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ARCHAEOLOGIES OF MEMORY

Memory – what a strange thing it is!
(Bachelard 1964: 9)

The present is "haunted" by the past and the past is modeled, invented, reinvented, and reconstructed by the present.
(Assmann 1997: 9)

. . . memory is a process, not a thing . . .
(Olick and Robbins 1998: 122)

This book is about something difficult to define, something troublesome to pin down, and in which not everyone entirely believes. It is also about something vital to our understanding of the ancient world. People derive identity from shared remembrance – from social memory – which in turn provides them with an image of their past and a design for their future.[1] What people remember of the past fashions their sense of community and determines their allies, enemies, and actions; they will argue over it and kill for it. Social memory is manifestly a mighty force, but also a fugitive one. Memories overlap and compete; over time they change or are eradicated; people forget.

As this chapter will demonstrate, it is hard enough to follow the mutabilities of memory in the present day; so, inevitably, the problems are all the more compounded for long-gone times. How to study a present "haunted"

1. Fentress and Wickham define social memory as "an expression of collective experience: social memory identifies a group, giving it a sense of its past and defining its aspirations for the future" (1992: 25). Olick and Robbins define memory studies as "a general rubric for inquiry into the varieties of forms through which we are shaped by the past, conscious and unconscious, public and private, material and communicative, consensual and challenged" (1998: 112). A closely related concept is Assmann's "cultural memory," summed up tersely by Jonker as "the sum of the memories which a society needs to emulate its past and from which it derives its identity": Jonker 1995: 30; Assmann delimits four spheres – mimetic memory, material memory, communicative memory, and cultural memory – with the first three entering into the space created by the fourth: Assmann 1992: 21, 48–66. Some recent general reviews of social memory include Bourguet *et al.* 1990; Connerton 1989; Fara and Patterson 1998; Klein 2000, esp. 134–38; Lowenthal 1985: 193–210; Olick and Robbins 1998; Roth 1994.

by the past, when even that present lies far removed from us in time, leaving only fragments behind? How are we to conceive the memories of past peoples such as, for example, the ancient Greeks? Two academic strategies have evolved to deal with such questions. The first has been simply to relieve dead populations of the burden of their past, proceeding to analyze and assess their activities as if they had no memories at all. The second has been solely to rely on surviving documentary evidence when attempting to recover what societies valued and recalled. Neither strategy is satisfactory – the first based on an arrogant and unsound premise, the second on a severely limited view of what constitutes relevant data.

This book proposes another way forward by espousing the cause of archaeology, in particular the evidence it affords of monuments and landscapes. In archaeology the term "matrix" defines the material in which artifacts are embedded and supported; I shall argue here that memories are similarly embedded and supported within a material framework. To examine that framework is to expand the range of commemorative practices and impulses we can actually recognize and study, giving back to peoples in the past – if only ever partially – some of the vigor of their remembrances.

To make my argument, I will consider three specific case studies, each set in a different time period and with a different geographical scope. They are, however, related analyses, for each revolves around peoples at a time of especial stress and transformation (notably the impact of military conquest and annexation), and each employs archaeological evidence to trace responses to those challenges. To begin, however, I want to explore in somewhat more detail the nature of social memory and the present state of its study. The role of archaeology in this endeavor also requires clarification, detailing just which categories of material culture are most helpful in approaching anything as intangible and frangible as memory. At the chapter's conclusion, I introduce the three studies in which we will explore remembrance of things past – in the past.

SIX SHORT STORIES ABOUT SOCIAL MEMORY

I find talking in the abstract about social memory a rather arid discourse for such a dynamic subject. To that end, six short stories are here told that delineate the power and complexity of remembering. Myriad tales could have been invoked, but I deliberately chose the six to represent diverse contexts and approaches. The first vignette serves as a bridge to the principal focus of the book – ancient Greece – but the remainder are admittedly a geographically

and temporally mixed bag. The short stories also display the mélange of means through which memory is sustained (including ritual performances, archival documentation, oral traditions, ethnographic testimony, and physical mementoes) – or erased – as well as a variety of scholarly styles. The cumulative impact of these short stories makes a variety of points essential to my argument, and these will be reviewed after the stories have been told.

Stripping the Parthenon

The story of the Greek Revolution against Turkish dominion – its enthusiastic European backing, its heroic indigenous leadership – has been recounted many times. Memories of past freedom stirred all parties involved; the invocations most frequently recorded called upon the classical age and, in particular, upon the liberty ensured by the Persian Wars. Innumerable quotations come to mind; Byron musing at Marathon "that Greece might still be free," or Alexander Ypsilantis proclaiming:

> Let us recollect, brave and generous Greeks, the liberty of the classic land of Greece; the battles of Marathon and Thermopylae; let us combat upon the tombs of our ancestors who, to leave us free, fought and died. The blood of our tyrants is dear to the shades . . . above all, to those of Miltiades, Themistocles, Leonidas and the three hundred who massacred so many times their number of the innumerable army of the barbarous Persians – the hour is come to destroy their successors, more barbarous, and still more detestable. Let us do this or perish. To arms then, my friends, your country calls you.

Pressure to locate the source of Greek identity in that particular, classic epoch continued in the wake of statehood – a choice externally urged by the influential "Philhellenes" of Europe and by the geopolitical situation of the young nation. Today, the history, art, and culture of the High Classical age still dominate global conceptions of what is truly significant about Greek history.

Also demanding recognition within this modern nation, however, are divergent patterns of commemoration, versions of Greek cultural origins that refused to forget the centuries intervening between Pericles and Kolokotronis. Advocates remember and speak for the heritage of Byzantium, and for indigenous developments in the country, even under Turkish rule. The title *Romiós* (or Romeic), derived ultimately from "Roman," has been used to sum up this stance, which (such is the authoritative power of the "Hellenist" image) has often been conceived in pejorative terms. The co-existence of these distinct memorial positions, and the contestations between them, have been

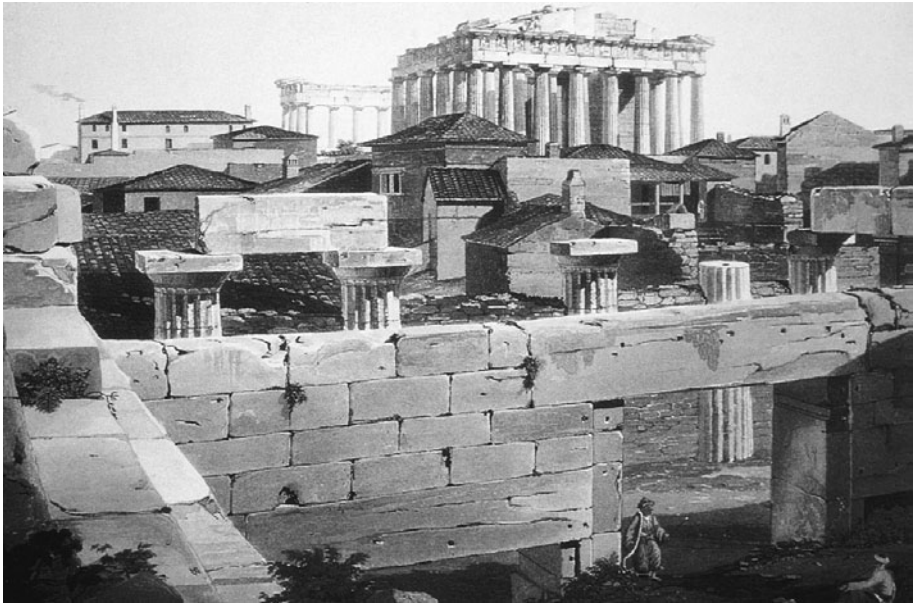

Fig. 1.1 Aquatint of the Athenian Acropolis, published in *Views in Greece, from Drawings by Edward Dodwell* (1821). A Turkish mosque would have stood within the Parthenon at this time, but that fact seems discreetly veiled.

remarked in many spheres – in poetry, in politics, in folklore, in music, above all in language.[2] But they could also be visible to the eye.

An aquatint published in 1821 (the very year of Revolution) by the British traveler Edward Dodwell helps to make the point (Fig. 1.1). That is indeed the Parthenon on the Athenian Acropolis, but here it stands side-by-side and surrounded by dwellings, religious structures, fortifications, and monuments belonging to quite distinct historical epochs – a palimpsest of construction and experience. For viewers and passers-by, elements within this collection would stimulate memories of different episodes, gods, or heroes; they would activate remembrance of different moments in the past. The continuing physical juxtaposition in Greece of churches and temples, Byzantine mosaics and

2. For a scholarly study of "Hellenist" and "Romeic" conceptions, as manifest particularly in folklore studies, Herzfeld 1982. Patrick Leigh Fermor was once told by a Greek friend that (in some uses) "Romiós" represented "our dirty linen" – or, in Leigh Fermor's words, "the helplessness of subjection and the strands of Turkish custom which . . . wove themselves into the web of Greek life." Fermor discusses the "Helleno-Romaic dilemma" at length in *Roumeli*, creating a list with sixty-four diverging characteristics and preferences. The last of these contrasts the Dome of St. Sophia with the columns of the Parthenon (1966: 96–147, quotation at 100). The Ypsilantis proclamation is quoted in full in St. Clair 1972: 23; out of a vast bibliography, see also Brewer 2001; Tsigakou 1981: 21–62.

Fig. 1.2 Twentieth-century view of the Athenian Acropolis.

Classical statues, allows both Hellenist and Romeic conceptions of the past to persist, and persistently to contend with each other.

That only remains true, however, if the structures themselves are allowed to survive. These observations cast new light upon a well-documented phenomenon: the stripping of the Athenian Acropolis over the course of the nineteenth century. Medieval and early modern monuments and structures – the Turkish mosque within the Parthenon, parts of the Ducal Palace, the Frankish Tower – were all demolished, with little record kept of their "destruction."[3] Left behind is a polished limestone surface on which stand scattered edifices and monuments dating almost exclusively to the classic "golden age" (Fig. 1.2). Explanations for these actions are numerous, complex, and deeply bound up with the emergence of Greek national identity and the *Megali Idea*, and with the imperatives of western cultural (not least touristic) expectations. The appearance of the present-day Acropolis must also be taken, however, as the result of a battle over social memory; it represents a struggle for control over a highly memorable space. The loser, characteristically, becomes invisible.

3. For an overview of this "destruction," McNeal 1991. A similar pairing of illustrations, as in Figs. 1.1 and 1.2 here, is employed in Schneider and Höcker 1990: 11.

The Camisard rebellion

In the early eighteenth century, Louis XIV, the Sun King, revoked the Edict of Nantes and outlawed Protestantism. Local enforcement of this central edict led, in the Cévennes mountains of southern France, to desperate revolt. Whipped up by Messianic exhortations and waging guerrilla-style warfare, the Camisards (as they are known) for a short time beat back the Royalist troops before being crushed. Over 250 years later, the historian Philippe Joutard discovered that the people of the Cévennes were still happy to talk about this Camisard rebellion. They described its leaders and heroes (one evocatively nicknamed "Roland," after the hero of the medieval narrative, *The Song of Roland*), as well as the course of various clashes; in particular they could identify geographical locales associated with the revolt, not least the refuge caves of the Camisards. To some extent these communal memories were fed by historical accounts and by formal monuments; on the other hand, such honors were late in coming – the rebels were widely condemned until a nineteenth-century Romantic reappraisal. Moreover, the fact that many of the anecdotes revolve around minor events – a particular skirmish, the exploits of a familial ancestor – points to the work of long-term oral tradition, rooted in strong memories of specific places.

These stories – some academically verifiable, some not – all work to the same end: "that of constituting the Protestant community's identification of itself as a community of resistance, which is partly backed up by and partly creates a tradition of resistance that has continued to exist in the area until today." The paradigmatic eighteenth-century outbreak invades and shapes remembrance of other historical events which become "camisardized," as James Fentress and Chris Wickham put it in their 1992 book *Social Memory*. Other groups at moments of opposition (notoriously the French Resistance of World War II) are cast very much in the Camisard mold, while men or events which fail to fit this pattern (even such "greats" as Napoleon or World War I) are disregarded – much to the horror of more conventional nationalist historians. This commemorative structure guides the region's ongoing political stance: steadfastly in favor of opposition, in favor of resistance.

Relative stability of population clearly contributed to this deep-running pattern of social memory; by contrast, neighboring areas, more transformed by processes of industrialization, possess far sketchier notions about the uprising. As the people of the Cévennes themselves become increasingly mobile, the detail of Camisard memories, and their inherent power, is also becoming attenuated.[4]

4. Fentress and Wickham 1992: 92–99, quotation at 93.

Digging Sargon

In the successive and competing dynasties and empires of ancient Mesopotamia, regimes continually invoked memories of their predecessors, using them to create and promulgate structures of political identity. A principal stimulus for these shared memories, Gerdien Jonker has argued, was the physical trace of the past in the present-day landscape: old cities, old walls, old temples, old statues – in other words, the material framework of the past in the present (termed, after Halbwachs [see below, pp. 24–25], the *cadre matériel*). While this led to a complicated "topography of remembrance," the most powerful commemorative magnet was late third-millennium BC Akkad and its legendary rulers Sargon and Naram-Sin. This "Akkad orientation" offered a legacy of centralized rule and state strength, in contrast to which names and events lacking such ingredients fell into "the black holes that recur in reconstructions of Mesopotamian memory patterns."

As the centuries passed, however, invoking the necessary *cadre matériel* became harder and harder to do, as the Mesopotamian landscape was profoundly rewritten, with new structures and features threatening or erasing those older traces. Yet Assyrian and Babylonian rulers of the first millennium BC still desired connections back in time, not least to the now distant days of Akkad. Kings thus turned philologist, reading (as one inscription claims for the seventh-century BC ruler Ashurbanipal) "the obscure Akkadian which is difficult to master. I inspected stone inscriptions from before the flood on which the dynasties had stamped their seal." Babylonian rulers, with monumental ruins in their territories, took an even more direct approach, purposefully digging at Akkad, at Ur, at Sippar, and elsewhere. Excavated discoveries were carefully recorded, resulting in texts oddly reminiscent of modern museum records: "Copy of a baked tile from the ruins of Ur. The work of Amar-Sin, king of Ur . . . Nabu-shuma-idinna . . . examined it and copied it for further surveying."

Not only did Mesopotamian kings practice excavation but, in a good cause, they would even salt their sites. Nineteenth-century AD excavations at Sippar discovered a container under the floor of the Ebabbar (the "White House"), abode of Shamash, god of the sun. In it were found building inscriptions of Nabonidus, last of the Babylonian kings (556–539 BC), together with a strangely shaped stone tablet (the "cruciform monument"; Fig. 1.3). Nabonidus, in recording his restoration of the Ebabbar, claimed to be building on the very foundations of Sargon the Great himself; there he discovered an inscription of Naram-Sin unseen by any other monarch, the king himself calculated, for 3200 years. This, the cruciform monument, bore Naram-Sin's

Fig. 1.3 The "cruciform monument" from the temple of Shamash at Sippar.

"original" regulations for the Shamash temple. Nabonidus implemented these rules, which seemed to come – in every sense – straight from the past, before reburying Naram-Sin's message with accounts of his own activity. A statue was also found in the old foundations, unequivocally identified by Nabonidus as an image of the great Sargon although the king noted "half of its head had broken off and it had disintegrated so that he did not find its face." The statue too was restored to a cultic function.

The strategy here is clear. Nabonidus sought, as a Babylonian king in an era of Assyrian decline, to claim the mantle of Akkad and thus of universal empire. If the necessary *cadre matériel* to summon up the necessary memories had vanished, then it was necessary to rediscover it. Nor should this be taken as an isolated royal fantasy. Through their engagement in ritual activity along lines laid down millennia before, broader communities came to see themselves as part of an ongoing chain of activity, anchored back in a hallowed time. Yet these links to the past, and the authority and pride they channeled, emerged only in carefully predetermined situations. As Jonker stresses, not all aspects of the past were equally important: not just any old excavation, in any old place, finding any old artifacts would do. The targets selected and the "chosen interpretation depended on the identity of the community that did the digging." The statue's face may have been missing, but Nabonidus none the less knew he had found Sargon.[5]

Neolithic gatherings

The prehistoric monuments of Britain are almost preternaturally long-lived. One example, Hambledon Hill in Dorset, is a local landscape inscribed with Neolithic long mounds, Bronze Age barrows, an Iron Age hillfort, and Anglo-Saxon burials; it has been documented as a notable regional landmark in accounts of the English Civil Wars, in the writings of Thomas Hardy, and in modern parish records (Fig. 1.4). Throughout this remarkable span of occupation, each period, in its own way, recognized its predecessors: earthworks respect earthworks, present-day archaeologists carefully disentangle the site's stages of activity.

5. Jonker 1995, quotations at 68, 156, 155, 170, 174. Another chest, this one dating to the ninth century BC, was also found (just below that of Nabonidus) in the nineteenth-century excavations of the Ebabbar temple. It too contained inscriptions and a cult relief of the god. Eleventh-century invasion had eradicated the cult of Shamash from Sippar; the "discovery" of this image, it was said, allowed new statues to be made and the cult renewed with honor. The king Nabu-apla-iddina then buried the relief "to prevent such a loss occurring again" (p. 163). Nabonidus must have been aware of this other casket, but makes no mention of it; his discoveries are turned to a different purpose. For other archaeological acts of Nabonidus, Schnapp 1996: 13–19, 31. For deliberate mutilation of another image of "Sargon": Nylander 1980.

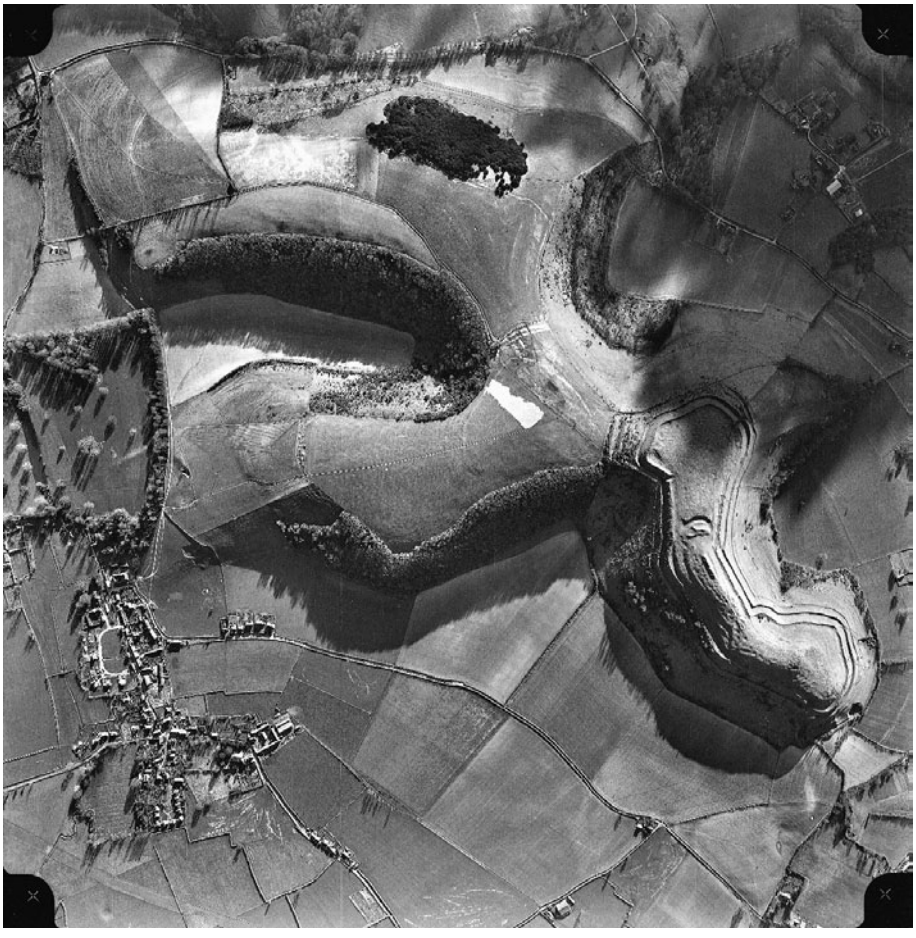

Fig. 1.4 Aerial view of Hambledon Hill, Child Okeford, Dorset.

For the generations alive during the earlier British Neolithic (the fourth millennium BC), monumental complexes such as Hambledon Hill appear to have served as points in the landscape for the intermittent meeting of a population that was otherwise for the most part dispersed. Such gatherings allowed bonds of recognition and kinship to form, defining a larger social world for these small and scattered groups. Meeting at monuments provided contexts for exchange and feasting, for display and competition. These rituals and conversations provided the space necessary for the communication and consolidation of shared memories: "Within and around these arenas, it was possible to renew a sense of the collective, to mediate conflicts between lineages and confirm distinctions within groups . . . more often than not, these practices drew upon the past, the past of earlier generations and the past of ancestral