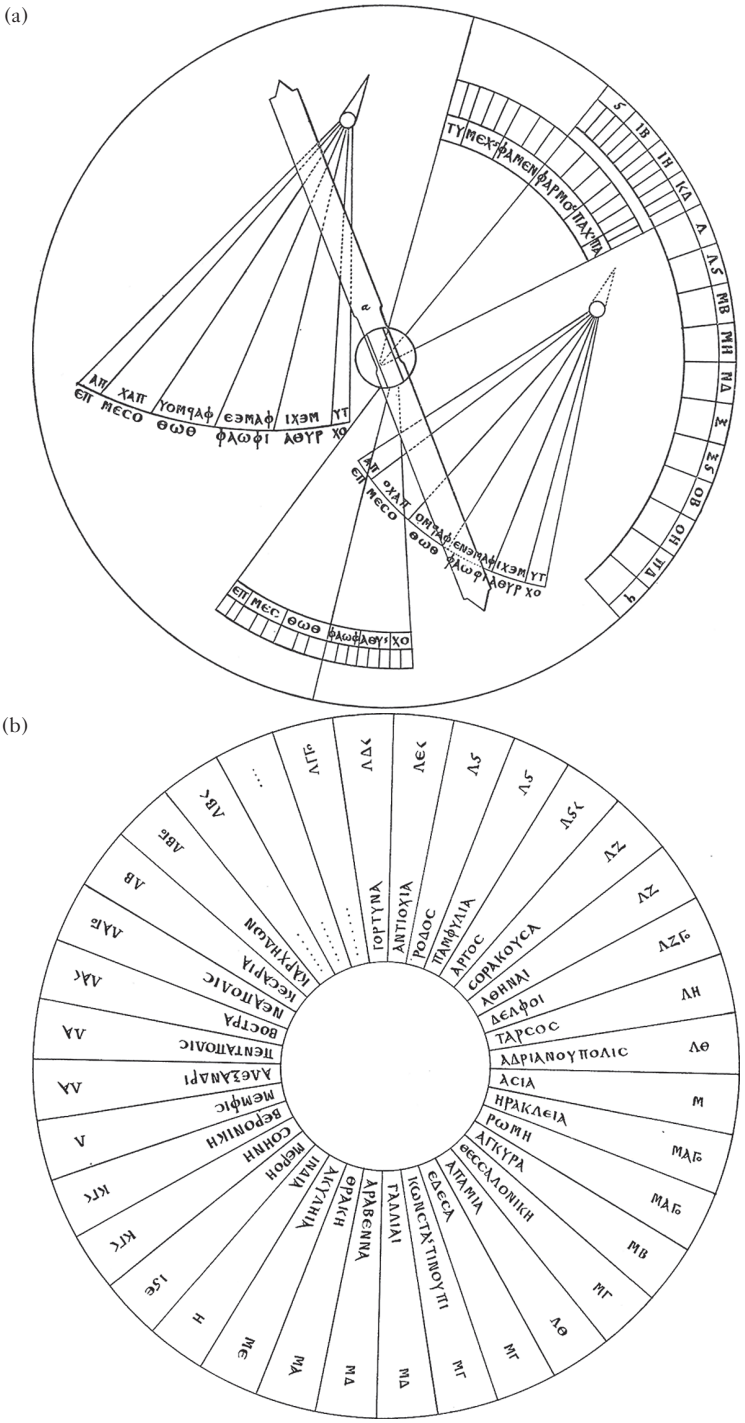


FIGURE 17.5 Constantin von Tischendorf's drawing of his portable sundial disc acquired in Memphis, Egypt, around 1859. He did not record its dimensions, and it is now lost.

(von Tischendorf [1860], 73)

Yes, judging by two lists at least. First, the names on the Aphrodisias sundial (Greek) list—presented as a continuous round—may give the initial impression of being just a random jumble without even a designated starting-point (Figure 17.6).[41] The order here really is deliberate, however, because the names can be visualized to form an outline *periplous* or *periegesis* of the Mediterranean, including some of its greatest cities (Map 17.2).[42] Second, the placement of one particular name in the Vignacourt/Berteaucourt-les-Dames (Latin) list is revealing.[43] Here, as in several other instances (the Memphis list, for example), the order of the names is determined by the numerical sequence of their latitude figures. It follows, therefore, that the compilers of these particular lists had both the wish and the capacity to create for themselves a "mental map" reliant upon latitude as its organizing principle.

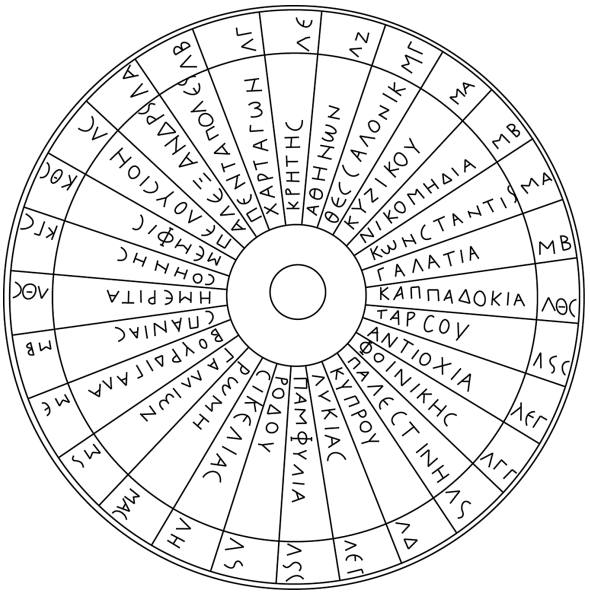


FIGURE 17.6 Portable sundial found at Aphrodisias, Turkey, in 1963 (inv. no. 63–400; since lost): drawing of the reverse.

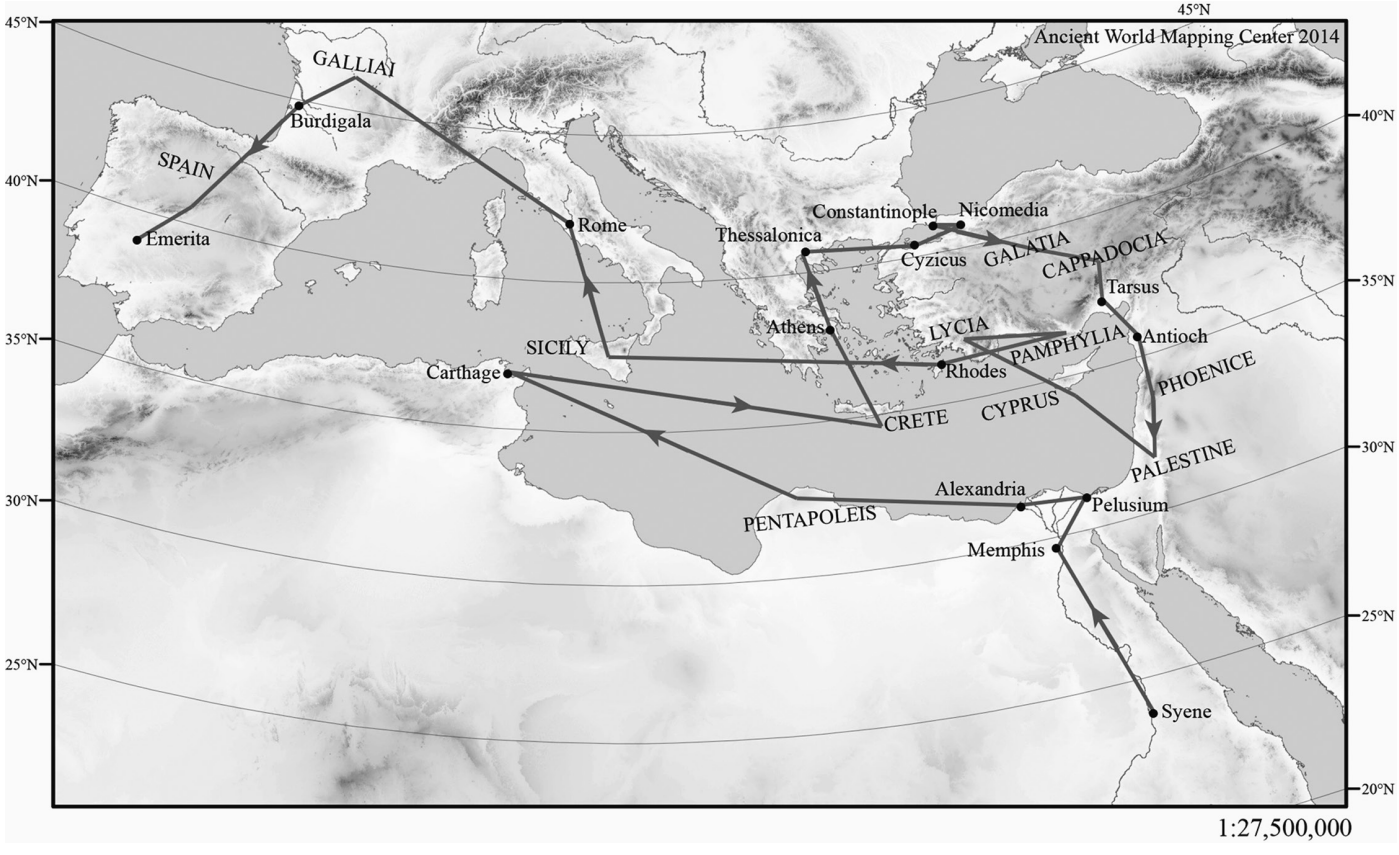
(Courtesy of Ancient World Mapping Center)

41. Winter (2013), 270–272. In this case and all comparable ones in Tables 17.1 and 17.2, my list starts from the name with the lowest latitude figure.

42. See n. 6 of this chapter.

43. Hoët-van Cauwenberghe (2012).

MAP 17.1 Roman Empire around 200 CE



MAP 17.2 Names on the portable sundial found at Aphrodisias (see Table 17.1) marked on a modern locator map at the latitude stated for each, with a route added. Accurate longitude is assumed.

Strikingly, however, the compiler of the Vignacourt list did not rely upon latitude alone, because there is a glaring departure from the latitudinal sequence to be noted here: Belgica 48, with Lugdun-um/-ensis 46 and Aquitania 45 to follow in one direction, and Noricum, Raetia, Illyricum (all 46) in the other. This compiler's geographical "mental map" evidently envisages the Gallic provinces Aquitania, Lugdunensis, and Belgica as three adjacent blocs; hence the wish not to separate Belgica from the other two here, even though its name must occur out of latitude order in consequence. This said, it is plain that, by the same token, the compiler could also have switched the order of Narbon-is/-ensis and Callecia, so that Callecia (the northwest region of Spain) would then come next to Spain in the list, and Aquitania, Lugdunensis, and Belgica next to Narbonensis. Why the compiler did not switch the order of Narbon-is/-ensis and Callecia is impossible to say. Possibly he (or she) was disinclined to depart from latitude order, but was nonetheless tempted to indulge just a single exception for what may have been his own "home" province; the villa site at Vignacourt where this sundial was found is near Samarobriva (modern Amiens) in Belgica.

If we may infer that the compilers of all these lists had an awareness of the geographical relationship of the locations they selected, then, in turn, some comparison of the relative latitudes they assign to them promises to prove instructive. For example, note how in the Aphrodisias list—to judge by the latitudes stated—both the city of Nicomedia and the region/province of Galatia are located at the same latitude, 42, one that sets them both north of Constantinople 41. Two other names here with surprisingly high latitude figures are Thessalonica 43 and Palestine 36; the latter figure sets this region/province distinctly to the north of (Syria) Phoenice 33.33 and even of (Syrian) Antioch 35.33. In the compiler's mental map, was Palestine truly there, so far north? If so, this seems a distressing lapse in the geographical grasp of a manifestly educated individual—one who felt able to envisage the entire Mediterranean world, and was sufficiently preoccupied by latitude to record many figures to a fraction of a degree. However, the latitude figures here may matter less than the names as an indicator of geographical awareness, because the sequence of names still outlines a viable circuit for a *periegesis*, even if the sundial would not function at its best in Palestine with the latitude set at 36.

When a comparison of relative latitudes in the lists on other sundials is made, once again, lapses in the geographical grasp of educated individuals are unmistakable. To be sure, engravers' slips as well as muddles of one kind or another must be taken into account, but even after such allowances are made, notable shortcomings remain. Consider the relation of Spain 35

to Africa 42, seven degrees farther *north* in the Crêt-Châtelard (Latin) list;[44] also the figure 37 for Illyricum (at the actual latitude of Syracuse, therefore!) both here and in the very similar Rome (Latin) list.[45] Consider Bithynia 44, Cappadocia 43, and Galatia 40 (as many as three degrees farther *south*) in the Time Museum (Greek) list.[46] In the same vein, the latitude figures in the Mérida list place Tarrac-o/-onensis 44 to the north of Narbonensis 43.5. Note also Neocaesarea 44; Cappadocia, Asia, and Constantinople all at 43; and Bithynia 41 in relation to one another in the British Museum, London, list. Most strange are Galatia 45, Phrygia 36, Bithynia 35 in relation to one another as well as to Lycia, Cilicia, Asia, and Cappadocia (all four at 31) in the Museum of the History of Science, Oxford (Latin) list.[47] Also strange here is the wide interval between the adjacent figures 46 for Pannonia and 52 for Dacia; finally, compare the latitudes here for Spain 42, Africa 41, and Sicily 41, all of them to the north of Sardinia 40.

Undoubtedly, the initial impression communicated by the names and corresponding latitude figures listed on these portable sundials is that their owners enjoyed a confident geographical awareness matched by a wide-ranging worldview that seamlessly spanned the Roman Empire and beyond to the north, east, and south. In addition, there can be no question that many more cities, regions, and provinces were known to them than just those that they (or a designer) chose to include in the limited space available on these small portable sundials. For all this show of confidence, however, the unique opportunity that the inclusion of associated latitude figures offers us to assess the accuracy of the owners' geographical awareness alters our initial impression. As we have seen, it emerges on investigation that there were no "standard" latitude figures for locations, and that serious misconceptions are widespread here. To eliminate or reduce such errors, it would clearly have been a useful precaution to check each list of names against a map made according to Alexandrian cartographic principles; but it seems that such checks were not performed and, of course, unfailing accuracy is not to be expected of such maps, anyway.

The owners were evidently not bothered by these flaws and inconsistencies. They already carried a mental map in their heads, one for which Rome's provinces may conceivably have been a framework.[48] The names by which they

44. Winter (2013), 610–611.

45. Winter (2013), 537–538.

46. Winter (2013), 612–613.

47. Winter (2013), 604–605.

48. Talbert (2004).

remembered the provinces—even after the foundation of Constantinople, included in all four lists in Table 17.1—remained the old forms, without regard in particular to the radical changes in provincial organization and nomenclature introduced by Diocletian.[49] Not so much as a hint remains of how the scientific knowledge that motivated would-be owners to acquire a "geographical" portable sundial was spread. One likely possibility, at least, is that they learned from the type of encounters in libraries which Matthew Nicholls draws our attention to in Chapter 2 above, as well as from seeing for themselves how others used these enviably intriguing miniature gadgets.[50]

Even so, we may suspect that practical use hardly mattered to most owners who acquired a geographical portable sundial. Instead, these objects were valued as showpieces that communicated the owners' (supposed) mastery of scientific principles for computing the time, and—as a glance at the list of geographical names would instantly demonstrate—their pride in a world that Rome dominated in all directions, one through which those who identified themselves as Romans could expect to move freely as far as Britain and Dacia, or Ethiopia and India. It is striking that *lack* of attention to maps can be inferred from the lists on these sundials. Nonetheless, the lists match the Marble Plan and the Peutinger Map in their basis of detailed geographical data subordinated to communicating Roman worldviews along with Roman values only loosely related to cartography. These worldviews were liable to be impressionistic, variable, and molded by a mix of mental impressions, itineraries, and other lists, as well as some traditional literature, rather than by a set of shared, accurate images comparable to the modern maps we take for granted. Practical communication through maps remained slight in classical antiquity. Our understanding of how contemporaries conceptualized their surroundings remains frustratingly inadequate.

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49. Cf. Racine (2009), 79: "Reading classical poetry closely in school and hearing the grammarian's commentary on place-names mentioned by poets was for the educated Roman the first lens through which he learned to see the wider world, a lens that would be later supplemented but never completely replaced by direct experience, personal contacts and the flow of news."

50. The small size of the object surely added to its appeal: owners could feel that they were gaining the chance to hold the Roman Empire, indeed the world, in just one hand. Compare the popularity of European pocket globes in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries: Sumira (2014), index s.vv. "pocket globes."

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