

Felipe Rojas, *The Pasts of Roman Anatolia: Interpreters, Traces, Horizons*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. Pp. xxi, 252. ISBN 9781108484886. \$99.99 (Hardcover); \$80.00 (eBook).

Studies on memory in the Greco-Roman world, and particularly on local or regional conceptualizations of the past, have become increasingly important in recent decades as scholars strive to understand how the ancients perceived their world and their history. In this volume Rojas offers an important, innovative, and highly conceptual contribution to these discussions. Through his focus on Anatolia, Rojas examines how Roman-era “archaeophiles” – a term he favors over “archaeologist” or “antiquarian,” both of which he considers too modern and precise for application in the Roman period – interacted with and interpreted material traces of the past.

Rojas engages in two levels of analysis throughout his book. First, he examines pre-Roman material remains and Roman textual references to earlier material remains to illuminate how Romans and residents of Roman Anatolia interacted with and interpreted physical traces of the past. Rojas’ work is different from other studies on Roman memory because of his emphasis on interactions with material culture rather than literary culture, thereby allowing him to explore how not only the educated aristocratic élite, but also non-elites such as farmers, shepherds, and local priests, whose voices are generally absent from Roman literary texts, interacted with traces of the Anatolian past. Rojas’ second analytical thread uses his examples of Roman archaeophilia to reveal the limits of modern archaeological methods and theories for reconstructing Roman views of their past. He argues that ancient archaeophilia was more holistic, incorporating sensory, ephemeral, and natural elements that would not be considered acceptable archaeological evidence today, and challenges all modern archaeophiles (academic or not) to re-adjust how they interpret remains of the past, what voices they privilege in discussing the past, and what types of evidence they consider “valid” for informing us about the past.

Rojas begins his analysis by looking first at the “Interpreters” (Chapter 2), i.e. individuals whom he identifies as archaeophiles. He focuses especially on Pausanias’ travel accounts of Anatolia, though also draws from stories of Strabo, Pliny, Caesar, and Cicero. Yet the author also strives to reconstruct the voices of their interlocutors – the local guides, priests, and collectors with whom Roman aristocratic travelers would have interacted as they sought out local antiquities. In many cases, the ancient accounts only implicitly reveal what these local guides said by placing them in opposition to the claims of the Roman elites. Rojas shows that archaeophiles used and promoted ancient objects for a variety of reasons, such as to legitimize their local history in the eyes of their Roman governors, to connect themselves to the land’s earlier history, or to distinguish themselves from contemporary cultural trends (such as the increasing domination of Christianity).

In Chapter 3, “Traces,” Rojas examines the physical and non-physical traces that served as indications of past peoples. He begins by asserting the importance of

assemblages in Roman engagements with the past. Textual accounts of Roman archaeophilia show that it was not always a single object or monument, but rather a set of traces that, when considered together, produced a story of the past while confirming each others' significance. These assemblages included not only the static, manufactured remains that modern archaeology values, but also less tangible pieces of evidence, such as features of the landscape (e.g. springs or mountains) that the Romans viewed as traces of past activities or, in some cases, as *embodiments* of past figures. One illustrative example that Rojas discusses is the "throne" of Kızıldağ, which has several inscriptions and reliefs on and around it dating from the late Bronze Age through the Roman period. A late Hellenistic- or Roman-period inscription tells of a priest named Craterus who "leaped" (ἐπήδησε) in this place. Rojas draws on evidence from Pausanias about religious rituals performed in precarious locations to suggest that this cliff-side inscription records some kind of ritual or "dance" through which the Roman-period priest may have sought to engage with a local deity, who was perhaps represented by the Iron Age figure inscribed on the throne centuries earlier. Rojas also considers "sensorial" evidence as an essential part of the archaeological assemblage and interpretation of the site since the throne overlooked the seasonal Hotamış Lake, whose waters fluctuated dramatically with the seasons.

In Chapter 4, "Horizons," Rojas examines "memory horizons," which he defines as "the historical contexts that ancient interpreters themselves brought into focus when interacting with material remains" (16). He argues that archaeophiles (both ancient and modern) interpret material remains of the past in the historical contexts that make the most sense to them, not necessarily interpreting them in the context of the period or culture in which they were produced, with the result that the historical narratives often overlap and intertwine with each other. To illustrate, Rojas shows how the citizens of Roman Aphrodisias displayed monuments that simultaneously glorified earlier Roman emperors and legendary "Asiatic" figures of the pre-Roman past, including Semiramis, Ninus, and Gordis, without distinction, thereby granting the relatively young city a much more ancient past. While some memory horizons reacted to physical remains of the past, others incorporated costumes and ceremonies intended to reenact or remember past events that belonged to cultures that had previously inhabited the region, such as the Persians in Zela.

Most important in Chapter 4 is Rojas' discussion of the role of colonialism, cultural bias, and academic snobbery in interpreting these memory horizons. Rojas warns against the long-standing assumption among scholars that people of the Greek and Roman periods paid little attention to the remains of earlier cultures. He asserts that such attitudes are rooted in the memory horizons, "only of the colonizer, dismissing the colonized's narratives as unsystematic, misinformed, erroneous, or nonexistent" (141, emphasis original). This traditional perspective relies on assumptions that the Romans would reference the distant past in terms or chronological constructions recognizable to us (e.g. "they would know about the

Hittites if they cared to learn about the past”), and frequently presents European explorers and scholars (both ancient and modern) as “rediscoverers” or “rescuers” of the Anatolian past. Rojas points out several issues with this framework. First, it is anachronistic to expect the Romans to view their past in the same way we do; they should not be faulted, e.g., for understanding the relief statue on Mount Sipylus as an ancient depiction of the Mother of the Gods rather than recognizing it as a Bronze Age Luwian sculpture. Second, by dismissing the many ways of interacting with the past that do not fit in with the frameworks created by Eurocentric classicists and archaeologists, scholars have limited their ability to discover how the Romans *did* understand their past. Rojas calls for a revision of these attitudes, pointing out, “many sorts of pre-classical material remains did in fact repeatedly incite the interest of local archaeophiles in antiquity,” but perhaps not in the way that the modern academic community would like or recognize (142).

In Chapter 5, “Beyond Anatolia,” Rojas argues that archaeophilia was common throughout all regions of the Roman world. By looking at examples from Spain to India, Rojas revisits his discussion of the colonization of the past by showing how discourses of the past often differed between local and foreign archaeophiles, with the foreign (usually Roman) interpreters generally assuming that their higher level of education (and “material connoisseurship,” as Rojas calls it) allowed them to claim a better understanding of local history than those who lived there. Cicero’s “rediscovery” of the tomb of Archimedes in Syracuse is one of several examples that Rojas gives to illustrate this point. He also shows that the emphasis on autopsy – a point first discussed in Chapter 2 – and using all five senses was common not only among local commoners, but also the learned intellectuals such as Pausanias and Plutarch. Rojas closes the chapter by recalling interactions he himself (an educated outsider) has had with local archaeophiles (often shepherds and farmers) in Anatolia and asks once again: Whose knowledge of the past should be prioritized? Who gets to make history from traces of the past? And what traces of the past are worth protecting?

In his concluding chapter, “The Past in Things: Ancient Archaeophilia and Modern Archaeology,” Rojas directly addresses these deeper questions. He asserts that his goal was not to prove or disprove in modern terms what Romans thought about their past, but rather to understand Roman archaeophilia on its own terms. Acknowledging that many elements of ancient archaeophilia – especially those preserved in ancient literature – have shaped the modern disciplines of archaeology and history, he urges scholars in those disciplines not to discount other, less “scientific” ways of viewing and interpreting the past that may have held value in the Roman world.

The collection of evidence that Rojas presents throughout these six chapters is fascinating, and he is mindful to present a mixture of more familiar and more obscure examples of literary, epigraphical, and archaeological evidence supplemented with ample images to facilitate the reader’s comprehension of the spatial and physical contexts of his arguments. The chapters are interdependent, and examples from

earlier chapters frequently show up again in later ones. Notably, his discussion of dragon spoor in Chapter 2 (80-93), which illustrates the long tradition of dragon-slaying myths in Phrygia and Lydia beginning in the Hittite period and shows the centrality of sensory, natural, and ephemeral components in the assemblages of evidence for Roman engagement with the past, comes back in Chapter 4 (127-37), where he shows how the dragon myths were reinterpreted via a Christian “memory horizon,” replacing Apollo with the Apostle Philip, who himself became known as a dragon-slayer and whose *martyrium* in Hierapolis was built with blocks from the former temple of Apollo.

The author has exercised a great amount of creativity and originality in his analysis. His task is not easy, as he himself acknowledges in his concluding statements (“Taken individually, many of the case studies I have examined above are too incomplete or too opaque to provide insight into historical specifics,” 180), and some of his interpretations are more convincing than others, but his overall thesis and methodology provide an important reminder to historians and archaeologists to be cognizent of the wide range of memory horizons, interpretations, and physical remains to consider when trying to understand the relationships between Roman-era peoples and their past.

Rojas’ book will be of particular interest to scholars interested in Roman (or pre-Roman) Anatolia; the study of memory in antiquity; mythology and physical remnants of the mythological past; and more generally, any scholars (of any region or period) who are interested in diversifying the voices and methods that contribute to the production of knowledge about the past. Further, this book would be an excellent addition to any advanced undergraduate or graduate course about archaeological method and theory.

ANDREA F. GATZKE
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT NEW PALTZ
gatzkea@newpaltz.edu