

THE DESTRUCTION OF CITIES IN THE ANCIENT GREEK WORLD

From the Trojan War to the sack of Rome, from the fall of Constantinople to the bombings of World War II and the recent devastation of Syrian towns, the destruction of cities and the slaughter of civilian populations are among the most dramatic events in world history. But how reliable are literary sources for these events? Did ancient authors exaggerate the scale of destruction to create sensational narratives? This volume reassesses the impact of physical destruction on ancient Greek cities and its demographic and economic implications. Addressing methodological issues of interpreting the archaeological evidence for destructions, the volume examines the evidence for the destruction, survival, and recovery of Greek cities. The studies, written by an international group of specialists in archaeology, ancient history, and numismatics, range from Sicily to Asia Minor and Aegean Thrace, and include Athens, Corinth, and Eretria. They highlight the resilience of ancient populations and the recovery of cities in the long term.

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Edited by Sylvian Fachard, Edward M. Harris
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INTEGRATING THE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND LITERARY
EVIDENCE

Edited by

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*This volume is dedicated to the memory of all those who lost their
lives during the pandemic of 2020–2021.*

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PREFACE

The idea of a volume dedicated to “Destruction, Survival, and Recovery in the Ancient Greek World” sprung from the research interests of the two editors, which merged during the trips and site visits conducted in Greece in the course of the American School of Classical Studies’ Academic Program between 2017 and 2020. Each year, the School’s Regular Members travel over 10,000 kilometers and hike another 1,000 kilometers to visit some 400 archaeological sites and museums and deliver on-site reports, reviewing the literary and archaeological evidence for each site. In the course of our site visits to cities that had sustained destructions or had been allegedly “razed to the ground,” it appeared that the archaeological signature for the “destruction” was often elusive, if not missing entirely, and was based on unreliable data. It often appeared that the magnitude and impact of the destruction had often been inflated by ancient and modern historians alike, as well as, in some instances, by archaeologists. Although we were struck by the high number of cities that allegedly sustained sieges and “destructions,” we were surprised to see how many of them seemed to have recovered in the span of one or two generations. It became increasingly clear to us that there was another story of destruction to be told, one focusing as much on the immediate impact of the event as on the recovery phase in the long term. Moreover, in an illuminating way, we realized that by studying the recovery phase of a Greek city following destruction, much could be said about its population, economic base, and institutions. Convinced that these issues would interest archaeologists and historians alike, we decided to organize a conference in Athens to discuss a series of case-studies that would provide enough critical archaeological data to study destruction post-destruction at the level of an entire city or region.

The present volume results from the conference held May 16–18, 2019, at the American School of Classical Studies at Athens. We are grateful to the American School for providing the financial support and intellectual framework that led to its organization and publication. The editors wish to thank in particular the Director of the School, Prof. Jenifer Neils, for her continuous support and encouragement. We wish to thank all contributors for enthusiastically embracing the volume’s themes and contributing to its publication. We are very grateful to Beatrice Rehl at Cambridge University Press for

encouraging the project right from the start and to Bethan Lee for her superb work with the copy-editing process. We also wish to thank the Regular Members of the School who took up the task of writing a regional catalog of destructions for the volume's Appendix. We are also grateful to Konstantinos Tzortzinis, ASCSA Digital Media specialist, for his collaboration during and after the conference.

This volume is also a way of celebrating the virtues of the American School's Regular Program, which, for over a century, has offered its Regular Members a unique way of exploring and studying the archaeology, history, and landscape of Greece.