Cultural identity in the Roman
Near East:

An historiographical exercise

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Abstract

The central premise of this thesis is that the concepts of hellenisation and romanisation are no longer useful as interpretive models of the Graeco-Roman Near East. Through most of the twentieth century they did good service generating research questions and providing innovative explanations of both existing and new data. On the one hand the notion of hellenisation focused attention on the historical importance of cultural change in the Hellenistic period, while the concept of romanisation focused scholarly attention on life in the provinces rather than on the court life of the imperial city and highlighted the importance of epigraphy and archaeology as against the philological study of literary texts. But the underlying assumptions of both concepts — the superiority of Graeco-Roman culture, the ‘civilising’ role of the intrusive powers, the passivity of the indigenous peoples of the region, the notion that Greek, Roman and Semitic cultures are bounded entities — are now dated.

In the first part of the thesis I deconstruct the concepts of hellenisation and romanisation in detail and then develop an alternative framework which is avowedly postmodern and interdisciplinary, eschews eurocentrism, and uses postcolonial concepts as well as insights from modern social theory.

In the second part of the thesis I use the alternative framework to review the evidence relating to the provincial city of Gerasa in the Roman province of Arabia. Looked at through this alternative prism it has been possible to offer some different readings of the evidence not apparent in earlier interpretations. In particular, in using the concepts of resistant strategy and cultural imperialism to discuss the emergence of the Antonine period city plan, I challenge the traditional view of Hadrian’s urbanisation policy.

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Jordan, make use of the library resources of the American Center of Oriental Research ACOR), Amman and the British Institute, Amman (where Dr Alex Bellum introduced me to some of the subtleties of middle eastern social linguistics); and then spend two weeks at the Kenyon Institute, Jerusalem, Israel. On this trip I was able to have lengthy discussions with Dr Ina Kehrberg-Ostrasz (on site at Gerasa), Dr Chris Tuttle, Deputy Director, ACOR (Amman), and Fr. Jean-Baptiste Humbert, Director of le laboratoire d'archéologie de l'École Biblique, Jerusalem. Jean-Baptiste's brother, Gabriel, was both an incomparable host during our six weeks in Jarash and an excellent guide to various sites in Jordan. Our driver, Omar, was also great company and, for our sake, on occasion took his car where no car should have to go! To all these people, my heartfelt thanks for time and expertise generously given.

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Translation note

I have done my own translation of primary Greek and Latin sources with the exception of the epitaphs of Meleagros of Gadara, for which I have used that of Richard Aldington.

Abbreviations

Primary sources

In general, the abbreviations used are those of the *Oxford classical dictionary* (1996) 3d ed. (Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press); biblical abbreviations are those of sections 10.48-50 of the *Chicago manual of style online* (<http://chicagomanualofstyle.org>).

<i>I Kgs</i>	First Book of Kings, Jewish Testament
<i>II Kgs</i>	First Book of Kings, Jewish Testament
<i>I Macc.</i>	First Book of Macabbees, Jewish Testament
<i>II Macc.</i>	Second Book of Macabbees, Jewish Testament
<i>I Sam.</i>	First Book of Samuel, Jewish Testament
<i>II Sam</i>	Second Book of Samuel, Jewish Testament
<i>Acts</i>	Book of Acts, Christian Testament
<i>Amos</i>	Book of Amos, Jewish Testament
<i>BT</i>	Babylonian Talmud, Codex Munich 95 (Jerusalem, 1970) (Heb.)
<i>Caes. B. Gall.</i>	Caesar <i>De Bello Gallico</i>
<i>Cic. Prov. Cons.</i>	Cicero <i>De Provinciis Consularibus</i>
<i>Dan.</i>	Book of Daniel, Jewish Testament
<i>Dio Cass.</i>	Dio Cassius <i>Roman history</i>
<i>Deut.</i>	Book of Deuteronomy, Jewish Testament
<i>Epit. de Caes.</i>	<i>Epitome de Caesaris</i> , in Fr. Pichlmayr (ed.) <i>Sextus Aurelius Victor: de Caesaribus</i> (Lipsae in Aedibus, 1961) [133]-176
<i>Eus. Eccles. Hist.</i>	Eusebius <i>Ecclesiastical history</i>
<i>Gal.</i>	Epistle to the Galatians, Christian Testament
<i>Gen.</i>	Book of Genesis, Jewish Testament
<i>Hippoc. Aer</i>	Hippocrates <i>Airs, waters, places</i>

<i>Isa.</i>	Book of Isaiah, Jewish Testament
<i>It. Eg.</i>	<i>Itinerarium Egeriae</i>
<i>John</i>	Gospel of John, Christian Testament
Joseph. <i>Ant.Jud.</i>	Flavius Josephus <i>Antiquitates Judaicae</i>
Joseph. <i>Bell.Jud.</i>	Flavius Josephus <i>de Bello Judaico</i>
Joseph. <i>Vita</i>	Flavius Josephus <i>Josephi vita</i>
<i>Josh.</i>	Book of Joshua, Jewish Testament
<i>Judg.</i>	Book of Judges, Jewish testament
Juv. <i>Sat.</i>	Juvenal <i>Satires</i>
Lib. <i>Or.</i>	Libanius <i>Orations</i>
Livy	Livy <i>ab urbe condita</i>
<i>Luke</i>	The Gospel of Luke, Christian Testament
Marcellin.	Ammianus Marcellinus <i>Res Gestae</i>
<i>Mk.</i>	The Gospel of Mark, Christian Testament
<i>Matt.</i>	The Gospel of Matthew, Christian Testament
<i>Neh.</i>	Book of Nehemiah, Jewish Testament
<i>Num.</i>	Book of Numbers, Jewish Testament
Philo <i>Leg.</i>	Philo. <i>Legatio ad Gaium</i> , in <i>Philo: with an English translation by F.H. Colson</i> . Vol X (London, Cambridge MA, 1962)
Pl. <i>Menex.</i>	Plato <i>Menexenus</i>
Plin. <i>Ep</i>	Pliny the Younger <i>Letters</i>
Plin. <i>HN</i>	Pliny <i>Naturalis historia</i>
Plut. <i>De Alex. fort.</i>	Plutarch <i>de fortuna aut virtute Alexandri magni</i>
Plut. <i>Vt. Crass.</i>	Plutarch <i>Crassus</i>
Plut. <i>Mor.</i>	Plutarch <i>Moralia</i>
Plut. <i>Vt. Pomp.</i>	Plutarch <i>Pompey</i>
<i>Rom.</i>	Epistle to the Romans, Christian Testament

Sall. <i>Cat.</i>	Sallust <i>Catilinae coniuratio</i>
SHA, <i>Hadr.</i>	<i>Scriptores Historiae Augustae Hadrian</i>
<i>Strab.</i>	Strabo <i>Geography</i>
Suet. <i>Vita</i>	Suetonius <i>de Vita caesarum</i>
Tac. <i>Agr.</i>	Tacitus <i>Agricola</i>
Tac. <i>Hist.</i>	Tacitus <i>Historiae</i>

Secondary sources

In general, abbreviations used for journals are those of the *American journal of archaeology* and *L'Année Philologique*.

AASOR	Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research
ABASOR	Annual of the British Archaeological School of Oriental Research
ADAJ	Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan
AJA	American journal of archaeology
AJP	American journal of philology
<i>AmerAnt</i>	American antiquity
<i>AmerAnth</i>	American anthropology
<i>AnnRAnth</i>	Annual review of anthropology
<i>ArchDial</i>	Archaeological dialogues
ARG	Archiv für Religionsgeschichte
BA	Biblical archaeologist
BAR	British archaeological reports
BASOR	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
<i>BiblArch</i>	Biblical archaeology
<i>BiblArchR</i>	Biblical archaeology review
BSOAS	Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies
CBQ	Catholic biblical quarterly
CHR	The Catholic historical review

<i>CP</i>	Classical philology
<i>CR</i>	Classical review
<i>CSCA</i>	California University studies in classical antiquity
<i>CW</i>	Classical world
<i>EVO</i>	Egitto e vicino oriente
<i>Curranthr</i>	Current anthropology
<i>HthR</i>	Harvard theological review
<i>Historia</i>	Historia. Zeitschrift für alte Geschichte
<i>HSCP</i>	Harvard studies in classical philology
<i>IJCT</i>	International journal of the classical tradition
<i>IEJ</i>	Israel exploration journal
<i>IHR</i>	International history review
<i>JAnthArch</i>	Journal of anthropological archaeology
<i>JAP I</i>	Jerash Archaeological Project, 1981-83.
<i>JArchMT</i>	Journal of archaeological method and theory
<i>JArchR</i>	Journal of archaeological research
<i>JBL</i>	Journal of biblical literature
<i>JBQ</i>	Jewish Bible quarterly
<i>JESHO</i>	Journal of the economic and social history of the Orient
<i>JHS</i>	Journal of Hellenic studies
<i>JJS</i>	Journal of Jewish studies
<i>JJurP</i>	Journal of juristic papyrology
<i>JNES</i>	Journal of Near Eastern studies
<i>JRA</i>	Journal of Roman archaeology
<i>JRS</i>	Journal of Roman studies
<i>JSAH</i>	Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians
<i>JSH</i>	Journal of social history
<i>JSS</i>	Journal of Semitic studies
<i>JSocArch</i>	Journal of social archaeology
<i>Klio</i>	Klio: Beiträge zur Alten Geschichte
Kraeling (1938a)	KRAELING, C. H. (Ed.) <i>Gerasa, city of the Decapolis: an account of the record of a joint excavation conducted by Yale University and the</i>

	<i>British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem (1928-1930), and Yale University and the American School of Oriental Research (1930-1931, 1933-1934).</i> New Haven, CT.
<i>MeditArch</i>	Mediterranean archaeology: the Australian and New Zealand journal for the archaeology of the Mediterranean world
<i>MEFRA</i>	Mèlanges de l'École française de Rome, antiquité
<i>NEA</i>	Near Eastern archaeology
<i>NEAEHL</i>	Stern, E. (ed.) (1993, 2008) <i>The new encyclopedia of archaeological excavation in the Holy Land</i> . 5 vols. Jerusalem : Israel Exploration Society & Carta ; New York : Simon & Schuster.
<i>OJA</i>	Oxford journal of archaeology
<i>P&P</i>	Past and present
<i>PCPS</i>	Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society
<i>PEQ</i>	Palestine exploration quarterly
<i>PEFQ</i>	Palestine Exploration Fund quarterly statement
<i>QDAP</i>	Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities of Palestine
<i>RBibl</i>	Revue biblique
<i>SCI</i>	Scripta classica Israelica
<i>SHAJ</i>	Studies in the history and archaeology of Jordan
<i>Syria</i>	Syria. Revue d'art oriental et d'archéologie
<i>Topoi</i>	Topoi Orient-Occident
<i>VT</i>	Vetus Testamentum
<i>WorldArch</i>	World archaeology
<i>ZDPV</i>	Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins
<i>ZPE</i>	Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik

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Introduction

In an address to the 1996 *International symposium on Syria and the ancient Near East, 3000-300 BC*, the Lebanese archaeologist, Albert Naccache, discussed the role of the history of the region for the indigenous, the coloniser and the foreigner alike, and argued that ‘... in spite of all the stupefying details that archaeology has revealed in the last few decades, it is never the aim of the histories of Syria and the Near-East to relate to the actual inhabitants of the area the history of their ancestors or to tell them where they come from, and thence who they are.’¹ Rather, the role of the history of the region has been to help westerners better understand their own religions and culture. He notes the values and attitudes inherent in the terminologies used in the scholarly history of the region to describe the peoples (Semites, Arabs, Hebrews, Israelites, Phoenicians, etc), the geography (Near East, Middle East, Phoenicia, etc) and the time periods. He draws attention to the ‘pivotal’ role of ‘the European military and political domination over the Mashriq’ in establishing the traditional time periodisation.² In contrast to the western time periods (for example pre-Hellenistic, Hellenistic, Early Roman, Late Roman, Byzantine, Islamic), he develops an historical periodisation for the region which is unrelated to military and political domination, but rather is based on human physical and cultural adaptation through time within the environmental context.

In his seminal 1985 study, *From polis to Madina: urban change in Late Antique and early Islamic Syria*, Hugh Kennedy argued that the traditional (western) image of the decline of classical urbanism in the east is to misread the social, political and economic dynamics of the Byzantine and early Islamic east.³ Unlike in the west, urbanism continued in the eastern half of the Roman Empire. ‘Paradoxically, however, this continuity in social and political function did not result in a continuity of architectural design and urban planning.’⁴ However rather than making ‘inappropriate value judgements’ and perceiving ‘the development of the Islamic city ‘... as a process of decay, the abandonment of the high Hippodamian ideals ...

¹ Naccache (1996) 29.

² Naccache (1996) 37.

³ Kennedy (1985).

⁴ Kennedy (1985) 4.

and the descent into urban squalor' we should see the changes in city planning as 'the result of increased urban and commercial vitality' in which '... the built environment' was 'adapted for different purposes, lifestyles and legal customs.'⁵

Both articles highlight the effect of the western orientation of the history of the Graeco-Roman Near East and could perhaps be best summarised as emphasising regional cultural discontinuity resulting from Graeco-Roman imperial ventures at the expense of recognising the resilience of indigenous cultural continuity.

My primary purpose therefore has been to try and demonstrate the need for an alternative approach. I have suggested that that new approach should make explicit use of the categories and concepts of postcolonialism not for any moral reason or personal distaste for imperialism as a form of governance, but because, I suggest, it provides a set of categories and concepts most likely to generate new interpretations of the existing evidence. Furthermore, just as modern indigenous peoples around the world are seeking to recover their own histories through the use of postcolonial concepts so too, it is my hope, that such an approach to the region may result in interpretations that better balances the respective roles of colonised and coloniser in effecting cultural change in the region.

The first part of the thesis therefore explores the development of western historical method and archaeological theory and some of the implicit attitudes which have shaped our understanding of the region. It is easy to criticise earlier scholarship, of course, and the harder task, which I attempt, is to develop an alternative interpretive framework for exploring the region's past history. In the second part of the thesis I review the history and archaeology of Gerasa, located in northwest Jordan. Originally a small indigenous village or town, it was re-founded during the Hellenistic period with the Seleucid name, Antioch-on-the-Chrysorhoas, and then subsequently underwent a major urban renewal during the second century of the Common Era. Finally, I apply my alternative interpretive model to the existing archaeological and historical evidence to see whether it generates new perceptions that may form the basis of further research.

⁵ Kennedy (1985) 17.

One swallow does not a summer make and applying the model to only one site is obviously of limited value. Several factors militated against my use of multiple sites. First, word count. Given the need for a full and detailed discussion of historical method and archaeological theory, a detailed analysis of more than one site was not possible while conforming to the word limit imposed by Victoria University of Wellington on PhD theses. Second, the Syrian civil war, denied me access to several sites which would have been useful as contrasting models. Third, a good working knowledge of German (which I do not have) is necessary if one is to come to grips with the literature relating to sites such as Gadara and Petra. Gerasa, best suited the bill therefore, as a site, already well excavated and published, with an extensive literature in English and French. Finally, it is a site with which I am well familiar.

Was the venture a success? Perhaps. Certainly the use of the methodology proposed — avoidance of the hellenisation/romanisation paradigm, and use of postcolonial model of imperial domination, indigenous resistant strategies — has resulted in tentative conclusions about the social and cultural dynamics of Gerasene society which are rather different from those one customarily reads. However, there are two major qualifications that must be made. First, the evidence relating to Gerasa, impressive though it is, is far from complete. As a consequence, new evidence may at any time emerge that requires major re-assessment of conclusions relating to the city. Second, no historical interpretation is fully objective and inevitably reflects the beliefs, values and interests of the historian. In that sense my conclusions do not reflect any attempt at debunking earlier interpretations.

Part one

Theory and methodology:

Developing an alternative

interpretive

framework

Part one

Theory and Methodology

Introduction

Sometime in the second quarter of the third century CE a Palmyrene notable commissioned preparation of his sarcophagus. Burial in a Graeco-Roman sarcophagus was a relatively recent innovation in Palmyra and reflected the continuing influence of western culture in this caravan city in the Syrian Desert.¹ But the sarcophagus also reflects an affirmation of local culture for the notable has himself portrayed being dressed in two different styles. On the front of the sarcophagus itself he is displayed as a central figure clad in a Roman toga; on the lid he is portrayed reclining and dressed in the eastern manner — boots, trousers, and caftan with sleeves. The sarcophagus is a striking example of the blending in one person of eastern and western practices in one key *indicium* of identity, dress.²

Fig. 1: Third century sarcophagus, Palmyra Museum

(Source: www.flickr.com)

¹ When adopting the sarcophagus as a burial practice, the Palmyrenes seem to have given its use their own local twist. According to Gawlikowski (2005: 54) they grouped sarcophagi in the family tombs and used them as banqueting couches usually arranged as a classical *triclinium* at the end of a gallery in the tomb.

² Schmidt-Colinet (1997) 163-165.

Names also are a key *indicium* of identity. In Gerasa, a city of the Decapolis located in northwest Jordan and closer than Palmyra to the Mediterranean littoral and Graeco-Roman influence, Zabdiōn son of Aristomachos, being priest of the imperial cult of the emperor Tiberius, (Ζαβδίων Ἀριστομάχου ἱερασάμενος Τιβερίου καίσαρος ...) made a public benefaction in the Temple of Zeus in 22/23 CE.³ The act of euergetism, priesthood in the imperial cult, the Greek inscription and the Greek name of Zabdiōn's father all suggest a family thoroughly immersed in the Graeco-Roman culture of the early Roman Empire. And yet the decision by Aristomachos to call his son by the Semitic name, Zabdiōn, was surely a conscious affirmation of indigenous identity.

Each act, making provision for one's burial and naming one's son, are essentially private actions with social implications. Both also are expressions of personal identity. Yet both examples also highlight the ambiguous nature of interaction between Graeco-Roman and indigenous culture in the eastern provinces of the empire. Aristomachos may be perceived as a hellenised man; he may even have identified himself as such. But what does that mean? Is the concept of hellenisation actually a useful concept for understanding the complex dynamics of cultural interaction? Or is it merely a label lacking any analytic purchase? Is it, like the parallel concept of romanisation, too generalised, the brush strokes too broad in their sweep? If Aristomachos of first century Gerasa identified himself as Greek, possibly even a descendent of the original Greek colonists of the town, what was he affirming in giving his son a Semitic name? Similarly, why did the anonymous occupant of the Palmyrene sarcophagus, apparently a togate Roman citizen, also have himself memorialised in indigenous dress on the sarcophagus?

The concept of hellenisation fails to provide an illuminating analysis of such complex processes of self-identification in a world of rapid social, political and religious change. In contrast, the modern social sciences provide a range of analytic categories relating to inter-cultural frontiers, the impact of colonisation and imperialism, and the nature of individual adaptations and identity. But is it valid to apply such modern concepts to an ancient society? Can we assume

³ The full inscription was found in the late nineteenth century on a panel which had been built into the wall of a house in the modern settlement of Jarash. Welles (1938) Inscription 2.

that the dynamics of personal experience of nineteenth through twenty-first century societies in distant parts of the globe parallel those of ancient Near Eastern societies?

Traditional western text-based historiography of the Near East struggles to make sense of many of the cultural ambiguities being thrown up by modern archaeology. Partly this is because of its dependence upon text, partly because of a failure to make significant use of the insights of the social sciences, but partly also because of a number of Eurocentric assumptions underpinning it. However recent developments in historical and archaeological method — postcolonial studies, comparative history, the use of social science categories, processual and postprocessual archaeology — offer the ancient historian a much more sophisticated toolkit.

These methodological issues are examined in more detail in Part One.

Chapter One briefly reviews the development of modern academic historiography from its nineteenth century empiricist-positivist roots to the relativism of postmodern theory. The emergence of the hellenisation/romanisation siblings is placed in this theoretical continuum and the concepts are deconstructed to highlight the confusion as to their precise meanings, their origins in the intellectual world of modern European imperialism, and the increasing recognition of their inadequacy as analytic tools.

Chapter Two provides a similar brief review of the development of theoretical archaeology from the early culture-historical approach through processual theory to the relativism of postprocessual archaeology and the recognition of the subjectivity of interpretation. The theoretical questions posed by historical archaeology are also examined. The practice of modern Near Eastern archaeology is located in this frame. The implications of its western imperialist, religious and nationalist origins are examined. The chapter also explores the relevance of postprocessualism's concern for groups marginalised by text-based historiography and an archaeological focus on monumentalism.

Chapter Three addresses the question of the validity of modern European imperialism as a fruitful analogue of the Roman Empire. Gosden's tripartite model of colonialism is considered, as is Terrenato's criticism of the use of the

analogy. I argue that the careful use of the analogy is valid when examining social processes and provides the rationale for the use of analytic tools from the modern social sciences including the concept of identity, structuration theory and postcolonial theory as alternatives to the concepts of hellenisation and romanisation.

Chapter Four concludes Part One of the thesis by developing an alternative framework which will provide opportunity to explore the textual and archaeological evidence in a way that provides greater understanding of the dynamics of cultural change for more of the population of the region than the elite minority represented in the literary, epigraphic and monumental civic and funerary architecture.

Chapter one

Hellenisation, romanisation and the limitations of historical method

'...History is made not so much by heroes or natural forces as by historians.'

— J. C. Stobart *The grandeur that was Rome* (1912) p.3.

'... the same facts afford innumerable conclusions to different individuals and in different ages.'

— G. Finlay *Greece under the Romans* (1844) p.xix

Gibbon's *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* as it relates to the eastern provinces is probably the first significant post-Enlightenment attempt at a narrative history that also seeks to make a rational analysis of cause and effect in the region. Perhaps inevitably, the analysis is strongly Eurocentric and prejudiced, for Gibbon had little time for the eastern citizens of the Empire. Those two orientations of his work have proved surprisingly durable and they have survived in two dichotomies that have endured even into twentieth century scholarship.¹ The first is that between civilisation and barbarism, thus —

In the second century of the Christian era, the empire of Rome comprehended the fairest part of the earth, and the most civilized portion of mankind. The frontiers of that extensive monarchy were guarded by ancient renown and disciplined valour. The gentle, but powerful, influence of laws and manners had gradually cemented the union of the provinces. Their peaceful inhabitants enjoyed or abused the advantages of wealth and luxury.²

It was a view that in 1923 Francis Haverfield, Camden Professor of Ancient History at Oxford would express even more dramatically —

...the Roman Empire was the civilized world; the safety of Rome was the safety of all civilization. Outside roared the wild chaos of barbarism.³

¹ The ancient binary world view of citizen and 'Other' continues in the modern world. My supervisor, Professor A. J. Pomeroy, drew my attention to Constantine Cavafy's poem 'Waiting for the barbarians' which concludes with the bewilderment of discovering the barbarians are no more: 'Now what's going to happen to us without barbarians? Those people were a kind of solution'. (Cavafy (1990) 14-15).

² Gibbon (1993[1776]) vol. 1 1.

³ Haverfield (1923) 11.

The second dichotomy inherent in Gibbon's view of the Empire was that between the manly vigour of the Republican Roman and the effeminacy and degeneracy of the eastern citizen or Asian, thus —

The manly pride of the Romans, content with substantial power, had left to the vanity of the East the forms and ceremonies of ostentatious greatness. But when they lost even the semblance of those virtues which were derived from their ancient freedom, the simplicity of Roman manners was insensibly corrupted by the stately affectation of the courts of Asia.⁴

Again, Haverfield matched such racism when he wrote that Egypt and the eastern provinces were non-European and 'racially incapable of accepting a higher culture in any better form than that of a thin varnish.'⁵ The stereotype

Fig.2: J.-L. Gérôme's *The Dance of the Almeh*

The painting captures the popular 19th century image of the East as exotic, indolent, sensuous, technologically backward and morally degenerate. Similar attitudes are reflected in Strauss' opera, *Salome*, and Flaubert's novel, *Salammbô*.

(Source: www.wikipaintings.org/en/jean-leon-gerome.)

⁴ Gibbon (1993 [1776]) vol.2 102.

⁵ Haverfield (1924) 173. See also Haverfield (1923) 12-14. After discussing various fifth and fourth century BCE sources including Herodotus, Aeschylus, Euripides, Pindar, Plato, Isocrates, and Xenophon, Isaac (2004: 297) concludes that the later authors have in common 'a marked disdain for Persia and the Persians... it is remarkable in its emphasis on the collective inferiority of Asia ... The overall impression, however is unavoidable: increased self-confidence, expansionist drive, and various forms of proto-racism and ethnic prejudice formed the spiritual climate for Alexander's conquests in the east. Furthermore, *it is clear that the tone of these passages formed the model for anti-eastern attitudes through the ages* [my italics] ... The accusation that the East was marked by a paradoxical combination of softness and servility combined with arrogance, luxury, and corruption has had a long history which began in the fourth century.' It was evident, for example, in the late nineteenth century British Raj (Sinha, 1995).

of the degenerate and barbarian Asiatic, incapable of appreciating high culture, has been, perhaps still is, endemic in western culture and lies at the heart of Saïd's concept of orientalism.⁶ As late as the mid-twentieth century the noted English author and traveller, Rose Macauley, gave expression to it when describing her travels in the Levant —

Entering some Arab village of squalid hovels, we are in a Roman colony, among temple columns, triumphal arches, traces of theatres and baths which no one has had the intellect or the cleanliness to use since the Arabs expelled the civilized Graeco-Roman-Syrian inhabitants and squatted among their broken monuments, stabling their horses in the nave of a Christian basilica, their camels in a richly carved pagan temple, their families in mud huts clustering about the proscenium of a theatre: the broken heirlooms of the race that rules stand like desolate ghosts among the squalor.⁷

Of course, these are ancient dichotomies that pre-date Gibbon and may be traced back in western scholarship to the Greek view of the world and non-Greek barbarians. For the Greeks themselves had a long-standing dichotomised image of themselves *vis à vis* non-Greeks; an image which in the aftermath of their wars against the Persians portrayed the barbarian by grotesque caricature as 'uneducated, even bestial, hostile to strangers, despotic or enslaved, superstitious, cruel, cowardly, and faithless.'⁸

In the late fifth century BCE Hippocrates wrote —

Such is the difference in natural and physical appearance between Asiatics and Europeans. Concerning their cowardliness and lack of manliness (τῆς ἀθυμίας τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ τῆς ἀνανδρείας), the principal reason why Asiatics are not as warlike (ἀπολεμωτεροί) as Europeans and of more gentle temperament (ἡμερώτεροι) is due to seasonal changes not being great, neither hot nor cold, but even tempered. For neither mental shocks nor severe violent bodily change occurs, which are more likely to stimulate the wild passion that imbues courage than is boredom. For it is change of all types that stimulate human knowledge

⁶ Saïd (2003) [1978]. This dichotomy is, of course, a staple of Roman racial stereotypes: Juv. *Sat.* 8.112-117: '...despicias tu forsitan inbellis Rhodios unctamque Corinthon despicias merito: quid resinata iuuentus cruraque totius facient tibi leuia gentis? horrida uitanda est Hispania, Gallicus axis Illyricumque latus ...'; Tac. *Hist.* 4.17: 'servirent Syria Asiaque et suetus regibus Oriens: multos adhuc in Gallia vivere ante tributa genitos; Florus *epitoma* i 47,7: 'Syria prima nos victa corrumpit, mox Asiatica Pergameni regis hereditas.'; Sall. *Cat.* 11.5 '...huc adcedebat, quod L. Sulla exercitum, quem in Asia ductaverat, quo sibi fidum faceret, contra morem maiorum luxuriose nimisque liberaliter habuerat.'

⁷ Macauley (1953) 246-7.

⁸ Hengel (1980) 55. See also Hall (1989).

and drive men to be restless. For these reasons I think the Asiatic people to be lacking in character (ἄναλκες). But also because of their customs; for much of Asia is ruled by kings. For wherever the political order is such that men are not independent but ruled oppressively, it is not in their nature to undertake military training in order to appear warlike. For the hazards are not equivalent.⁹

By the fourth century, Athenian tragedy portrayed the non-Greek barbarian in grotesque forms,¹⁰ while at the same time Plato could compare Athenians and barbarians using the concept of racial blood purity —

Thus, it must be emphasised, the essential spirit of the city [Athens] is noble, free, solid and healthy; it manifests hatred of barbarians as a consequence of our being pure Greeks, untainted by barbarian blood. No Pelops, Cadmus, Aegyptus, or Danaus dwells among us, or the many others who are barbarians by nature, being Greek only by custom. But we live here, untainted Greeks, not polluted with barbarians. Therefore the city has acquired a pure hatred of those of alternative breeds.¹¹

The Romans adopted such racist stereotypes: Cicero describes Syrians and Jews as peoples ‘who are born to slavery’;¹² Livy dismisses the army of Antiochus III as ‘Syrians and Asiatic Greeks, the most worthless peoples among mankind and born for slavery’;¹³ Tacitus calls Jews ‘... the most contemptible among that portion of humanity born to servitude’;¹⁴ and Juvenal despairs of the decadent influence of Syrians in Rome: ‘Now the Syrian Orontes has already discharged into the Tiber, bringing not only strange

⁹ καὶ περὶ μὲν τῆς φύσιος τῆς διαφορῆς καὶ τῆς μορφῆς τῶν ἐν τῇ Ἀσίῃ καὶ τῇ Εὐρωπῇ οὕτως ἔχει. περὶ δὲ τῆς ἀθυμίας τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ τῆς ἀνανδρείας, ὅτι ἀπολεμώτεροί εἰσι τῶν Εὐρωπαίων οἱ Ἀσιηνοὶ καὶ ἡμερώτεροι τὰ ἡθεα αἱ ὦραι αἴτιαι μάλιστα. οὐ μεγάλας τὰς μεταβολὰς ποιούμεναι οὔτε ἐπὶ τὸ θερμὸν οὔτε ἐπὶ τὸ ψυχρόν. ἀλλὰ παραπλησίως. οὐ γὰρ γίνονται ἐκπλήξεις τῆς γνώμης οὔτε μετὰστασις ἰσχυρὴ τοῦ σώματος, ἀφ’ ὧτων εἰκὸς τὴν ὀργὴν ἀγριοῦσθαι τε καὶ τοῦ ἀγνώμονος καὶ θυμοειδέος μετέχει μᾶλλον ἢ ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ αἰεὶ ἐόντα. αἱ γὰρ μεταβολαὶ εἰσι τῶν πάντων αἱ ἐπεγείρουσαι τὴν γνώμην τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ οὐκ ἐῶσαι ἀτρεμίζειν. διὰ ταύτας ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ τὰς προφάσιας ἀναλκες εἶναι τὸ γένος τὸ Ἀσιηνὸν καὶ προσέτι διὰ τοὺς νόμους. τῆς γὰρ Ἀσίας τὰ πολλὰ βασιλεύεται. ὅκου δὲ μὴ αὐτοὶ ἐσωτῶν εἰσι καρπτεροὶ οἱ ἄνθρωποι μηδὲ αὐτόνομοι, ἀλλὰ δεσποζονται, οὐ περὶ τούτου αὐτοῖσιν ὁ λόγος ἐστίν, ὅπως τὰ πολέμια ἀσκήσωσιν, ἀλλ’ ὅπως μὴ δόξωσι μάχιμοι εἶναι. οἱ γὰρ κίνδυνοι οὐχ ὁμοῖοι εἰσι. (Hippoc. Aer.16)

¹⁰ See Hall (1989) for an extended discussion of the barbarian in tragedy.

¹¹ οὕτω δὴ τοι τό τῆς πόλεως γενναῖον καὶ ἐλευθερον βέβαιόν τε καὶ ὑγιές ἐστιν καὶ φύσει μισοβάρβαρον διὰ τὸ εἰλικρινῶς εἶναι Ἑλληνας καὶ ἀμιγεῖς βαρβάρων. οὐ γὰρ Πέλοπες οὐδὲ Κάδομοι οὐδὲ Αἴγυπτοὶ τε καὶ Δαναοὶ οὐδὲ ἄλλοι πολλοὶ φύσει βάρβαροι ὄντες, νόμῳ δὲ Ἑλλήνες, συνοικοῦσιν ἡμῖν, ἀλλ’ αὐτοὶ Ἑλλήνες, οὐ μειζοβάρβαροι οἰκοῦμεν, ὅθεν καθαρὸν τό μῖσος ἐντέτρεκε τῇ πόλει τῆς ἀλλοτρίας φύσεως.’ Pl. Men. 1.245 c/d.

¹² Cic. Prov. Cons.: 5.10: ‘... nationibus natis serituti.’

¹³ Livy 36.17.5 ‘... hic Syri et Asiatici Graeci sunt, uilissima genera hominum et seruituti nata’

¹⁴ Tac. Hist. 5.8 ‘despiciatissima pars servientium’

tongues and practices, but also its [Bacchic] flute players, slanting stringed instruments and drums, and slave girls ordered to prostitute themselves at the circus'.¹⁵ Scythians were 'half men', eunuchs; Phoenicians and Carthaginians, liars.¹⁶ Romans were contemptuous of Greek settlers in the east and of the Hellenistic rulers in particular. This attitude is dramatically exemplified in Suetonius' account of Octavian's refusal when offered a tour of the tombs of the Ptolemies after visiting the tomb of Alexander the Great in Alexandria: 'He said, I wished to see a king not corpses'.¹⁷ So far as the Romans were concerned, Greeks, formerly manly in nature, had succumbed to the pull of the east and had become effeminate and degenerate.¹⁸ They had, in the jargon of nineteenth century European imperialism, 'gone native'.

Modern academic history emerged in nineteenth century Europe, based upon the triple principles of rational analysis, the use of textual evidence and the historian as detached objective researcher. The underlying assumption was that past reality, researched in the archive of textual sources, was capable of reliable objective analysis using the positivist empiricism of the scientist investigating the natural world.¹⁹ In its beginnings in the universities of Europe, the new historical science was intimately associated with the emergence of nationalist ideologies and national histories. It promoted the development of European civilisation as 'human progress'; and, significantly, traced the lineal descent of modern Europe back to the Greeks and Romans. Significant, because if Greece and Rome represent the 'cradles of European civilisation', and if European civilisation represents the pinnacle of human progress, then inevitably other ancient societies are less significant than Greece and Rome.²⁰

¹⁵ Juv. *Sat.* 3.62 'iam pridem Syrus in Tiberim defluxit Orontes, et linguam et mores et cum tibicine chordas obliquas nec non gentilia tympana secum vexit et ad circum iussas prostare puellas.'

¹⁶ Isaac (2004) 338, 340; 125, 324-332

¹⁷ Suet. *Vita* 18.1: 'Regem se uoluisse ait videre, non mortuos'

¹⁸ Note Livy's disparaging comment about 'Asiatici Graeci' alluded to earlier in this paragraph; also Livy 38.17.11: 'Macedones, qui Alexandream in aegypto, qui Seleuciam ac Babyloniam, quique alias sparsas per orbem terrarum colonias habent, in Syros Parthos Aegyptios degenerunt ...'

¹⁹ Munslow (2006) [2000] 199.

²⁰ Alcock (1993: 3) noted that the dominant interpretive paradox (celebration of Greek achievement, shame at Greek failure) 'is a purely external, European construction of Hellenic history, written by outsiders in order to define their own modern and western identity'. There is an extensive literature on Victorian fascination with Greece and Rome, see, for example, Clarke (1989); Goldhill (2011); Hingley (2000); Jenkyns (1980); Turner (1981); Vance (1997).

Such a view of human history provided a rationale for nineteenth century European imperialism and colonisation of the rest of the world as vigorous and manly colonists and colonial administrators in Africa, Asia and the Antipodes saw themselves bearing the 'white man's burden' of bringing civilisation to the benighted savage races of the world —

Take up the White Man's burden--
Send forth the best ye breed--
Go bind your sons to exile
To serve your captives' need...

Take up the White Man's burden--
The savage wars of peace--
Fill full the mouth of Famine
And bid the sickness cease;
And when your goal is nearest
The end for others sought,
Watch sloth and heathen Folly
Bring all your hopes to nought...

- Rudyard Kipling *The white man's burden* (1898)²¹

It is very easy now to be dismissive of such imperialist cant while viewing the pretensions as simply a nineteenth century manifestation of the ancient dichotomies (civilisation/barbarism; vigorous and manly European/degenerate and effeminate Asiatic).²² Furthermore, several authors have noted the parallelism between modern Hellenistic and Roman imperialist historiography and the ideology of modern imperialism.²³ Although the notion of the 'civilising mission' of the nineteenth century imperialist, so graphically captured in Kipling's poem, is only picked up in a limited way in the classical literature, nineteenth century historians with a classical training certainly drew parallels.²⁴

²¹ Kipling (1919) vol.II 110-112. Note the image of the 'savage' in the American cartoon which reflects the nineteenth century black 'golliwog' image of the barbarian 'Other'.

²² Sinha (1995).

²³ Austin (2003) 127; Hingley (2000); Owen (2005) 5-18; Revell (2009) 5-6; Vance (1997) 222-46; Hingley (1996) 35-9; *contra* Freeman (1996) who argues that it was modern historians who tended to make the comparison.

²⁴ Thus, for example, 'The men of the [Roman] Empire wrought for the betterment and the happiness of the world' – Haverfield (1923) 10.

The two dichotomies also underpin the concepts of hellenisation and romanisation, the modern historian's traditional tools in addressing cultural interaction from the Hellenistic period through to Late Antiquity. Both hellenisation and romanisation are descriptive generalisations that refer to the process of cultural diffusion that occurred as a result of military conquest and acquisition of imperial territories. At the time each term was coined, during the highpoint of European imperialism, the process was seen as a civilising process by vigorous and manly Europeans (Greeks and Romans). Subsequently, as more evidence has come to light the processes of cultural interaction have been found to be much more complex than initially envisaged. The balance of this chapter traces the evolution of the concepts and finally discusses their modern historiographical utility.

Hellenisation

The concept of the Hellenistic age as a definable historical period is a construct of the nineteenth century German historian, Johann Gustav Droysen.²⁵ In political terms the age is now usually defined as that period between Alexander's defeat of the Achaemenid Empire (331 BCE) and Octavian's defeat of Antony and Cleopatra at Actium (31 BCE).²⁶ While the ancients would have agreed that these were two highly significant events, there is no evidence that they saw the period between as a definable and significantly different epoch.²⁷ Droysen on the other hand saw the period as culturally defined and characterised by the fusion of the Greek language and culture with the native cultures of the territories conquered by Alexander. Furthermore, for Droysen this cultural development was evidence of the hand of God working in history and preparing the world for the spread of Christianity. He coined the term *Hellenismus* to encompass this cultural process, deriving it from the Greek ἑλληνισμός, itself a late second century

²⁵ Droysen (1877-78).

²⁶ See, for example, Bugh (2006) xix-xx; Erskine (2003) 1; Green (2007) xv, (1990).

²⁷ Green (1990) xv; Bugh, G.R.(2006) 1-3. Certainly, the Romans saw Augustus' reign as inaugurating a new golden era. Thus, for example, in Virgil's famous fourth eclogue: 'Adgredero o magnos – aderit iam tempus – honores, cara deum suboles, magnum Iovis incrementum! Aspice convexo nutantem pondere mundum, terrasque tractusque maris caelumque profundum; aspice, venturo laetentur ut omnia saeclo!' Similarly, Philo of Alexandria, (Philo *Leg.* 147). Plutarch, writing in the second century CE, when the idea of a relatively humane imperial power unifying the world politically had currency, perhaps, saw Alexander as fulfilling a similar civilising world mission.(Plut. *De Alex. fort.* XLVII.3-4) Libanius in 4th century CE Antioch, saw Seleucus I in a similar light (Lib. *Or.* 11.77-104).

BCE neologism meaning 'imitation of the Greeks' with its first use being attributed to II Mac.4.13.²⁸ Prior to the publication of Droysen's *Geschichte des Hellenismus* the period was regarded with considerable disdain by historians as a low point between the Greek classical age and the triumphs of the early Roman Empire.²⁹

Since Droysen, the term 'hellenism' and its companion, 'hellenisation', have remained as fundamental concepts used by ancient historians, classicists and archaeologists alike, and yet, despite their widespread usage, there is considerable dispute as to what the terms mean precisely although central to it is the notion of cultural discontinuity in the subjugated eastern societies. In the 1950s Rostovtzeff argued that the Seleucid, Antiochus Epiphanes, was forced by necessity to attempt to strengthen the Greek life of existing cities as any natural process of hellenisation of the East had come to a standstill and his very empire was threatened with collapse. 'Antiochus' attempt was dictated by a desire to revive Hellenism by introducing into the chief strongholds of Orientalism a new and fresh Greek element. It was a counsel of despair. Epiphanes and Hellenism lacked the strength to put it into execution. His failure in Palestine was not exceptional.³⁰ Rostovtzeff notes that 'the natives' were not legally excluded from either the army or the administration, but played only a subordinate role in both institutions with eminence only to be achieved by adoption of Greek education and mode of life. But at the same time he observes intermarriage leading to a degree of orientalised of the 'Greeks' of the Hellenistic monarchies. However, a sharp dividing line remained between the 'ruling hellenized bourgeoisie' and the native working classes.³¹

²⁸ Green (2007) xvi; Liddell and Scott (1968) s.v. "Ἕλλην. In the first century CE the Jewish scholar, Philo of Alexandria, writing of the benefits of Augustus' reign, extends the meaning of the verb ἑλληνίζειν from speaking Greek, to acculturating regions: ... 'He it was who reclaimed all cities for freedom, who restored order where there had been disorder, preparing and civilising all unsociable and savage peoples. He enlarged Hellas with many new Hellases as he hellenised the barbarians in their most important regions....' (οὗτος ὁ τὰς πόλεις ἀπάσας εἰς ἐλευθερίαν ἐξελόμενος, ὁ τὴν ἀταξίαν εἰς τάξιν ἀγαγὼν, ὁ τὰ ἄμικτα ἔθνη καὶ θηριώδη πάντα ἡμερώσας καὶ ἀρμοσάμενος, ὁ τὴν μὲν Ἑλλάδα Ἑλλάσι πολλαῖς παραυξήσας, τὴν δὲ βάρβαρον ἐν τοῖς ἀναγκαιοτάτοις τμήμασιν ἀφελήνισας...) (Phil. Leg.147). According to Hengel (1980, 54) this transitive use of ἑλληνίζειν only next occurs three centuries later in Libanius.

²⁹ Green (2007: xv-xvi) instances Grote.

³⁰ Rostovtzeff (1954) 189; see also 160.

³¹ Rostovtzeff (1941) vol.2 1070-3; see also vol.1 517-524.

By 1980 the German religious historian of the period, Martin Hengel, noted that 'the much-used terms 'Hellenism' or 'Hellenization' are blurred and disputed. Historians and theologians use them frequently, but it does not follow that we can be certain what they mean.'³² He was clear however that '... 'hellenism' ... is understood as the designation of an apparently clearly defined culture ...'³³ He explicitly rejects this view and considers

...the interest of the Diadochoi and the later Hellenistic kings lay not so much in extending Greek culture towards their oriental subjects as in securing and extending their own personal power. This, however, was done less by mixing with the Orientals than by keeping apart from them, and was helped on by the intensive use of Macedonians and Greeks in military matters and in the royal administration. The king's power was rooted in the Macedonian phalanx, Greek mercenaries, officials and technicians ... The cultural 'unity' of the new 'Hellenistic' world, which had grown so much greater, did not lie within their field of vision; on the contrary, they often pursued a narrow-minded mercantile policy of mutual segregation (and detachment), and wrought destruction on one another in constant suicidal wars from the death of Alexander to the final victory of Rome.³⁴

In fact, Hengel perceived no cultural unity during the Hellenistic monarchies and emphasised the need to distinguish different components of what is generically called 'hellenisation'. First, professional contacts; secondly, the physical mixing of populations caused by mixed marriages; thirdly, the adoption of Greek language and culture by Orientals; and fourthly, the complete assimilation of 'orientalized' Greek and 'hellenized' Orientals.³⁵ In other words, the notion of a cultural unity underlying the hellenisation concept was an historiographical artifice which could not sustain critical examination.

By the end of the 1980s, Peter Green disagreed with those who saw hellenisation as a 'conscious, idealistic, missionary propagation in conquered territories of Greek culture, *mores*, literature, art and religion.'³⁶ He considered that hellenisation was 'incidental rather than conscious or

³² Hengel (1980) 51.

³³ Hengel (1980) 52.

³⁴ Hengel (1980) 53.

³⁵ Hengel (1980) 60-61.

³⁶ Green (1990) xv.

deliberate.’³⁷ Hellenisation ‘...meant the interpenetration of Greek and Oriental culture.’³⁸ Under the *Diadochoi* Greek culture existed in enclaves rather than being diffused: ‘The conquerors’ artificial islands of culture were at first no more acceptable than a wrongly matched heart transplant.’³⁹ More recently, Michel Austin agreed that any hellenisation that took place was not a result of ‘royal policy and initiatives’ or ‘cultural mission’; instead, the foundation of Greek-style cities, reliance on Greek colonists and soldiers and the recruitment of Greek advisers and senior official served the imperial purpose.⁴⁰ After all the practice was not initiated by Alexander, but had been carried out earlier by his father Philip II in pursuit of his expansionist policies.⁴¹ Erich Gruen concurred: ‘The Greeks had not come to Hellenize the barbarian nor to assimilate [the native populations of Asia] ... Such is the general consensus – and fundamentally accurate.’⁴² In the last decade, Gruen described Hellenism as ‘the language, literature and learning of the Hellenic world’ which under the rule of the Hellenistic kingdoms became the culture of the ruling class in the major cities.⁴³ The Jewish encounter with it provoked a cultural revolution, but Gruen disagrees with the traditional view that the coming of Hellenism to Palestine represented a confrontation of Hellenism and Judaism or that such a confrontation should be construed as a ‘metaphor for a tension between reason and religion, between rationality and spirituality, throughout the ages.’⁴⁴

In 1998 the Israeli scholar, Lee Levine, noted that ‘Hellenism’ and ‘Hellenisation’ are often used interchangeably and refer to ‘the ways in which Greek culture affected the Orient’. Furthermore, he notes that attempts to distinguish the two terms have resulted in at least four different, and sometimes contradictory, variations including:

³⁷ Green (1990) 313.

³⁸ Green (1990) 323.

³⁹ Green (1990) 323. See also Erskine (2003) 3.

⁴⁰ Austin (2003) 128-130.

⁴¹ According to Worthington (2008: 46,49, 109-10) Macedonian colonies were established by Philip in Crenides Philippi, Methone, the Chalcidice and Thrace. Sixteen year old Alexander as regent followed his father’s example in establishing Alexandropolis in Maedian territory.

⁴² Gruen (1993) 5. Interestingly, Lloyd (2002) has argued, with reference to early Ptolemaic Egypt, that the hieroglyphic evidence does not support the traditional image of the indigenous elites being firmly subordinated to their foreign masters.

⁴³ Gruen (2003) 264-265.

⁴⁴ Gruen (2003) 264-265.

- i) Hellenism means 'native Greek culture' while Hellenisation is 'Greek culture abroad';
- ii) Hellenism is 'the distinctively classical Greek cultural ambience'; Hellenisation, 'the larger cultural vortex of the Hellenistic age including eastern as well as western components';
- iii) Hellenism is the 'conscious process of adopting Greek ways and the internalization of whatever political, social, and symbolic implications may accrue to such a deliberate process'; Hellenisation, is the 'broader inculcation of a culture, often on a subconscious level';
- iv) Hellenism is 'the overall cultural setting'; Hellenisation, 'the ongoing process of cultural symbiosis'.⁴⁵

Levine also notes the underlying Eurocentric assumption of much discussion of Hellenisation and quotes R. Harrison as a representative scholarly viewpoint: 'Hellenization is usually understood as the process through which post-classical Greek civilization promoted itself and assimilated peoples with an eye toward the unification of the known world into a single nation sharing a common culture.'⁴⁶ Note the active agency assigned 'post-classical Greek civilisation' and also the passivity of the 'assimilated peoples' — a point which Levine also challenges, noting that 'Hellenization was far more complex than merely the impact of the West on the East'.⁴⁷

Levine also criticises the second dualistic assumption he finds in modern scholarly discussion: a society is either 'hellenised' or it is not.⁴⁸ As an illustration of the diversity of local responses to Hellenism, Levine instances the synagogues of Bet She'an, ancient Scythopolis. Settlement there dates back to the Palaeolithic and it was a significant urban settlement during the Iron Age, originally Canaanite, Philistine and then Jewish. During the Hellenistic period Scythian veterans were settled there, while in Late Antiquity at least five Jewish congregations had built separate synagogues in the city

⁴⁵ Levine (1998) 16.

⁴⁶ Harrison (1994) cited in Levine (1998) 17. See also Erskine (2003) 3,12; Owen (2005: 22 n7) contrasts the interpretation of the archaic Greek colonisation where 'the Orientalizing phenomenon is not assumed to mean the adoption of Eastern ethnic identities by Greeks.'

⁴⁷ Levine (1998) 18-19. See also Lee (2003: 6-7) for another rejection of the use of a crude version of hellenisation in describing cultural change in the Near East.

⁴⁸ Levine (1998) 17-18.

and surrounding *chora*. Their response to Hellenistic pagan iconography, given the Judaic prohibition on representational art, is illuminating. Rehov, for example, displays no figural art and its inscriptions are only in Hebrew and Aramaic. At the other end of the cultural spectrum, Bet Alpha depicts the binding of Isaac, the Greek divinity, Helios, zodiac signs, animals and a Greek and Aramaic inscription, while its architectural plan derives from the contemporary church basilical form. The other three synagogues fall between these two extremes.⁴⁹ Clearly, to describe Late Antique Scythopolis as hellenised is to obscure rather than clarify the nature of cultural change in that single location.

Herbert argues that the concept of hellenisation reflects a scholarly desire to categorise a period of 'exuberant' diversity by its common and unifying features, but which also has resulted in a tendency to undervalue the indigenous contribution to the cultural life of the period. Such a bias reflects the nature of the surviving literary sources which are overwhelmingly Greek, while the few surviving non-Greek sources have been under-utilised as a consequence of the classical training and bias of historians of the period.⁵⁰ She demonstrates the limitations of hellenisation in a brief discussion of the archaeological exploration of Tel Anafa in the Galilee where one Late Hellenistic building, LHSB, was significant for the prosperity of its inhabitants and the vigorous hellenisation that it reflected. However, that assumption was challenged when the construction of the building was narrowed to a very short time period during which the Seleucid Empire was collapsing and the coastal Phoenician city states were recovering their independence. Stratigraphic evidence showed that LHSB was constructed during the period between the collapse of Seleucid power and the emergence of Roman hegemony – a period when the Graeco-Phoenician citizens of Tyre and Sidon controlled the region around Tel Anafa. Using this as a working hypothesis, examination of the archaeological evidence found elements of Phoenician influence rather than thoroughgoing hellenisation. She concluded that '... once the possibility of such non-Greek elements is admitted, they are there to be found.'⁵¹

⁴⁹ Levine (1998) 170.

⁵⁰ Herbert (1993) 118-9.

⁵¹ Herbert (1993) 122-4.

The concept of hellenisation draws upon the notion of acculturation as developed in early twentieth century anthropology and sociology.⁵² But acculturation is now a largely discredited concept which according to Jones is based upon 'a common framework of thought derived from the colonial era and a widespread interest in the assimilation and modernization of non-western societies',⁵³ or, more succinctly, as Owen puts it 'civilizing the natives'.⁵⁴ The study of ethnicity in the latter part of the twentieth century represents not only a change of terminology, but also a shift in the conceptualisation of human diversity from physical taxonomies of race through to a study of culture and society. But despite such a shift, the notion of evolutionary cultural development persisted. For although the classification of diversity by culture is a shift from classification by race it is still predicated upon the notion of culture as an objective bounded entity – Semitic culture, Graeco-Roman culture, and so forth. Furthermore, those cultures could be classified in accordance with notions of evolutionary development – 'primitive', 'high', 'low'. On the other hand, ethnicity as a classificatory term recognised human diversity and avoids the problems of racial and cultural classifications. Additionally, while the earlier classifications were firmly embedded in the ideology of imperialism, ethnicity is a concept that belongs in the era of decolonisation and postcolonialism.⁵⁵

The concept of hellenisation also emphasises the active role of the colonising agents. In contrast, modern anthropological studies of the impact of colonialism put greater emphasis upon the role of the indigenous population in driving adaptation to the intrusive culture. Moreover, while members of indigenous elites, individually, may consciously emulate the cultural practices of their imperial masters in an effort to retain their privileged social position, members of other social groups may engage in various forms of cultural resistance whilst continuing to establish some form of *modus operandi* in the new context.⁵⁶ However, the concept of elite emulation has come under criticism in Roman studies for treating the provincial elite as a homogenous

⁵² For a more extended discussion of the development of anthropological taxonomies of human diversity see Jones (1997) 40-55.

⁵³ Jones (1997) 33.

⁵⁴ Owen (2005) 13.

⁵⁵ Jones (1997) 40-55.

⁵⁶ Millett (1990b) first offered elite emulation as the mechanism for cultural change in the western provinces.

entity which fails to distinguish the responses of individuals or of the variety of local response.⁵⁷ Similarly, different motivations may have driven elements of other social groups, resulting in social tension, even conflict, within the indigenous community. We have a reasonable understanding from Josephus and the two books of the Maccabees of just such processes being worked through within Judaeen society during the Graeco-Roman period as the urban Palestinian Jewish elites adapted first to Hellenistic culture during the period of Seleucid rule and then subsequently to Roman rule, while simultaneously popular resistance developed among the other social classes.

There is a final criticism which I would make of the concept, relating to the relationship between culture and power. By continuing to structure research and debate concerning the Hellenistic Near East in terms of the Hellenisation model, modern historians and archaeologists may inadvertently be perpetuating the ideological premises of modern European imperialism. If we accept that modern academic history has its origins in the nineteenth century emergence of contemporary European nationalist identities and national histories together with notions of the superiority of European 'civilisation' (see pages 9-10 above); and if further, we accept that archaeology, like anthropology, is an intellectual outgrowth of European colonialism (see pages 36-38 below); then, we should be very cautious of the underlying ideological premises of any paradigm such as hellenisation, or for that matter, romanisation. If the premises are shaped by ideological assumptions of cultural superiority, civilising mission, right to rule, etc., then the paradigm risks perpetuating the power inequalities inherent in that ideology.⁵⁸ It is only by avoiding the traditional dichotomy of coloniser and colonised and replacing it with a model of cultural fusion in the form of hybrid and creole cultures, that such flawed premises may be avoided.⁵⁹ If the period after 323 BCE, the so-called Hellenistic Age, was witness to the emergence of rapidly changing cultural perspectives, it must be said that our perception of the period is primarily through the lens of surviving European (Greek and Latin) text embedded within which is the ideology of Greek imperialism. Such a view of

⁵⁷ Freeman (1993) 441-2.

⁵⁸ For a full discussion of the relationship between power, ideas and culture see Wolf (1999).

⁵⁹ Gosden (2012).

the new world is inevitably going to reflect Hellenic cultural continuity rather than native vibrancy or cultural fusion. Such a critique of hellenisation may be seen as part of the whole Eurocentric cast of modern historical method.

In summary then, the origins of the concept of hellenisation may be traced to European historical analysis during the high point of modern European imperialism — a period when the imperialist powers rationalised their aggression and conquest as a civilising and Christianising process. Droysen used such ideology in interpreting Alexander's conquests and the subsequent activities of the *Diadochoi*, thus establishing the intrinsic importance of the period at a time when classicists had typically regarded it as a period of decline from high Greek classicism. But as later research has established a more nuanced image of the dynamics and diversity of the cultural processes at this time the concept of hellenisation has been found to be increasingly inadequate. Specifically, it –

- i) is derived from unacceptable and outmoded modern imperialist dichotomies of the civilised imperialist vs. the barbarian native, and the manly active imperialist vs. the passive degenerate native;
- ii) lacks a single unambiguous meaning;
- iii) is Eurocentric in orientation — assuming the active agency of the Greeks in disseminating hellenic culture in conquered lands, privileging the classical literary record and under-utilising both the non-Greek literary sources and material culture;
- iv) imposes a spurious cultural homogeneity which undervalues both the indigenous contribution to the cultural life of the region and the sheer diversity of that life, and
- v) perpetuates an unequal relationship between power and culture by its dependence upon the ideological premises of modern imperialism.

Given these criticisms I would suggest that, notwithstanding the fact that the concept is well-entrenched in modern scholarship, it is of questionable analytical value to modern historical scholarship.

Romanisation

For much of the twentieth century romanisation — the process by which the indigenous peoples of territories acquired by conquest were either incorporated into the Roman Empire or adopted Roman values⁶⁰ — has been the principal explanatory model for the diffusion of Roman culture through the empire's programme of territorial expansion. Some have even argued that the *mission* of Roman imperialism was the extension of good government, economic and social opportunity, even civilisation itself, to the world.⁶¹ But latterly this viewpoint, fashionable during the highpoint of European imperialism and twilight years of empire, has come under challenge in the post-colonial era.⁶² In the latter half of the twentieth century, the romanisation model has been subjected to increasing critical scrutiny with a regional focus emphasising the variety of responses to Roman culture.⁶³ Modern post-colonial studies of European imperialism and its impact upon indigenous cultures has also resulted in the modification of the concept of romanisation until finally, its abandonment has been called for.⁶⁴

The origins of the concept of Romanisation

The first three volumes of Mommsen's *Römische Geschichte* (1854-1885) were devoted to the rise and fall of the Republic.⁶⁵ Yet despite the Republic being the period of Rome's greatest imperial expansion, the *Geschichte* lacked a theoretical framework for the interpretation of imperialism, although Mommsen is usually credited with the concept of 'defensive imperialism', by which Rome, during the Republic, is seen as only reluctantly acquiring overseas territories. The fifth volume of the *Geschichte*, published in Britain as *The provinces of the Roman Empire* (1885) was ground-breaking as Mommsen shifted the focus of Roman imperial historiography from Rome itself to the provinces. The work emphasised unifying Roman institutions such as

⁶⁰ Barrett (1997).

⁶¹ See, for example, Mommsen (1886) 4-5; Haverfield (1924) 171-72. Freeman (1993) discusses the main authors promoting such an interpretation; Hingley (2000) provides a detailed examination of the relationship between late Victorian/Edwardian British imperialism and perceptions of the Roman Empire.

⁶² See, for example, Webster and Cooper (1996).

⁶³ See, for example, Terrenato (1998); Hingley (1996), (2003), Revell (2009) 2; Sweetman (2011) Hingley (2005).

⁶⁴ Barrett (1997) 51; Sweetman (2011) 1.

⁶⁵ The following discussion of Mommsen's thought is drawn from Freeman (1997).

official colonisation, the spread of citizenship, language and coinage. He also made use of inscriptions to highlight similarities especially in the western provinces. Given such a methodology it is inevitable that the study emphasised Roman acculturation in the region. The work had two profound consequences for Roman studies. First, it demonstrated and emphasised the role that epigraphy could play. Second, it shifted the focus from the traditional view of the decadence of the Roman capital and emperors to the vitality of Roman institutions, the prosperity and the long peace in the wider Roman world during the period of apparent decadence. The image that Mommsen projected was of a reluctant Rome lacking an expansionist imperial policy and of quiescent provinces accepting Roman rule and thriving under the *pax romana*.⁶⁶ This reluctant or defensive view of Roman imperialism was challenged in 1915 by Oldfather and Canter with their reappraisal of Augustus' German policy.⁶⁷ Roman expansion in the early Principate was now to be seen as more aggressive than Mommsen had believed.

Haverfield and Roman Britain

Haverfield's *The Romanization of Britain* was the seminal work which first explicitly articulated the concept and set the agenda for British scholarship in particular.⁶⁸ Various known as the 'father of Romano-British studies' and 'the Pope of Roman Britain', Francis Haverfield was Camden Professor of Ancient History from 1907 until his death in 1919.⁶⁹ Haverfield's published output is prodigious.⁷⁰ His work is notable for drawing on European scholarship and for the encouragement of a more rigorous archaeology of Roman Britain about which he wrote extensively.⁷¹ He was, of course, writing at the highpoint of British imperialism when comparisons between imperial Rome and Britain

⁶⁶ Freeman (1997) 31ff. For examples of attempts to explain away Roman imperialism with such concepts see Badian (1968); Cary (1954) 143-145; Scullard (1951) 141-145; Veyne (1976).

⁶⁷ Freeman (1997) 32, citing Oldfather and Canter (1915).

⁶⁸ Haverfield (1923). Haverfield did not coin the term. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* that honour falls to the American nineteenth century linguist William D. Whitney. While others before Haverfield used the term in the late nineteenth century, he was the first to develop the concept as the primary interpretive model of cultural change in the Roman provinces.

⁶⁹ For a recent summary of Haverfield's career see Freeman (1996) 32f, n.2 32f. George MacDonald's 'Biographical notice' is detailed but hagiographic in tone, Haverfield (1924) 15-38.

⁷⁰ 'Bibliography', in Haverfield (1924) 38-57.

⁷¹ Freeman (1996) 19.

were commonplace.⁷² He was apparently liberal in his social and political views, supporting, for example, university education for women.⁷³ Notwithstanding such social attitudes he was imbued with the racist views of the day which affected some of his scholarly judgments.⁷⁴ Similarly, he seems to have been supportive of the notion that both the Roman and the British empires were civilising agents in world history.⁷⁵ Since then, twentieth century post-colonial scholarship has progressively dismantled the assumptions underpinning the romanisation model - history as 'progress'; the civilising role of imperialism; a binary 'us' and 'them' world view; the artefacts of one material culture retaining their original symbolic values when used in another cultural context.

If Haverfield was indebted to Mommsen's pioneering scholarship he was also aware of the need to move beyond text-based research and incorporate the findings of archaeology in any model of colonial acculturation. As a consequence, Haverfield seems to have consciously made the decision to familiarise himself with the progress of archaeology in Britain and to make extensive use of epigraphy and archaeological findings.⁷⁶ An examination of his bibliography provides evidence of the extent to which he personally strove to ensure the description and analysis of archaeological finds. Following Mommsen, he saw cultural uniformity in the use of Latin in inscriptions, the form of the inscriptions and in the institutions referred to in them. In seeking to place British archaeological evidence in context, he looked to continental evidence thus confirming a cultural uniformity of Roman Europe.⁷⁷ His

⁷² For a British ancient historian's comparison of British and Roman imperialism written as Britain dismantled its empire see Brunt (1965).

⁷³ MacDonald (1924) 25-6.

⁷⁴ Thus, for example, in 1907: 'The auxiliaries, on the other hand, were an inferior grade, inferior alike in *birth* [my italics] and education', or 'Greece and much of Asia and Syria and Egypt were occupied by a race kindred to the Italian ... The country districts of Syria and Egypt had indeed remained uncivilized, but their inhabitants were *racially incapable* [my italics] of accepting a higher culture (Haverfield (1924) 126, 173). Or again, in 1915, 'Not only in the further east, where (as in Egypt) mankind was non-European, but even in the nearer east, where an ancient Greek civilization reigned, the effect of Romanization was inevitably small.' Or, 'The west offers a different spectacle. Here Rome found races that were not yet civilized, yet were racially capable of accepting her culture.' (Haverfield (1923) 12-13).

⁷⁵ Haverfield (1923) 9-11, 13.

⁷⁶ Freeman (1997) 39-43; Haverfield's statement, 'Today the spade is mightier than the pen; the shovel and pick are revealers of secrets' is cited by MacDonald in his 'Biographical note', in Haverfield (1924) 28.

⁷⁷ Haverfield (1924) 91-93; 172-181.

research culminated in the publication of *The Romanization of Roman Britain*.⁷⁸

For Haverfield, cultural change in Roman Britain was a gradual and civilising process involving the progressive adoption of Roman language, practices and material culture by both rich and poor. In analysing reports of nineteenth century excavations of British villages, Haverfield is clear that they were quickly modified by Roman civilization.⁷⁹ The rural peasantry ‘utterly forgot their Celtic fashions’.⁸⁰ Indeed, Haverfield explicitly rejects Vinogradoff’s suggestion of a contrast between an élite ‘exotic culture’ and a primitive ‘vernacular culture’.⁸¹ The active agent in the civilizing process of romanisation was the Roman provincial administration which gave expression to the Roman ‘mission’. Provincial administration was Rome’s greatest imperial achievement.⁸² Agricola was ‘a great name’; the model of a sound administrator.⁸³ This was not, however, colonisation involving major population transfers, but rather a voluntary process devoid of coercion, ‘the influence of a higher civilization on lower races fitted to assimilate it.’⁸⁴ Haverfield is also at pains to emphasise that the process occurred across the entire empire and not only in Britain.⁸⁵

Haverfield’s romanisation model of cultural change is important for a number of reasons. First, it provided a coherent explanation of the range of evidence that existed at the time he wrote. Second, he followed Mommsen in shifting the focus of Roman historiography from the centre to the provinces. Third, he goes beyond Mommsen by analysing not just the literary or epigraphic evidence, but also by integrating those two sources with the archaeological. Fourth, he contributed significantly to the shift of British archaeology from antiquarian interest to systematic discipline. Finally, Haverfield is important for placing the study of Roman Britain in the context of the western empire and

⁷⁸ Haverfield (1923).

⁷⁹ Haverfield (1923) 45-7.

⁸⁰ Haverfield (1923) 46.

⁸¹ Haverfield (1923) 46.

⁸² Haverfield (1923) 9-10.

⁸³ Haverfield (1924) 112-3.

⁸⁴ Haverfield (1924) 174-5.

⁸⁵ ‘The lands which the legions sheltered were not merely blessed with quiet. They were also given a civilization, and that civilization had time to take strong root. Roman speech and manners were diffused; the political franchise was extended; city life was established; the provincial populations were assimilated in an orderly and coherent culture. A large part of the world became Romanized.’ Haverfield (1923) 11.

the cultural commonalities such as language, urban society, practices and procedures of military and civil administration, literature, art and some elements of the material culture.

As with hellenisation, this was a dichotomized model however which drew upon the classical model of civilized and barbarian. Thus, '...the Roman Empire was the civilized world; the safety of Rome was the safety of all civilization. Outside roared the wild chaos of barbarism.'⁸⁶ It was a model, also, that was explicitly racist. Egypt and the eastern provinces were non-European and 'racially incapable of accepting a higher culture in any better form than that of a thin varnish.'⁸⁷ Although both Mommsen and Haverfield expanded the use of sources beyond the literary, they continued to evaluate cultural change from the perspective of the Roman power and its institutions rather than from that of the indigenous cultures. Above all, it is this lack of an adequate concept of Roman imperialism that has rendered the term 'romanisation' of limited value.⁸⁸ This is, perhaps, almost inevitable given that both were men working at the apogee of European imperialism when Rome's so-called imperial 'mission' to civilize the Barbarians was analogous with the nineteenth century notion of the 'white man's burden'. Thus, for example, Haverfield's descriptions of provincial administration and of Agricola ('this respectable middle-class official ... he wished not only to rule them well ... but to encourage the diffusion of Roman culture amongst them, and fit them for membership of the Roman state') seem to evoke the benevolent British colonial administrator in Africa or India.⁸⁹ In reaching such a conclusion, Haverfield seems to have disregarded the implications of Tacitus' perception of culture as an instrument of rule.⁹⁰

In presenting such a benign 'civilising' model of Roman imperialism Haverfield failed to acknowledge either the military aggression of conquest or the use of military power to maintain administrative control of conquered territories and

⁸⁶ Haverfield (1923) 11.

⁸⁷ Haverfield (1924) 173; see also Haverfield (1923) 12-14.

⁸⁸ Freeman (1997) 46.

⁸⁹ Haverfield (1924) 112-3; Haverfield (1923) 10-14. On the western perception of parallels between Rome and modern imperialism see, for example, Vance (1997: 222-46); Majeed (1999).

⁹⁰ See especially Tac. *Agr.* 21.

peoples.⁹¹ In particular, Haverfield does not acknowledge either the frequency of rebellion against Roman power or the underlying resentment which precipitated such rebellions. In contrast, Roman literary sources suggest that Romans were only too aware of the hostility their rule engendered.⁹²

For most of the twentieth century romanisation was the dominant model of Roman imperialism particularly in English language historiography. However, in the last decades of the century the concept came under challenge. On the one hand, much more extensive evidence was now available for consideration from all parts of the territories of the empire than Haverfield had available to him; evidence that suggests much more variety in the responses to Roman culture than Haverfield envisaged with his model of the progressive diffusion of a uniform 'civilizing' culture.⁹³ Additionally, insights from modern social theory were being applied comparatively to the archaeological evidence in particular.⁹⁴ But the most fundamental change resulted from the application by romanists of the insights of studies of modern colonialism and cultural hegemony to the better understanding of Roman imperialism.⁹⁵ Central to such studies is the challenge of the underlying assumptions of imperialism, assumptions that Haverfield accepted unquestioningly. But Revell goes further, suggesting that the various recent theoretical approaches to cultural

⁹¹ For example, Isaac (1984) considers the role of the Roman army in Syria, Arabia and Judaea had more to do with internal policing than protection of the provinces from external threat or aggressive expansion.

⁹² For example, Tac. *Agr.* 30-32; note also Favorinus' famous quip when he conceded a point of grammar to Hadrian: 'It's the easiest option,' he said, continuing, 'It's inconsequential for me, being a well known scholar, and not appropriate to correct everything believed by him who commands 30 legions.' (*iucundissimum movit. Ait enim: 'Non recte suaditis, familiares, qui non patimini me illum doctorem omnibus credere, qui habet triginta legiones.'*) SHA, *Hadr.* 15.13; and Plutarch's advice to a local politician: But keep reminding yourself of this: 'You who rule a city which has submitted to Caesar's proconsuls, are yourself ruled. For these [Roman soldiers] are not the spear men of the plain, nor is this old Sardis or powerful Lydia. So get a new suit (lit. You must make you shabby/ little cloak neat), keep your eyes on the [proconsul's] residence (lit. rostrum) and neither take pride nor trust in honours bestowed. Watch out for the [imperial] boot over your head.' (*ἀλλὰ κάκεινο λέγειν πρὸς ἑαυτόν, "ἀρχόμενος ἄρχεις, ὑποτεταγμένης πόλεως ἀνθυπάτοις, ἐπιτρόποις Καίσαρος 'οὐ ταῦτα λόγῃ πεδιάς,' οὐδ' αἱ παλαιαὶ Σάρδεις οὐδ' ἡ Λυδῶν ἐκείνη δύναμις"* εὐσταλεστέραν δεῖ τὴν χλαμύδα ποιεῖν, καὶ βλέπειν ἀπὸ τοῦ στρατηγίου πρὸς τὸ βῆμα, καὶ τῷ στεφάνῳ μὴ πολὺ φρονεῖν μηδὲ πιστεῦειν, ὁρῶντα τοὺς καλτίους ἐπάνω τῆς κεφαλῆς) Plut. *Mor.* 813.

⁹³ On the diversity of local responses see, for example, Terrenato (1998a); Revell (2009), Sweetman (2011).

⁹⁴ See p. 84 n.6 below for examples.

⁹⁵ See, for example, Hingley (1996), (2000), (2003); Webster (1996a), (1996b), (1997), (2001), (2003). (2008a), (2008b), (2010); Hall (2008); Mattingly (2008); Porter (2010); Vasunia (2003); *contra* Freeman (1996); Alston (1996); Terrenato (2005).

change in the empire like romanisation itself, are all based upon 'the idea of bounded cultural identities of Roman and pre-Roman, and the ability to label material culture as more one than the other, a hybrid of recognisable constituent parts.'⁹⁶

In summary then, as with hellenisation, the underlying assumptions of the concept of romanisation are to be found in the rationale of modern European imperialism. As with hellenisation, romanisation is founded on a binary world view of civilisation and barbarism together with the notion of history as progress. The concept has been important in shifting the focus of Roman studies from the machinations of the imperial court to the vitality of provincial life. But it fails to recognise the diversity of local responses and the active agency of indigenous populations while, most importantly, it promotes a benign image of Roman imperialism and does not reflect the impact of aggression and asymmetric power relations on the various social classes in provincial society.

The utility of the concepts of hellenisation and romanisation

In questioning the value of these two terms, it should be emphasised that the intention is not to question the reality of cultural change in the Graeco-Roman world between the Hellenistic Age and Late Antiquity. However, both concepts focus the analysis on cultural discontinuity and imperial cultural expressions rather than focus on the continuity and adaptation of indigenous culture under the stress of imperialist conquest and settlement. Furthermore, if the term 'hellenisation' is capable of a variety of definitions, some contradictory, and if it encompasses a diverse range of political, cultural and social processes, then the unavoidable conclusion must be that today it is of negligible value as an analytical tool in ancient historical methodology. Similarly, if Syme is correct in his description of the term 'romanisation' as 'vulgar and ugly, worse than that, anachronistic and misleading' then assuredly those authors who urge the abandonment of the term are correct.⁹⁷ It is not just that the concepts are too gross as generalisations, they *mislead*. They imply an imperial purpose where one did not exist, unity where there was diversity; disguise hostility and resentment; confuse cultural fusion and assimilation; privilege the intrusive

⁹⁶ Revell (2009) 2.

⁹⁷ Syme (1988) 33-46, cited in Mattingly (2002) 537.

European imperial culture and its sources over the indigenous,⁹⁸ and are based upon ancient racial dichotomies.⁹⁹

For any historical paradigm or category to be useful, it must do more than simply act as a short hand descriptor of observable phenomena; it must have potency in providing categories of analysis that generate insightful and challenging working hypotheses. Without question the ancient Mediterranean world became imbued with Graeco-Roman values and institutions. But describing that phenomenon as hellenisation or romanisation adds no understanding to the complex social and cultural processes that were occurring, processes moreover which need to be examined locally rather than globally. The examination of linguistic practice, for example, at a particular location or within different elements of the population or a region is more likely to provide useful insights than generalising affirmations of Greek as the *lingua franca* of the eastern Mediterranean (see pages 97-100 below). Judith McKenzie's study of the tomb facades of Petra is an another excellent example of how such a locally focused approach to the monumental funerary architecture of a specific region influenced by classical forms can produce genuine insights into the processes involved.¹⁰⁰ At an earlier stage of historical research the concepts of hellenisation and romanisation undoubtedly did have analytical value and generated much research and insight, it is doubtful if they do so any longer.

The limitations of modern historical method

Romanisation and hellenisation are concepts generated at a time when western historiography was confidently applying the principles of empirical positivism. That remains the *de facto* theoretical framework of most published material relating to the Roman Near East. But modern historiography has taken a postmodern turn that acknowledges multivocality and the subjectivity

⁹⁸ Consider for example, the underlying attitudes inherent in the following from Browning. In describing a particular type of tomb facade in Petra he considers it 'represent[s] the culmination of the native imagination working on basically native ideas before they tried bravely, but disastrously to grapple with the implications of the classical language of the architecture ... Hellenism was eventually to swamp the local tradition and lead to a period of almost architectural chaos which was only sorted out by the Romans.' Browning (1982) 87-8, cited in McKenzie (1990) 4.

⁹⁹ Isaac (2004).

¹⁰⁰ McKenzie (1990).

and relativism of historical narrative. In this final section of the chapter therefore I review the emergence of postmodern historiography.

Since Leopold von Ranke in the nineteenth century, western historiography has been primarily an exercise in the discovery of textual sources and their subsequent interpretation in a discursive narrative.¹⁰¹ By the beginning of the twentieth century academic historians were confident of providing an accurate narrative of the events of the past and the motives of historical figures through the application of the principles of sceptical empiricism and positivism. But as the certitudes of the turn of the century became less certain, so too the assumptions and methodology of nineteenth century scientific historical method came under challenge.¹⁰² Today there is general recognition of the impossibility of achieving Ranke's goal of an objective narrative of the past ('wie es eigentlich gewesen').¹⁰³ The old positivist-empiricist assumption that the role of the historian was to research the 'facts' which could then speak for themselves has largely been abandoned as recognition has grown that the role of the historian is much more complex than that. For, as Derrida has demonstrated, a text in itself has no meaning; meaning lies in the human actions of writing and reading. Furthermore as a text is re-read in different situations and times so it acquires new meaning embedded in the new social context in which it read.¹⁰⁴ Whereas the nineteenth century empiricists strove to remove the historian from the historical narrative by such devices as the use of the passive voice, today there is greater awareness of the historian's active (and subjective) agency in selecting data; interpreting that data; imposing a plot on the selected data then writing an historical narrative reflecting that emplotment in culturally and socially defined language. In short, historical writing is not simply an objectively reliable narrative of 'how things really were', but rather a creative literary work of substantial inherent subjectivity. Fundamental to this deconstruction of the historical process was the

¹⁰¹ 'Written texts constituted the essential mark of historical societies, the kind that made history, about which historians had to write, particularly now that they had become professional practitioners of a real 'science'.' Detienne (2007) 5. See also Carr (1986 [1961]) 10-13.

¹⁰² There is a huge literature critiquing historical methodology. For a useful introduction and bibliography see Munslow (2006 [2000])

¹⁰³ Ranke, "Preface: *Histories of the Latin and Germanic Nations from 1494-1514*", cited in Stern (1956) 57.

¹⁰⁴ Derrida (1981), cited in Hodder (2000).

recognition of the distinction between irretrievable past reality and history as created literary discourse representing and interpreting that past reality. In his seminal *Metahistory: the historical imagination in nineteenth-century Europe* Hayden White defines an historical work as 'a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse that purports to be a model, an icon, of past structures and processes in the interest of *explaining what they were by representing them*.'¹⁰⁵ Such a postmodern definition is anathema to the modernist historian for whom the written history ('the form') is of less significance than the empirical discovery, verification and examination of the evidence from the archive ('the content').¹⁰⁶ In contrast, the postmodernist historian perceives history as a *created* rather than a *discovered* discourse. The historian is an author, culturally situated in time and space, who uses persuasive or rhetorical skills in promoting her/his interpretation of the past: for the postmodernist historian the relationship of form and content is reversed.¹⁰⁷ But if history is a created discourse then it follows that there can be multiple contested histories of the same past reality.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, the past as knowable objective reality is an impossible empirical goal except at the most primitive annalist level of dates, locations and events. For the very evidence, primary textual sources from the archive, upon which the modernist historian is reliant is itself a literary construction representing the past reality. Thus, for example, a modern historian writing about Julius Caesar in Gaul will inevitably have to deconstruct (itself a subjective process) his *Commentarii de bello gallico* for it is now generally recognised as a self-serving tendentious literary construction. Similarly, the existence of, say, a legal provision in Justinian's *Digest* relating to the harbouring and protection of bandits is capable of multiple readings: is it evidence of the widespread existence of that phenomenon or is it evidence of the fears of the imperial authorities and implicit acknowledgement that theirs was an oppressive regime driving people to outlawry? The reader of the law is free to use either interpretation and in the absence of other information both interpretations must be deemed equally valid. Neither takes us any closer to the past reality concerning banditry.

¹⁰⁵ White (1973) 2.

¹⁰⁶ Munslow (2006) 3.

¹⁰⁷ Munslow (2006) 11.

¹⁰⁸ Smith (1999) 33.

But if historical writing is constrained by the cultural and social characteristics of both the primary sources and the historian as narrator, Roman history in particular, suffers from a further constraint relating to the nature of the sources themselves. First, not all the primary sources relating to the eastern empire are easily accessible to the modern western scholar with a classical training whose knowledge of ancient languages is likely to be limited to Greek and Latin with perhaps some knowledge of Hebrew. Quite apart from the problem of accessing good translations of Aramaic, Syriac, Phoenician, Emesene, Palmyrene, Nabataean, Safaitic, Thamudic and Arabic texts and inscriptions, there is the problem of accessing Arabic secondary literature. This latter point becomes readily apparent on only a cursory examination of the bibliographies of Irfan Shahîd's multi-volume study of the interaction of Arabs and western culture in Late Antiquity which draws extensively on Arabic sources, both primary and secondary.¹⁰⁹ The fact of limited access to Semitic language sources tends to privilege a Eurocentric perspective as a consequence of the dominance of Greek and Latin primary sources in modern scholarship. Additionally, the surviving literature of the Roman Empire is written from the perspective of the educated and powerful. The voices of the poor, women, children, the enslaved and other non-elite groupings are scarcely heard except as interpreted in the writings of the elite.¹¹⁰ Thus in the eastern provinces of the Empire the direct voice of such groups is largely silent, with the possible exception of the Thamudic and Safaitic inscriptions in the desert; some of the later books of the Hebrew Testament; the Jewish Mishnah and Talmud; the Christian Testament and apocryphal writings; and some of the Sibylline Oracles. As a consequence of the success of Chalcedonian orthodoxy,

¹⁰⁹ Shahîd (1984a), (1984b), (1989), (1995-2002), (1998).

¹¹⁰ A speech such as that assigned by Tacitus to the British rebel Calgacus is a literary creation (Tac. Ag. 30-32). It does however constitute evidence that thoughtful Romans were well-aware of the reasons for the hostility and hatred of many of the conquered peoples of the empire: 'to steal, to slaughter, to pillage is falsely called empire, while everywhere they make desolation and call it peace.' (auferre trucidare rapere falsis nominibus imperium, atque ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant.) (Tac. Ag.30.) Or again, this from Tacitus on natives becoming Roman: 'our dress was esteemed and the toga, popular. Gradually, [the Britons] were lead astray by the blandishments of decadent living — the covered walk, the bath and the stylish dinner party. And, in their ignorance, this is called culture, when in reality it is an element of their servitude.' (habitus nostri honor et frequens toga. paulatimque discessum ad delenimenta vitiorum, porticus et balineas et convivorum elegantiam. idque apud imperitos humanitas vocabatur, cum pars servitutis esset) (Tac. Ag. 21).

Christian beliefs, literature and Orthodox historiography has, until recent times, dominated the traditional historiography of the later empire.

In summary, contemporary historical methodology has become something of a contest between the modernist and the postmodernist. On the one hand, the modernist upholds the empiricist tradition of meticulous research 'in the archive' and emplotment of the discovered 'facts' in a meaningful narrative objectively representing past reality, hopefully as an absolute truth. On the other hand, the postmodernist finds subjectivity and relativity in the historical narrative and sees it primarily as a created literary work. Furthermore, the postmodernist is able to accept the possibility and validity of multiple or contested historical narratives. A corollary of the postmodern critique of positivist empiricism is the acceptance of the concepts and insights of the social sciences and cultural anthropology in historical method.¹¹¹ It is this development, together with the deconstruction of eurocentrism, the use of social science concepts and theories (identity, ethnicity and structuration theory) and the greater use in historical writing of archaeology, not merely in the provision of illustration of textual interpretation of cultural change, but also the interpretation of material culture in its own right that informs the theoretical framework being developed here.

In the next chapter we examine developments in theoretical archaeology and the relevance of archaeology to the writing of history.

¹¹¹ See for example, Detienne (2007).

Chapter two

Theoretical archaeology

*'Constituted by memory and distance, ruins are proxies for
a past that is continually reinvented in the present.'*

— Claire Lyons (1997) *'Archives in ruins'* p.79.

The excavated ruins of Gerasa through which tourists amble in northwest Jordan are Roman, in the main from the Antonine period; the descriptions and explanations they hear from their guides are solely about 'the Romans'. The original Neolithic, Bronze and Iron Age settlements and their populations, it seems, have been erased from the popular narrative. Little remains of the Late Hellenistic settlement either — or, at least, little has been excavated. In part, of course, this focus on the Roman reflects the huge Antonine period building effort which has bequeathed us the remarkable ruins of today's archaeological park. But in no small part, it is also a reflection of the classical preoccupations of early western travellers in the Near East and early archaeological exploration of the site. It is notable that although Gerasa has been professionally excavated for nearly a century, any domestic and non-elite architecture there may be on the west bank remains largely unexcavated; indeed much of it has simply been covered with the spoil from the excavation of Roman public monuments and Christian churches from Late Antiquity.¹ On the eastern side, where the modern township is located, nothing has been excavated apart from a few Byzantine churches. Even a cursory reading of the report of those early joint Anglo-American excavations of the 1920s and 1930s makes it clear that the goal was the uncovering and explication of the Classical and Early Christian monuments.² Later strata, especially those relating to the transition from classical city through Late Antiquity to Islamic city seem to have been examined

¹ Kehrberg (2011) 1-2; Pierobon (1984a) 26-7.

² See esp. Stinespring (1938); also Fisher and McCown (1929/30: 1): 'Its immediate objective was the uncovering of the churches of Jerash. In this the expedition was brilliantly successful.' In his preface to the official report of the Anglo-American excavations, Rostovtzeff (1938: ix) deals with Gerasa's pre-Hellenistic origins with a summary 'A village of native shepherds and tillers of the soil in her early beginnings, Gerasa became a modest Greek town ...'

only for evidence of Christianity while the process of urban adaptation and modification was categorised as 'decline' or worse.³ Even today, little in the way of systematic excavation of residential areas has been done.⁴ In part this is a result of the modern city overlaying that section of the ancient city believed to be residential on the eastern side of Wadi Jerash. Nevertheless, large tracts of land within the circuit wall remain unexcavated on the western side while *cardo*, *decumani*, temples, churches, theatres and other monumental structures have been excavated and substantially restored.⁵ Despite all this activity by a number of national teams the visible profile of public space and monumental architecture has little changed in that time.⁶ In other words, the primary focus has remained the exploration and restoration of already well known elements of the Roman city; and despite prolonged and intensive excavation, little has been achieved in exploring the cultural continuity of the site from the Bronze Age through into the Islamic era. Such a focus on classical monumentality reflects both Eurocentric intellectual assumptions and pre-occupations of earlier western archaeologists with the classical ideal and early church architecture, together with the touristic archaeological interests of the Jordanian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities. The Ministry has continued to develop the site with a primary focus on restoration of public monumental structures rather than the systematic excavation of the stratification of human habitation. Instead, the focus seems to be on the western half of the city as an archaeological park and a premier tourist attraction, second only to Petra in the south, complete with twice daily gladiatorial shows and chariot racing in the restored hippodrome.⁷ In such a touristic scenario the study of kitchen middens and pottery workshops fails to make the cut compared to the restoration of the monumental. In short, the history of the archaeological site reflects the pre-occupations of the original

³ Fisher and McCown (1929/30) contains several references to clearing 'stones and rubbish', or 'debris', overlaying classical period structures; Kraeling (1938b) describes the later history of the city in the Omayyad period in very subjective language: the 'Mohammedan' conquest was a 'severe reverse', the city's streets were reduced to 'walled alleys', living quarters were 'wretched hovels'.

⁴ Kehrberg (2011).

⁵ Pierobon (1984a: 27) refers to the 'thematic partiality' for public monumentalism of such excavations.

⁶ Kehrberg (2011).

⁷ On the Eurocentric assumptions and pre-occupations of western archaeologists in the Near East see Steele (2005); Lipman (1988). On touristic archaeology see, for example, Silverman (2002); Brand (2000). On the impact of touristic archaeology on Gerasa specifically, see Kehrberg (2011).

excavators, the privileging of the classical over Late Antique and Omayyad developments, the glamour of monumental excavation, and national economic interests over-riding the purely academic. The resultant visual image is overwhelmingly of the city of the male elite. Fleeting glimpses of other communities can be observed — the funeral goods of a teenage girl buried during the second century BCE;⁸ Semitic personal names and references to Nabataean gods in inscriptions;⁹ a synagogue and references in Josephus point to a Jewish community;¹⁰ while masons' marks at quarries and pottery workshops and tanneries provide insight into the working lives of the urban proletariat.¹¹ Notwithstanding such glimpses, whole sections of the community of Gerasa are absent from the archaeological record. Women, children, slaves, and the rural peasantry of the city's *chora* are invisible. In part this is a reflection of the state of the archaeological data, but also, if theoretical archaeological debate is to be believed, it also reflects biases in excavation strategies, methods and practice, and data interpretation. And yet the archaeological exploration of Gerasa may not be unusual.¹²

In this chapter therefore, I summarise the development of theoretical archaeology which has reflected a series of contests for intellectual dominance of the discipline: between the humanistic and empirical-positivist traditions, determinism and individual agency, objectivity and relativism and multivocality in created archaeological narratives. I look also at the extent to which these theoretical debates have informed archaeological research in the Roman Near East.

Culture-historical archaeology

The last decades of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century witnessed the transition of archaeology from treasure hunting and cultural plunder through antiquarianism, the 'physical proof' of the past (such as, for example, biblical archaeology, Schliemann and Troy) to the taxonomic

⁸ Kehrborg and Manley (2002a, 2002b), Kehrborg (2004a).

⁹ Welles (1938).

¹⁰ Crowfoot (1938) 236-9; *Bell. Jud.* 2.18.5

¹¹ Kehrborg (2009).

¹² Similar comments apply to Nabataean archaeology. Tuttle (2012: *personal communication*) advises that only one common dwelling (unpublished) and three elite residences have been excavated at Petra; together with three farmhouses.

classification of 'the litter of the past' both spatially and temporally.¹³ Initially, such early scientific archaeology was focused particularly on European prehistory and the evolutionary development of the most advanced of societies from Palaeolithic and Neolithic origins.¹⁴ The concept of cultural evolution paralleled, and obviously was derived from, the emergence of geological and biological evolution. Later in the nineteenth century, cultural evolutionism was challenged by the emergence of European nationalism and a new interest in ethnicity, especially in northern Europe.¹⁵ The shift in focus from prehistoric monumentalism to artefact was paralleled by the first attempts at associating artefacts with ethnic groups. At this time there was no recognition of ethnicity as a social construction, instead it was defined in immutable biologically determined terms, which easily enabled the characterisation of indigenous peoples colonised by the European powers as inherently inferior. Furthermore, if ethnic characteristics were biologically determined, then logically the notion of cultural evolution was a *non sequitur*, while migration and cultural diffusion could be perceived as potential pollution of 'pure' racial characteristics.¹⁶ As archaeologists applied these ethnological theories to the growing prehistoric European artefactual data they were able to classify the material both spatially and chronologically leading slowly to an emergent historical orientation.¹⁷ It was a short step then through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to describe as cultures or civilisations, spatially and chronologically defined prehistoric assemblages and to relate them to specific ethnic groups.¹⁸ Gustaf Kossina's *die Herkunft der Germanen*, the most notorious systematic expression of the culture-historical approach, has been described as 'a mixture of important theoretical innovations and a fanciful glorification of German prehistory as that of a biologically pure master race.' Kossina's work, 'for all its chauvinistic nonsense', is significant for 'the final replacement of an evolutionary approach to prehistory by a historical one'.¹⁹

¹³ Reece (1990, 30) coined the phrase, 'the litter of the past'.

¹⁴ Trigger (1989) 73-109.

¹⁵ Trigger (1989) 148.

¹⁶ Trigger (1989) 150-1; Jones (1997) 40-79.

¹⁷ Trigger (1989) 150-161.

¹⁸ Trigger (1989) 162-163.

¹⁹ Trigger (1989) 164-167; Kossina (1911).

British archaeology, developing within the culture-historical tradition, followed a different trajectory and accepted migration and invasion as biologically and culturally enriching rather than as a source of degenerative racial pollution.²⁰ The publication in 1925 of Vere Gordon Childe's *The dawn of European civilization* was a milestone which set the agenda for European prehistory through into the 1950s. Childe abandoned the interpretation of material culture as cultural development, and instead attempted to identify discrete groupings of peoples and to understand their historical interactions. Diffusion and migration were now the mechanisms of cultural change.²¹

The culture-historical approach to the interpretation of the archaeological record has been important in the technical development of archaeological praxis particularly with reference to stratigraphy, chronology and classification of artefacts. It has also provided a comfortable context for the development of national archaeologies around the world. Consequently, archaeology has proved to be a potent force in twentieth century nationalism, self-determination, the repudiation of colonialism and ethnic tensions and conflicts.²²

The published writings of most Near Eastern field archaeologists today tend to largely ignore the more arcane theoretical debates concerning empirical-positivism, subjectivity and relativism in interpretation, multivocality, agency and intentionality. In 2005 Pollock and Bernbeck noted that whereas Near Eastern archaeology 'has stood in the theoretical and methodological forefront of the discipline of archaeology. It would however, be difficult to argue for such a prominent position for the field these days ... Many of the general themes that are sources of vibrant debate in other parts of the world — for example whether emphasis is placed on the study of individuals and small groups or on larger collectivities, or on questions of meaning as opposed to external causalities of change — have resulted as yet in little sustained debate in archaeology in the Middle East.'²³ Possibly this is a result of the role of colonialism and the Bible in

²⁰ Krebs (2009) provides a fascinating narrative of the influence of Tacitus' *Germania* in the development of modern German notions of racial purity from the fifteenth century through to the twentieth century ideology of National Socialism.

²¹ Trigger (1989) 167-174; Childe (1925).

²² Trigger, (1989) 174-195; Trigger (1984); Kohl (1998); Kohl and Fawcett (1995a), (1995b).

²³ Pollock and Bernbeck (2005) 2-3. See also Ross and Steadman (2010); Porter (2010) 166-7; Meskell (1998) 1-12.

early archaeological exploration of the Middle East.²⁴ For not only was archaeology a western discipline, funded by westerners and western institutions for their own purposes, but its management especially during the mandate period was in the hands of the European administrators.²⁵ The underlying colonial structure is perpetuated today in the 'asymmetric' relationship between western (or western-trained) expedition director, specialist team and local labourers whose land is being excavated and whose antecedent culture is being interpreted. While some of these elements of European imperialism no longer apply Caroline Steele still sees 'distinct continuities of praxis between archaeology of the 19th century and that of the present'.²⁶ Additionally, biblical archaeology, predicated upon the historicity of the biblical stories and the identification of biblical sites, is still a significant force in Near Eastern archaeology.²⁷ The origin of the Palestine Exploration Fund and later European and American archaeological societies such as the American Schools of Oriental Research, the École Biblique et Archéologique of the French Dominican Order and the Deutsche Palästina Verein is to be found in the notion of Bible-inspired archaeology.²⁸ Together these two drivers of early archaeological exploration in the Middle East, colonialism and the Bible, have inspired the construction of a pre-Islamic past as part of a western cultural heritage — the source of Judaeo-Christian 'civilisation'.²⁹ Western culture and

²⁴ For a summary survey of the development of Near Eastern archaeology and bibliography see Porter (2010).

²⁵ For a witty and readable account of life on near eastern archaeological expeditions in the interwar period which exemplifies many of the underlying attitudes of that time — maternalism towards the 'natives', underlying attitudes of superiority, the expedition leader as a sort of colonial administrator, not to mention the crudity of archaeological methods, see Mallowan (1999)[1946].

²⁶ Steele (2005) 45-47, 50-51. See also Pollock (2010).

²⁷ For a history of biblical archaeology with a heavy focus on the American contribution see Davis (2004); Silberman (1998). For examples of the debate within biblical archaeology concerning the question of historicity of biblical narratives see, for example, Dever (1998) and the later controversy between Faust and Finkelstein in the 2003-8 issues of *NEA*. Joffe (2002) more recently, eschewed reference to biblical text in its entirety and attempted to explore the development of Iron Age 'ethnic' states in the Levant based solely on archaeological evidence. For discussion of the pre-occupation with biblical sites at the expense of prehistoric and post-Roman archaeology in pursuit of legitimization of Israeli claims together with the alienation of Palestinian heritage, see, for example, Yahya (2005, 2010); Abu El-Haj (1998, 2001).

²⁸ Yahya (2005) 66.

²⁹ Pollock and Bernbeck (2005) 6; Steele (2005) 46-52. Goodman (1998, 3-14) has suggested that the perception of Jewish culture in Palestine as somehow particular and distinctive from the other cultures of the Near East may be a reflection of the preservation of Jewish literature in this western Judaeo-Christian cultural milieu.

European nations were the 'true' heirs of the great civilisations of the Near East, not the peoples of the modern Arab states.³⁰ At its crudest, a linear descent for modern western 'civilisation' was created through the Romans and the Greeks back to the Roman province of Judaea and thence the Bronze Age myths of the Book of Genesis.³¹ While only a few archaeologists with personal beliefs in the inerrancy of the biblical texts are likely to subscribe to such a crude paradigm, modern academic discussion still utilises frames of reference which derive from it such as the barbarism/civilisation dualism, the concepts of hellenisation and romanisation,³² and the privileging of classical texts.³³

Processual archaeology

In the second half of the century the new or processual archaeology rejected the underlying assumptions of culture-historical archaeology for the more ambitious goal of seeking understanding of the social processes of the excavated society through the strict application of the principles of empirical-positivism and the assumption that the objectives and principles of archaeology were the same as those of the natural sciences.³⁴ In the United States, archaeology had become more identified with the social sciences, anthropology in particular, rather than with history. The development of the new archaeology was a natural theoretical development of this relationship. Central to processual archaeology is the notion of social-cultural evolution as an adaptation to environmental change.³⁵ The analogy with biological evolution is obvious. If cultural adaptation is a response to environmental factors then it follows that it should be predictable and responsive to analysis by sound scientific methodology rigorously applied. Furthermore, as these cultural processes are explicated cross-cultural general 'laws' should be able to be established.

³⁰ Trigger (1989) 161.

³¹ Thus, for example: 'Even as his spaceships reach toward the future and the stars, modern man is more concerned than ever with his past on his own planet. From China to Peru, diggers are everywhere. And nowhere are they busier than in the ancient heart land of the Near East, where Western culture was born.' *Time Magazine* 13 December 1963.

³² See Lee (2003) for an example of an attempt to deconstruct the traditional concepts of romanisation and hellenisation in Near Eastern archaeology and to apply more sophisticated postcolonial models of cultural fusion.

³³ Betlyon (2005) explores the implications of the assumption of classical textual perceptions of Persia as a decadent oriental monarchy, together with biblical archaeology for the perception of the period as a 'dark age' in Syro-Palestinian history.

³⁴ Johnsen and Olsen (1992) 419.

³⁵ Binford (1982).

The leading exponent of these ideas was Lewis Binford who summarised the break with the past as follows:

The major methodological and theoretical points of contrast involve distinctions between cultural analogies and homologies, between culture viewed as summation of traits and culture viewed as a system, between units of observation and units of analysis, between inductive and deductive approaches to the archaeological record. A basic underlying problem involves the use of scales of measurement. It was argued that traditional archaeological measures compound variables which probably operated independently in the past, and a solution of the problem of measuring along several dimensions simultaneously must be reached in order to determine just what we *are* measuring.³⁶

Binford published two seminal articles *Archaeology as anthropology* and *Archaeological systematics and the study of culture process*.³⁷ He accepted unequivocally that archaeology was anthropology, subject to scientific discipline, had made significant contribution to anthropological explication, but had contributed little to anthropological explanation.³⁸ He defined scientific explanation as 'the demonstration of a constant articulation of variables within a system and the measurement of the concomitant variability among the variables within the system'. Processual change in one variable relates in a constant and predictable way to change in others. He contrasted scientific explanation with historical explanation which, if demonstrated, is mere explication: 'if migrations can be shown to have taken place, then this explication presents an explanatory problem; what adaptive circumstances, evolutionary processes, induced the migration'.³⁹ It is a mechanistic model which Trigger relates to the emergence of a neo-evolutionism in the context of American post-war prosperity, world hegemony and optimistic self-confidence.⁴⁰ But Binford went further than simply promoting an innovative way of using archaeological data; he chastised practitioners of the discipline for not only failing to further the aims of anthropology but of actually retarding their accomplishment: 'The lack of

³⁶ Binford (1968) 26.

³⁷ Binford (1962) and (1965).

³⁸ Binford (1962) 217.

³⁹ Binford (1962) 218.

⁴⁰ Trigger (1989) 289-4.

theoretical concern and rather naive attempts at explanation which archaeologists currently advance must be modified.⁴¹ After dismissing the culture-historical approach as wholly inadequate as anthropological explanation, Binford proposed a new definition of culture. Culture is not a system of shared ideas, but instead 'culture is an extrasomatic adaptive system that is employed in the integration of a society with its environment and with other sociocultural systems ... This complex set of interrelationships is not explicable by reduction to a single component idea — any more than the functioning of a motor is explainable in terms of a single component, such as gasoline, a battery, or lubricating oil.'⁴² New taxonomies are required that will facilitate multivariate analysis and the isolation of causally relevant variables. Rather than morphological and decorative classification of ceramics, for example, Binford argues for a taxonomy based upon primary functional variation (the difference between a plate and storage jar) and secondary functional variation (reflecting social context of use and/or use as a cultural boundary marker).⁴³ Binford also denied that psychological factors (individual intentionality, identity) had a role in any ecological-adaptive explanation of prehistory.⁴⁴ Trigger has concluded that the efforts of American archaeologists to deduce social organisation from archaeological effort has not lived up to the standards Binford had set for such work.⁴⁵ Furthermore, they have not been able to show that only a small range of variables were dominant in shaping socio-cultural systems. Nor have they been able to show that they could infer, say, social organisation and ideology from another element of a socio-cultural system such as the economy.⁴⁶ Trigger also criticised the new archaeology for creating an 'invidious dichotomy' between history and archaeology and paying little attention to important aspects of human behaviour such as religious beliefs, aesthetics and scientific knowledge and 'the positivist pretence of ethical neutrality.'⁴⁷ By 1989 Guy

⁴¹ Binford (1962) 224.

⁴² Binford (1965) 205.

⁴³ Binford (1965) 205-9.

⁴⁴ Trigger (1989) 302.

⁴⁵ Trigger (1989) 300.

⁴⁶ Trigger (1989) 308-310.

⁴⁷ Trigger (1989) 312-328.

Gibbon could conclude that the new archaeology had failed in its attempt to make archaeology truly scientific.⁴⁸

Processual archaeology remains influential in the States where archaeology is customarily located within anthropology. But as far as I have been able to determine its basic paradigm, relating social-cultural evolution to environmental change, has had negligible impact upon the historical archaeology of the Near East; instead, Near Eastern field archaeologists generally adopt a *de facto* culture-historical approach. On the other hand processual archaeology has unquestionably contributed to the practice of archaeology in the Near East through its emphasis upon scientific rigour and sound methodology.

Postprocessual archaeology

The processual model of interpretation was challenged strongly from the 1980s onwards by a cluster of critics now categorised as postprocessualist. These critics have shifted the focus of archaeology to issues of ideology, power, social context and individual intentionality. As with the postmodernist historian they have highlighted the subjectivity and relativity of both the archaeological object and its modern interpretation. Michael Shanks and Christopher Tilley, for example, argued in *Re-constructing archaeology* and *Social theory and archaeology* that we cannot know an objective past and that our interpretations are reflective of either conscious or unconscious contemporary socio-political perspectives. In particular, they challenge mainstream archaeology as supportive of the power structures and relationships of western capitalism.⁴⁹ They also have shown sensitivity to indigenous interpretations of material culture; accept non-academic interpretations of the past as valid, and are sensitive to the risk of academic archaeology being deemed elitist.

For the purposes of this analysis I have focused on the published views of Ian Hodder as presenting the most comprehensive theory in the various strands of postprocessualism.⁵⁰ In the first instance, Hodder suggests that processualism

⁴⁸ Gibbon (1989).

⁴⁹ Shanks and Tilley (1987a) (1987b); for a robust critical analysis of Shanks and Tilley's thinking see Watson (1990). Hudson (1981) provides a useful if dated overview of the amateur upper middle class origins of British archaeology until the professionalisation of the discipline in the postwar period.

⁵⁰ For a summary presentation of the main strands of postprocessualism see Smith (1995).

can be criticised for inhibiting the development of archaeology by trying to subsume it within other disciplines such as anthropology and the natural sciences.⁵¹ He firmly rejects the natural science model as being inappropriate for the archaeologist because, like the historian, the archaeologist is not external to the object under scrutiny in the manner of the natural scientist, but instead draws interpretive inferences from 'inside' their own cultural experience.⁵² He finds a theoretical rationale for his 'contextual archaeology' in the writings of the philosopher and historian, R.G. Collingwood.⁵³ He also rejects the evolutionary paradigm, seeing it as being too deterministic as a model for the interpretation of change in material culture and failing to give significance to the role of human agency and individual choice.⁵⁴ Furthermore, he argues that positing a direct relationship between material culture and human behaviour fails to take into account the role of ideas, beliefs, and attitudes.⁵⁵ Thus while certain items may be seen as explicitly symbolic, a flag or road sign, for example, and bearing a clear and unequivocal meaning akin to that conveyed in language by a word, most material symbols do not work in this way. Thus, in modern western society a garlic crusher is not an overt or explicit expression of social grouping or class, yet its association with garlic, and certain types of prepared dishes utilising the herb, is likely to be evocative of social and ethnic differentiation.⁵⁶ Furthermore, changing the context of an artefact in time and space can result in it assuming new meanings.⁵⁷ Thus, displaying an artefact in a museum results in a radical de-contextualising of it and, moreover, the process usually results in a change in its perceived value and meaning. For the classical Greek male citizen a decorated *krater* was primarily a functional accoutrement to a symposium, redolent of a specific set of values and produced in a workshop by a low status artisan; displayed alone and spot-lit in a glass case in a museum it is shorn of those values and becomes an art historical

⁵¹ Hodder (1991) 1.

⁵² Hodder (1991) 32.

⁵³ Hodder (1991) 95-106. For a criticism of the hermeneutical underpinning of Hodder and his reliance on Collingwood for his philosophical inspiration see Johnsen and Olsen (1992).

⁵⁴ Hodder (1991) 6-10.

⁵⁵ Hodder (1991) 3.

⁵⁶ Hodder (2000) 707.

⁵⁷ Hodder (2000) 709.

artefact — functionality is subordinated to the artistic merit of its decoration.⁵⁸ Instead of being interpreted in terms of consumption of wine, elite conversation, sexual exploitation of women and boys, and so forth, it is interpreted in terms of the development of western art conventions and the techniques of vase decoration. As a consequence of this ‘de-contextualising’ of the *krater* extensive explanatory notes are provided to assist the viewer to restore the object to its context. In the same way, the imperial statue removed from a provincial forum ceases to be a dominating public expression of hegemonic authority and power; instead, in the museum, it becomes representative of a stage in the development of Roman sculpture. In a provincial Roman city such as Gerasa, statues of emperors, provincial governors and prominent local citizens were a very prominent feature of public concourses, *thermae* and the main streets.⁵⁹ Their function was not merely decorative, but also as an intimidating statement of authority, imperial and civic. Illiterate rural peasants and urban artisans going about their business in the city would have been well aware of the ‘statement’ the statues were making — and it was not artistic.

The postprocessual archaeologist, as with the postmodernist historian, acknowledges the relativity and subjectivity of interpretation and rejects the new archaeology’s aspiration of objectively establishing the social structures and processes in the society under scrutiny. Hodder follows Collingwood and Taylor in noting the near impossibility of describing archaeological data without implying purpose.⁶⁰ Calling a Neolithic Aegean incised and fired pottery artefact a ‘frying pan’, for example, is manifestly an imposed description and every undergraduate text must clarify that there is no suggestion that in fact it was a cooking utensil.⁶¹ Furthermore, even to call it by a relatively neutral term, such as ‘ritual vessel’, is to impose a meaning that is no more than plausible inference from modern usage of such shapes. But even in historical archaeology much interpretation is by inference. For example, a Palmyrene sarcophagus from the Roman period is presumed to be much more than a

⁵⁸ On the contradiction between the utility of classical pottery and modern artistic aesthetics and value see Vickers and Gill (1994).

⁵⁹ Friedland (2003), (2007), (2008).

⁶⁰ Hodder, (1991, 82) maintains that to call a structure ‘wall’ or ‘hearth’, for example, is to assign meaning based upon modern assumptions of function.

⁶¹ As for example, Betancourt (2007) 18-20; Preziosi and Hitchcock (1999) 54-55; Pedley (2002) 3-37.

receptacle for a corpse. We infer from the imported marble from which it is made and its carved decoration that it is a marker of the social status of the corpse when alive; its placement in a family *hypogeum* suggests familial cohesion and social status; the attire (toga versus kaftan and trousers) in which the carved reclining figure on the front and top of the sarcophagus is dressed (presumed to be the interred corpse) is inferred to express some sense of multiple ethnic identity; while the triclinium arrangement of some sarcophagi in some *hypogea* is inferred to suggest funeral banqueting.⁶² Such inferences are plausible and coherent; nevertheless, in the absence of explicit contemporary written explanation, they remain potentially contestable, subjective interpretations.

In seeking meaning in material culture, Hodder argues for distinguishing between the functional meaning of an object and its ideational symbolism and urges the need to be self-critical in the imposition of meaning.⁶³ Hodder rejects the processualist's use of middle range theory;⁶⁴ and proposes a methodology for the 'reading' of the archaeological record as a 'text' based upon exploring similarities and differences over a wide range of variables specific to the artefact and its context. The contextual analysis is achieved through an iterative process of theorising and testing the data against theory. Through this process, meaning should emerge rather than be imposed.⁶⁵ Finally, like Shanks and Tilley, Hodder is concerned with 'the present in the past' and acknowledges that in recent years 'western, upper middle-class, and largely Anglo-Saxon males' have been confronted by three new perspectives – indigenous, feminist and other alternative archaeologies.⁶⁶

⁶² See image on page 1; for discussion of the sarcophagus and funerary banqueting see Gawlikowski (2005) 54.

⁶³ Hodder (1991) 124-126.

⁶⁴ The concept of middle range theory derives from sociology and attempts to distinguish between the simple observation, the empirical identification of patterns, and grand theorising which attempts to encompass the totality of social life. Binford (1977) introduced the concept into archaeology and continued to develop it as a means by which to theorise about the nature of archaeological inference while other theorists also explored its relevance to archaeology. For a summary and critique of Binford's views see Pierce (1989).

⁶⁵ Hodder (1991) 126-149.

⁶⁶ Hodder (1991) 166-174. On archaeology and indigenous peoples see Smith (1999); Shepherd (2002); Ferguson (1996). On feminist archaeology see Hill (1998); Moser (2007) who discusses the disciplinary culture of archaeology, focusing in particular on the role of fieldwork in shaping the sense of identity for the profession. Based on the examination of the professionalisation of Australian archaeology, she argues that there is a distinctive suite

The significance of postprocessual theory lies first in allying archaeology more with the historical view of human activity and society than with the scientific method of anthropology. As a consequence of this orientation the postprocessualist is less concerned with establishing general ‘laws’ to use in the interpretation of material culture and more interested in an interpretation that is embedded in the context of the specific culture. Furthermore, in common with the historian, the postprocessualist is sensitive to intentionality and the role of the individual.⁶⁷ Finally, the sensitivity of the postprocessualist to the role of archaeology, in common with ethnography, in supporting the western ‘establishment’ view of the world is vital whether in raising awareness of indigenous interpretations of data or in exploring marginalised groups in the archaeological record.⁶⁸

In an influential article in the 1980s, Trigger distinguished nationalist, colonialist and imperialist archaeologies, each reflecting contemporary ideologies and concerns in the exploration of the material culture of the past.⁶⁹ In the mid-1990s Kohl and Fawcett’s collection of essays explored nationalism and politics and the practice of archaeology in Spain, Portugal, Nazi Germany, the Balkans, the Soviet Union, the Caucasus, China, Japan, and Korea.⁷⁰ As they noted at the time, the literature relating to archaeology and the social, political and economic context in which it is practised is substantial and it is not my purpose here to do more than note that the relationship is now well established.⁷¹ While not focusing specifically on archaeology, the Māori academic, Linda Tuhiwai Smith explores the offensiveness of western ethnological practice for indigenous peoples drawing upon both the Māori experience and the international literature.⁷² The points made — outsiders assuming a European

of attributes relating to the activity of fieldwork, which are central to the organizational culture of the discipline. These attributes can be seen to have a gendered dimension, revealing the extent to which archaeology is shaped by different gender regimes.

⁶⁷ Hodder (1991: 80), for example, quotes Collingwood approvingly in noting that the fact that Caesar led his army across a north Italian river called the Rubicon is of no significance, but that in so doing, he knowingly and purposefully challenged the ideology of the Late Republic and set in train a series of events culminating in the fall of the Republic is significant.

⁶⁸ See, for example, Pollock (2010).

⁶⁹ Trigger (1984).

⁷⁰ Kohl and Fawcett (1995a).

⁷¹ Kohl and Fawcett (1995b). See also Kohl (1998). Relevant to the archaeology of the Near East: Abdi (2001); Abu el-Haj (1998); Abu el-Haj (2001); Scham (2001).

⁷² Smith (1999).

intellectual and cultural superiority, insensitivity, the ignoring of indigenous narratives or the imposition of a European interpretation on those narratives, alien interpretations and narratives which support the political ideologies of the dominant culture — are familiar in postcolonial studies and may be observed in the practice of archaeology.⁷³

More recently, alternative archaeological narratives have explored the roles of women and other marginalised or oppressed groups previously ignored. Meskell has noted that since the early 1990s theoretical archaeology has been shaped by the emergence of the study of social identity in ancient societies and, secondly, by recognition of the active role of archaeology in contemporary culture as expressed in nationalism, socio-politics, postcolonialism, diaspora and globalism. She viewed both trends as being driven by once marginalised groups. At the same time she perceived a reticence to adopt the politics of identity which she attributed to personal and disciplinary lack of reflexivity and anti-theoretical tendencies within archaeology.⁷⁴

Concern for war and politics, 'maps and chaps', the traditional twin *foci* of male-dominated text and public monumentalism,⁷⁵ has tended to remove most of the populations of ancient societies from the academic discourse. More recently social history has attempted to explore the lives and roles of women, children, slaves, and the urban and rural poor. Postprocessualists have actively encouraged a comparable archaeological focus on such marginalised groups also. As a consequence a substantial archaeological literature has now developed concerning the nature of social identity and how it can be identified and explicated through the material record of a society. Underlying the discussion is recognition that identity is socially constructed and individually managed. The principal social identities are gender, ethnicity, age, social status. There are innumerable other variables (including occupation, religious, political, tribal and sporting affiliations) that the individual manages in different contexts. The challenge for the archaeologist is to recognise material markers of such identities. Because identity is individual, such markers are frequently to

⁷³ Steele (2005) 50-52; Yahya (2005); Trigger (1984) 360-368. For extended discussions see McNiven and Russell (2005); Hendry (2005); Lydon and Rizvi (2010).

⁷⁴ Meskell (2002). See also Ross and Steadman (2010).

⁷⁵ The phrase, 'maps and chaps' is Suzanne Dixon's, cited by Balch and Osiek (2003) xv.

be found in private spaces rather than monumental public spaces, although these categories should not be seen as binary oppositions.⁷⁶ Women and children, for example, used public spaces in the ancient world and the challenge is to find evidence of that use and the social activities and inter-actions that occurred in such spaces rather than assume their activities were spatially limited to the domestic. But even interpreting domestic markers can be problematic. Typically, for example, food preparation areas and loom weights are interpreted as gender markers associated with women. Based upon textual evidence, one would expect their presence in Classical Greek houses to reflect segregation practices. In reality, loom weights have been scattered through most of the rooms of excavated Greek houses. Does this indicate archaeological conflict with the traditional text-based evidence of gender segregation in Classical Greek domestic architecture; disturbance of the site; changing use of the rooms of the house through its life; or even multi-functionality in the use of loom weights?⁷⁷

Agency theory underpins this pursuit of the social identities of individuals and groups within the material culture. Agency theory derives from the writings of the sociologists Bourdieu and Giddens and explores the relationship between the individual and the structures of society.⁷⁸ On the one hand the individual is constrained by social structures such as class and social practice while on the other hand individuals contribute to those structures, either intentionally or unintentionally, by reinforcing, challenging or amending them by their actions. It is this relationship between social systems/structures and the individual that has proved stimulating to the archaeologist in observing the physical results of the choices made by individuals or groups of individuals.⁷⁹ Agency theory is antithetical to archaeological practice based upon culture-history, systems theory and evolutionary theory whereby the material data is scrutinised for inter-site similarities and cultural entities. In contrast, agency theory requires the data be searched for dissimilarities and other evidence of non-normative actions and

⁷⁶ Hill (1998) 116.

⁷⁷ Foxhill (2000).

⁷⁸ For a further discussion of Giddens' structuration theory see below pages 104-6.

⁷⁹ For example Levine (1998) 170, describes alternative small group choices in the differing use of Graeco-Roman iconography in the excavated synagogues of Scythopolis (Beth Shean) in Israel.

‘competing interests within a society or household.’⁸⁰ Although agency theory in sociology is primarily concerned with the decisions and actions of an individual it is relatively rare for that to be observable in archaeology and as a consequence the focus tends to be on specific identifiable groups of which the most easily detected is the elite of a particular society.⁸¹ The material evidence of archaeology, however, can elucidate choices made by non-elite members of a society which is rarely possible from the textual evidence. The latter, whether literary or epigraphic, almost invariably narrates or memorialises the actions of individual members of the society’s elite. Indeed, Steadman and Ross, as archaeologists, go so far as to question the degree to which ‘the textual corpus represents a propagandist instrument for those in power’.⁸²

Architectural structures have a number of non-verbal meanings embedded within them related to, for example, social status and stratification, power relations, gender roles, domination, security and openness, ethnicity, religious values and so forth. Not only do these meanings shape present human behaviours but architectural structures convey those values and behaviours inter-generationally. As a consequence, architecture is a vehicle by which the individual expresses identity and agency by conforming to societal codes, or alternatively, deviating from them. To be most effective, however, when using architecture as a mechanism for exploring agency an entire settlement needs to be excavated to establish norms and deviations.⁸³ Technology also provides the opportunity to investigate agency by analysing how social values, relationships and symbols are transformed into physical objects. The application of agency theory to technology therefore provides the opportunity to explore individual intentionality in the decision-making of artisans at each stage of the *chaîne opératoire* or operational sequences of production. Variations in the sequences may be the result of a number of factors including individual choice.⁸⁴

Agency theory also has relevance for the archaeologist when considering the role and practice of the crafts. Gessner draws on the definition of knowledge of

⁸⁰ Jones (2010) 16-7.

⁸¹ Steadman (2010) 28.

⁸² Ross and Steadman (2010) 4.

⁸³ Steadman (2010) 29-36.

⁸⁴ Ross (2010) 80-81.

motor skills such as painting as embodied knowledge, learned through practice and experience, is expressed through bodily actions that have become almost automatic for the craftsman. But embodied knowledge is also social knowledge because it is learnt in the context of a process of socialisation and the adoption of socially defined conventions, traditions, and techniques. The archaeologist, therefore, is provided the opportunity to explore the relationship between social norm and the possible significance of variation from that norm.⁸⁵ For example, an examination of figural relief sculpture decorating the north theatre at Gerasa convinced Retzleff and Mejly that the workmen, probably locals, lacked assurance in the Hellenistic heritage and were making 'flawed' copies of poorly understood motifs. The workmen were assured and skilled in their mastery of the techniques for carving indigenous images and patterns in the local limestone, but their juxtapositions of maenads and Apollo, their lack of familiarity in the techniques needed to ensure good body proportions for figures in motion, and their inability to capture flowing garments naturalistically exposed their inexperience in executing Hellenistic art.⁸⁶ Bitti had earlier reached a similar conclusion when assessing a high relief head of Apollo sculpted also in the local limestone and found in the vicinity of the temple of Artemis at Gerasa.⁸⁷

In a useful review of the literature at the end of the twentieth century, Conkey and Gero note that the explosion in interest in gender in archaeology in the last decades of that century has resulted in significant developments: 'new questions have been put to old data, new topics and perspectives have been brought to well-studied archaeological situations and questions have been raised about the gendered production of both the archaeological record and archaeological knowledge.'⁸⁸ Discussion of gender in archaeology raises critical theoretical questions that go far beyond *praxis* or data interpretation and has contributed significantly to greater awareness of androcentrism in past research as well as the importance of gender relations in past societies.⁸⁹ More recently, gender has been positioned in relation to other identity markers rather

⁸⁵ Gessner (2010) 99-104.

⁸⁶ Retzleff and Mejly (2003).

⁸⁷ Bitti (1986).

⁸⁸ Conkey and Gero (1997).

⁸⁹ Hill (1998) 101.

than as a stand-alone category of 'single-issue polemics'.⁹⁰ Hill has urged a focus on gender-relations (social relations, political power, social influence, role structures and adaptations) and not on gender *per se*.⁹¹ She makes the further important point that the existing theoretical frameworks — culture-historical, Marxist, processual, postprocessual — are not inherently androcentric. Rather it is the archaeologist who is inherently biased.⁹² But gendered archaeology does not require a commitment to feminism so much as a commitment to exploring the archaeological record holistically.⁹³ She identifies three areas particularly responsive to a gender-informed archaeology: osteological evidence and mortuary context; representational imagery; and micro-scale spatial and contextual analyses.⁹⁴ A decade later, Tomašková takes a more pessimistic view of progress noting that while gender archaeology has highlighted the absence of women in traditional accounts of the past and androcentric bias, 'for most gender is an afterthought at best'.⁹⁵ She emphasises the need to change 'training of students, methods of fieldwork, structures of research, approaches to data, styles of presentation and interpretation...'⁹⁶

Hill's three categories are, of course, very relevant to the investigation of the other principal marginalised identities. Foxhill has also made the point that the shift in focus from elites, 'the spectacular, the great and the good', to ordinary lives requires the archaeologist to think in the time frame of short term 'lived reality' rather than just long term 'chronology' and 'periodization'.⁹⁷ As part of the development of a postmodern theoretical framework for explicating the disadvantaged, Scham proposes an archaeological paradigm, the archaeology of the disenfranchised, comprising four different models — the colonised model, the heritage pride model, the heritage recovery model, and the reaction/resistance model.⁹⁸

⁹⁰ Meskell (2002) 283.

⁹¹ Hill (1998) 104.

⁹² Hill (1998) 104.

⁹³ Hill (1998) 111.

⁹⁴ Hill (1998) 113-7.

⁹⁵ Tomašková (2007) 266.

⁹⁶ Tomašková (2007) 266.

⁹⁷ Foxhill (2000) 485-6; Meyers (2003) is critical of Syro-Palestinian archaeology for a pre-occupation with site diachronic stratigraphy that makes the study of household activities almost impossible.

⁹⁸ Scham, 2001.

Most recently, something of a reaction to all this theoretical discourse may be detected. The 2006 Twelfth Annual Meeting of the European Association of Archaeologists in Krakow ran a session entitled 'The death of Archaeological theory?' It was, apparently, a sell out. The organisers concluded that the session demonstrated that there is 'no clearly dominant theoretical paradigm'; that Anglo-American theorising has had limited impact in Eastern and Central Europe; that eclecticism is the norm even in the UK 'the heartland of post-processualism, while in the USA culture history and processualism are the norm; that there is an emerging consensus that in practice the majority of archaeologists reject a model of theoretical paradigm shifts (culture history/processualism/postprocessualism) and, in practice, combine methods and theories taken from all the traditions.⁹⁹

How far all this theorising has influenced Near Eastern archaeology is a moot point. The Dhiban Archaeological Project in central Jordan, for example, is a small-scale archaeological project which has adopted postprocessual field methods and explicitly engages the local community as stakeholders contributing non-material insights.¹⁰⁰ Unquestionably, a number of authors have identified and challenged the nationalist uses to which a number of modern Near Eastern states have put archaeology with the Iranian use of Persepolis and the Israeli use of Masada for ideological purposes being frequently cited as exemplars of the practice.¹⁰¹ Religious belief can still influence, as evidenced by the hostile response to the so-called 'minimalist' authors and the debates about the historicity of the Hebrew Bible.¹⁰² In recent times there has been a shift in focus from the monumental towards the excavation of domestic spaces and the role of women.¹⁰³ But prominent figures such as Dever have poured disdain upon postmodern concerns about subjectivity and multivocality.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Bintliff and Pearce (2011) 1-6.

¹⁰⁰ Steen *et al.* (2010).

¹⁰¹ Kohl (1998); Kohl and Fawcett (1995b); Boyntner, Dodd and Parker (2010); Abdi (2001); Ben-Yahuda (2002); Zias and Gorski (2006).

¹⁰² See, for example, Provan (1995); Hoffmeier (1997); Dever (1998), etc.

¹⁰³ See, for example, Meyers (2003); Nakhai (2007); Willett (2008); Ebeling and Homan (2008).

¹⁰⁴ Dever (1998).

Historical archaeology

The archaeology of historical periods poses its own specific methodological problems for both the archaeologist and the historian, since each utilises different types of evidence — textual and material. Should the one be given priority over the other? Is archaeology an independent science or merely the hand servant of history? More recently, new theoretical questions have arisen. What distinguishes history and archaeology? Is it simply a matter of using different evidence types? Or do the separate disciplines pose different questions of their respective evidence types? What is the difference between inter-disciplinarity and multi-disciplinarity? Both disciplines exist in the present, yet seek to provide an interpretation of evidence from the past, but in doing so, are their goals different? If the goal of history is to create a meaningful present narrative of events and motives in the past, what is the goal of archaeology? These questions are central to this thesis which, although an exercise in historiography, makes extensive use of archaeological evidence. In this section, therefore, I address some of these underlying methodological questions.

The term, historical archaeology, originated in North America about fifty years ago reflecting a perception of an illiteracy/literacy divide at the time of the European conquest and settlement of the continent. In other regions, notably Europe, the distinction was seen more as on an evolutionary continuum.¹⁰⁵ A more recent development, which perpetuates a strict dichotomy between illiterate and literate societies, has been the exploration of the significance of modern European expansion and colonisation, resistance and the new economic forms and political structures that were created throughout the world. This approach was based upon the idea that the global implications of the European expansion transformed the world and created new hybrid cultures.¹⁰⁶ But an archaeology of colonisation still retains the focus on literate societies and relates the illiteracy/literacy dichotomy to other symbolically charged dichotomies such as myth/history, barbarism/civilisation, primitive/advanced.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Funari (1999)

¹⁰⁶ Orser (1996).

¹⁰⁷ Funari, Jones and Hall (1999) 3.

When we turn to the ancient world, it is commonly noted that texts are overwhelmingly reflective of the views of a small and privileged male elite. In contrast, archaeology provides the opportunity to find evidence from the textually invisible masses through an examination of the material evidence from domestic quarters, children's toys, workshops, slaves' quarters on farms, rubbish dumps, gladiatorial schools, army barracks and camps and so forth. On occasion this evidence may be inconsistent with the textual evidence, as noted earlier in the case of loom weights in Athenian homes.¹⁰⁸ In another example, the role of women in Iron Age II Israel as reflected in the archaeological evidence is at variance with the androcentric bias of the Hebrew Bible.¹⁰⁹

How then should the classical archaeologist use classical texts? Conversely, how should the classical historian use archaeological evidence? Some archaeologists have attempted to use text as a source of social modelling of the classical world with the archaeological record supplying contexts in which the dynamics of these social models can be observed. A prominent example of this theoretical approach in action would be Morris's examination of funerary practices as a reflection of a bipolar social dynamic in Greece from the Geometric to Late Classical period. Small challenges Morris's model and offers a re-interpretation of the evidence. He proposes that classical archaeology should follow the example of American historical archaeology and that the archaeological and documentary record should be treated as completely independent sources produced in different contexts. He maintains that if this theoretical position is adopted it is likely to result in a wider range of possible interpretations of the evidence.¹¹⁰

Moreland suggests that a contextual approach may provide the means to transcend the disciplinary boundaries.¹¹¹ By this he means that we should view both text and material artefact as vehicles through which people and communities constructed a sense of identity. A fundamental element of this approach is to recognise that text not merely provides evidence about the past, but also had efficacy in the past. He demonstrates how text was used in the

¹⁰⁸ Foxhill (2000) 492-3.

¹⁰⁹ Nakhai (2007).

¹¹⁰ Small (1999).

¹¹¹ Moreland (2006).

Roman Empire, for example, as oppressive imperial instrument (tax records from Egypt) or as instrument of liberation and enlightenment (private invitations among the Vindolanda tablets showing women creating social networks outside the military regime of the camp). Moreland suggests that an approach based upon contexts and identity would hopefully result in new questions being posed of the evidence.

In exploring the nature of inter-disciplinarity, Isayev distinguishes between 'Mode two' projects which are short term and aimed at answering specific research questions and 'Mode one' projects which are long term collaborations aimed at framing new questions through an integrated approach and in anticipation of outcomes unachievable by a single discipline.¹¹² After reviewing how the two disciplines distanced themselves as they explored their respective boundaries during the twentieth century, she notes that they now seem to be moving to the centre. She rejects evidence type, and the methods for interpreting the different types of evidence, as defining of the respective disciplines. Instead, she follows Alcock in seeing social memory, expressed in landscape, materiality and text as formative of identity, personal and communal, and the focus of both history and archaeology. If both disciplines are concerned with the study of the past, then ultimately that is the 'study of populations and individuals in relation to one another and their environment'.¹¹³

Conclusion

Archaeology, a post-Enlightenment western discipline, is very much a study embedded in the ideologies and concerns of the present and, as with history, the empiricist-positivist ideal has proved to be an impossible goal.¹¹⁴ So embedded in contemporary politics is archaeology, that Pollock and Bernbeck found difficulty in finding authors willing to write about controversial issues that touch upon archaeology and current political issues of the Middle East because of fear of impact upon future research opportunities or possible jeopardy to an

¹¹² Isayev (2006).

¹¹³ Isayev (2006) 606.

¹¹⁴ Kohl and Fawcett (1995b) 14-15.

academic career.¹¹⁵ Kohl and Fawcett also experienced similar difficulties when seeking contributors for their collection of essays.¹¹⁶

As with historical method, the essential point is that the limitations of the empiricist-positivist archaeological model have been recognised. As a consequence, a shift to relativism, similar to that in historiography, may be followed in the development of archaeological theory through the twentieth century — scarcely surprising since both the historical text and the material artefact are what Ian Hodder calls ‘mute evidence’, separated across time and space from their author, producer or user; and therefore requiring interpretation without the possibility of interaction.¹¹⁷ Such interpretation is inevitably narrative in form and selective in determining relevant contextual elements. But while both the textual and the material evidence share the need for interpretation, they provide a differing focus on human activity. With few exceptions the textual evidence that has survived from antiquity reflects the views of the dominant, wealthy, educated and male ruling classes. However while the archaeological record certainly parallels the elite origins of textual evidence with monumental, palatial and funerary architecture and the design of urban space, it also has the capacity to reveal alternative views of people’s lives and possible conflicting voices. In particular, archaeology provides the opportunity to gain insight into the lives and beliefs of the otherwise marginalised and mute elements of a society (women, children, the poor and the enslaved); for if tombs, palaces, public baths and art, like text, provide expressions of power and domination in a society so too, workshops, slaves’ quarters, prisons, domestic space, kitchen middens, and private cult can provide alternative expressions of identity, culture, practice and resistance.¹¹⁸ But whereas archaeology, in common with anthropology, has readily made use of comparison and analogy in order to both infer meaning and also to generalise about human social behaviour and cultural significance, historical method has traditionally eschewed analogy. In the next chapter therefore we address this issue with particular reference to the validity of the use of postcolonial theory,

¹¹⁵ Pollock and Bernbeck (2005) 3.

¹¹⁶ Kohl and Fawcett (1995b) 3

¹¹⁷ Hodder (2000) 703.

¹¹⁸ Hodder (2000) 705-6.

comparisons with modern imperialism, and the use of contemporary sociological concepts such as ethnicity and identity.

Chapter three

Necessary analogies and alternative analytical tools

In Salman Rushdie's *The satanic verses* Zeeny Vakil, Saladin's former Mumbai lover, mocks his fawning posturing as an Englishman, "For Pete's sake," Zeeny tells him, "*Chamcha*. I mean, fuck it. You name yourself Mister Toady and you expect us not to laugh."¹ Saladin Chamcha, of course, is a representative postcolonial hybrid who belongs to neither the imperial nor the colonised culture. He aspired to be a completely assimilated Englishman living in the imperial metropolis, London, as 'a goodandproper Englishman'.² As a boy in Mumbai he dreamt of 'flying out of his bedroom window to discover that there below him, was—not Bombay—but Proper London itself, Bigben Nelsoncolumn Lordstavern Bloodytower Queen'.³ But the reality is very different. When taken into British police custody as an illegal immigrant, Saladin metamorphoses into a monstrous ithyphallic figure who sprouts horns, acquires cloven hooves, tail, hairy legs, and has halitosis.⁴ He is, in short, the embodiment of *The Other*. In another bizarre twist, Saladin, as the devil personified, becomes a resistance leader within the migrant community of London. As one reflects on Saladin's alienation from his ancestral culture and identification with the imperial culture, it is tempting, though futile, to speculate whether, similar alienation occurred to provincials in the ancient world. Did *Yosef ben Matityahu*, aka Titus Flavius Josephus, feel he never quite belonged when he settled in Rome in the late first century CE as the Flavians' Jewish propagandist? Did a youthful Lucian in Samosata dream of one day being a 'goodandproper' Athenian?⁵ What should we make of the ambiguity inherent in the epitaph of Meleagros of Gadara in

¹ Rushdie (2006 [1988]) 54.

² Rushdie (2006 [1988]) 43.

³ Rushdie (2006 [1988]) 38.

⁴ Rushdie (2006 [1988]) 157.

⁵ For a fascinating study of Lucian's ethnicity and its impact upon the interpretation of his work see Richter (2005: 93) '...this process of creating "Lucian" from his texts has evolved and shifted in ways which have reflected the various needs and preoccupations of his readers - Romantics, Theists, Orientalists. I am not unaware that the Lucian who has begun to emerge in recent years is no less a product of our own academic and political agenda. As previous generations resolved Lucian's identity by making him either Greek or Syrian, the Anglophone academy has discovered a post-colonial Lucian - a cultural hybrid whose texts address issues of identity, ethnicity, culture, and imperialism.'

which he invokes both his ethnic Syrian origins and the universality of humanity?⁶

The satanic verses acquired notoriety for its alleged blasphemy culminating in the Ayatollah Khomeini's *fatwa* of 1989 and Rushdie's enforced seclusion in protective custody: all reflective of a distorted reading of the novel. In reality the work is an exploration of the postcolonial themes of identity, hybridity and migrancy;⁷ themes that are common in modern postcolonial literature. Rushdie's evocation of hybridity in his characters is subtle. On the one hand Saladin wants to be 'a good and proper Englishman' living in 'Proper London' itself. It is a personal choice made in childhood; personal intention is emphasised. But his very name captures the ambiguity of his personal choice. His first name, Saladin, evokes the great Islamic champion, while his family name *Chamcha* is Hindi for toady or worse. In the same way, Zeena's personal choice is to remain in Mumbai and repudiate acculturation, toadyism. But her choice of language is indicative of the ambiguity in her choice. She speaks English, the language of the former imperial masters, while using rather dated colloquialisms, such as 'for Pete's sake'. Both characters *seem* to have made personal cultural choices, but in reality both are involuntarily responding to their postcolonial cultural context. The individual subjective experience is of personal choice and intentionality, the reality is of an externally imposed cultural constraint.

Some of the postcolonial concepts that Rushdie deploys in *The satanic verses* have entered the recent historiography of the ancient world, yet such usage begs the question concerning the validity of the analogy. Can nineteenth century British imperialism be a valid analogue for ancient Roman imperialism? Certainly, as noted in chapter one, the converse applied and apologists for modern European imperialism found its ideological justification by analogy with the Roman Empire. And certainly, the use of the modern imperialism analogy in classical studies is increasingly pervasive, not only in studies of Roman imperialism but also of Greek colonisation in the western Mediterranean during

⁶ '...Though I am a Syrian, what wonder? O friend, we inhabit one country — the earth; one chaos produced all men ...' (Richard Aldington's translation) Meleagros (1920) 37.

⁷ Kuortti (2007) 25, 128-132; Robinson (2005) 43-52.

the Archaic period.⁸ But the question is not to be restricted to the ancient historian's use of the concepts of modern postcolonial studies. One may also question the validity of using modern sociological concepts such as identity and ethnicity when discussing ancient social formations and dynamics. Again, there is a burgeoning modern literature relating to the Roman Empire in which an affirmative answer to these questions is assumed.⁹ But, should it? This chapter explores these questions.

The colonial analogy

Over the past few decades there has been a substantial debate, particularly in the English-speaking countries, concerning the continued relevance of the concept of romanisation, largely with reference to the western provinces.¹⁰ In essence, it was concluded that the Roman/native dichotomy was inappropriate and that the 'civilising' mission of the Romans was neither explicit nor intended. Moreover, the consensus seems to be that the underlying assumptions were invalid and had been simply imported from the nineteenth century European imperial ideology and applied to the development of the concept of romanisation. In essence the reasoning is circular: on the one hand, classically trained apologists for European imperialism used the Roman analogy of 'civilising the barbarians', while on the other, classicists applied notions deriving from modern imperial ideology. One consequence of this challenge to the old concept of romanisation has been to seek alternative interpretive frameworks in postcolonial theory.¹¹

More recently, the use of postcolonial theory itself, in studies of cultural interchange in the Roman world, has been subjected to critical scrutiny. Chris Gosden, for example, has developed a tripartite colonial typology in which he

⁸ See Hurst and Owen (2005).

⁹ A simple search of *JSTOR* is instructive. A search of archaeological and history journals using the search terms "ethnicity" and "Roman" provided 3886 references – not bad, given that according to the on-line *Oxford English Dictionary* the modern usage of 'ethnicity' can only be dated back to 1953. A similar search using "identity" and "Roman" turned up a whopping 20,429 references. Small wonder that some scholars are now questioning the utility of the concepts to Roman studies (see pages 67-74 below)

¹⁰ See pages 20-6 above.

¹¹ For example, Millett (1990a); Millett (1990b); Freeman (1993); Webster and Cooper (1996); Van Dommelen (1998); Webster (1997), (2001), (2003); Hitchner (2008).

places the Roman Empire in a different category from modern European empires —

i) *Colonialism within a shared cultural milieu*

The earliest form of colonial encounter and exemplified by relations in the pre-modern world from the Ubaid of Southern Mesopotamia to the Greeks, Aztecs, Incas, early Chinese, Vikings and Tongans. This type is characterised by cultural unity over a wide geographical area of peoples with differing histories and backgrounds; and not maintained by military might;

ii) *The middle ground*

This type is exemplified by the Roman Empire and early modern contacts with the indigenes of the Pacific, India, North America and Africa, and is characterised by accommodation on the part of both indigenes and colonisers and a working understanding of others' social relations. All parties think they are in control; often creates new modes of difference, not acculturation; can have a profound effect on colonisers; and

iii) *Terra nullius*

Colonialism of the last 250 years as experienced in settler societies of New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, North America and Siberia. It is characterised by lack of recognition of prior ways of life and people which leads to mass land appropriation, destruction of social relations, death through war and disease, and active resistance and cultural upheaval.¹²

This model of colonialism is not grounded in the ideology of invasion, power and dominance. Instead it is grounded in the materiality of culture and cultural interchange: 'Britain was colonised through contacts with North America, as much as the American colonies were creations of Britain.'¹³ In this model of colonialism, the modern concept of a colony as transplanted powerful settlers motivated by trade, the dispersal of excess metropolitan population, military advantage or the control of local resources is not definitive and only emerged with the development of significant levels of state power. For Gosden, colonialism 'is a particular grip that material culture gets on the bodies and

¹² Gosden (2004) 24-40.

¹³ Gosden (2004) 1.

minds of people, moving them across space and attaching them to new values'. '... colonialism is crucially a relationship with material culture, which is spatially extensive ... and destabilising of older values...' Before the emergence of powerful states, colonialism existed without colonies. Thus the Greek settlements of the Mediterranean were not initially deliberate settlements by the Greek city states, but accumulations of people around new centres of trade and metal ores.¹⁴ A basic premise of this model is the active agency of material culture which moves 'the bodies and minds of peoples' across space. 'Colonialism is a process by which things shape people, rather than the reverse. Colonialism exists where material culture moves people, both culturally and physically, leading them to expand geographically, to accept new material forms and to set up power structures around a desire for material culture.'¹⁵ In the pre-modern world, there is a complete congruence between the *dividual* (sic) and their social and cultural relations which is grounded in the shared social values attributed to things and given expression in gift-exchange. In contrast, in modern society the *individual* functions to a greater or lesser degree independent of social or cultural relations and things become objects – disembedded, quantifiable, standardised, and capable of exchange with strangers. 'Early colonialism begins at the point at which objects are starting to break out of purely local value systems ...' and 'Only with modern colonialism do quantities dominate and what we see as the economy comes into its own.'¹⁶

Such a challenging interpretation of colonialism raises a number of issues. First, the focus on the *agency* of material culture as the driver of colonialism does seem to marginalise human intention and agency and turns on its head the traditional view that human colonial activity was motivated by material culture. Second, for me, agency carries connotations of conscious intention inappropriately attributed to inanimate material culture. A preferable synonym, perhaps, would be 'instrumentality'.¹⁷ Third, such an analysis by-passes the traditional historical analysis of colonialism in terms of invasion, coercive state and military power, land alienation, disruption of social relations and indigenous

¹⁴ Gosden (2004) 2-3.

¹⁵ Gosden (2004) 153.

¹⁶ Gosden (2004) 39.

¹⁷ For a summary of the scholarly debate surrounding the notion of object agency, see Feldman (2010).

cultural traditions, resistance (passive, cultural and armed), and reprisals. Fourth, while his distinction between his middle ground and *terra nullius* types is compelling, it is also most relevant to the central question of this chapter and indeed the whole thesis; namely, the validity or otherwise of the modern European imperialism/Roman empire analogy. If modern European imperialism is of the *terra nullius* type and the Roman Empire is of the Middle Ground type can they be compared?

Nicolo Terrenato has pointed out that using postcolonial theory is simply to use the negative of the old imperial theory and continues to rely on the assumption that the analogy between the Roman Empire and modern European empires is valid.¹⁸ He also challenges that assumption arguing that a pre-modern empire is intrinsically different from a modern one on several basic points. Whereas the coloniser/colonised dichotomy in modern imperialism is ethnically derived, that dimension was largely irrelevant to the notion of Roman citizenship: it is inconceivable, for example, that an Indian rajah should have been appointed to the British House of Lords, whereas provincial elites had access to the Roman senate and magistracies.¹⁹ The critical divide in the ancient world was not that between coloniser/colonised, but rather that between an international network, even alliance, of elites (Roman and non-Roman) and the other social strata controlled and dominated by the collaborative effort of those elites. While the experience of the modern colonised indigenous peoples was of their societies being torn apart by the trauma of colonisation and their cultures despised, that was not always the ancient experience.²⁰ This seems to be a similar point to Gosden's distinction between middle ground and *terra nullius* colonialism. For Terrenato, these two points are not matters of superficial variability, but reflect structural difference between western modernity and Classical antiquity.²¹ 'The Greek and Roman world fits much more naturally in the context of other cultures centred upon aristocratic land-holding clans. This approach could only be

¹⁸ Terrenato (2005) 65.

¹⁹ The example is striking, but it should be noted that the modern European empires were not uniform. While no native subject was elected to the House of Lords, Ferguson (2011: 163) notes that they were elected to the French National Assembly as early as 1848.

²⁰ While it may not have been the universal experience of Roman imperialism, there are plenty of examples demonstrating the brutal impact that it did have on numerous occasions; See, for example, descriptions in Caes. *B. Gall.*; Tac. *Agr.*; Livy; Joseph. *Bell. Jud.*; Dio Cass. 69.13-14.3; Dyson (1971).

²¹ Terrenato (2005) 66.

overlooked in the past one hundred and fifty years because of the need to find precedent and justification (or damnation) for modern colonialism in the ancient world.²² Rather than look at the social and cultural processes in terms of ethnicity, Roman/indigene, he proposes the examination of social groupings across the empire without regard at all to ethnicity.²³ In this model, the main cultural tensions are between small-scale conservatism and globalising trends forcing cultural change. If it is accepted that pre-modern empires are structurally different and not simply more 'primitive', then it is possible to see that the one factor that is common to both worlds is cultural identity and the factors impinging upon its identity.²⁴

Perhaps for Terrenato's international network of aristocratic landowners ethnicity was not an issue, but there is plenty of literary evidence that the Romans did enjoy making ethnically loaded assessments of other peoples. As previously noted, Syrians and Jews were peoples 'who are born to slavery' (Cic. *Prov. Con.* 5.10); the army of Antiochus III comprised 'Syrians and Asiatic Greeks, the most worthless peoples among mankind and born for slavery' (Livy 36.17.5); and Jews in particular were '... the most contemptible among that portion of humanity born to servitude' Tac. *Hist.* 5.8. Scythians were 'half men', eunuchs; Phoenicians and Carthaginians, liars.²⁵ Greek settlers in the east had gone native and were now degenerate (Livy 38.17.11). Hadrian's Spanish accent was a source of mirth to the Senate (SHA. *Had.* 3.1). It is also evident that local people whose land tenure and way of life was disrupted by Roman veteran colonies viewed matters through an ethnic lens.²⁶

But there is a more fundamental point that is challengeable in Terrenato's model, namely how relevant and significant any international network of aristocratic landowners may have been to cultural change under the Empire? It is a reasonable description of the nature of relationships between members of the social and political elites of the different communities around the Mediterranean basin; and furthermore, it was a most influential network. But

²² Terrenato (2005) 66.

²³ Terrenato (2005) 67-70.

²⁴ Terrenato (2005) 70

²⁵ Isaac (2004) 338, 340; 125, 324-332

²⁶ On the impact, for example, of the establishment of the *colonia* of Berytus with a large territorium see below pages 114-5.

the relationships and influence exercised within that network was the experience of a very small minority of the population of the Roman Empire. For the great majority, ordinary people, peasants, artisans, shopkeepers, slaves, and the like, I would maintain that their experience of the empire fitted more closely to the destructive *Terra nullius* type as they experienced the disruptive impact of colonialism upon traditional economic, cultural and social norms and practices. As Given has commented: 'The most direct involvement of ordinary people with imperial rule is when their hard-won food is removed from in front of them and taken right out of their family, their community, and often their country... this is colonialism, as experienced by the great majority of people who live under it. Tribute begins at the threshing floor.'²⁷ While not wishing to denigrate the huge social and cultural developments that occurred throughout the Mediterranean world under Roman hegemony, the stark reality of conquest and initial colonisation was devastating for the local peoples as was the exaction of taxes.²⁸ Why else the large numbers of rebellions, many being led by members of Terrenato's international aristocratic network?²⁹

It is this central issue of control, domination, subjugation and how these were both experienced and perceived by local populations which, for me, remains central to the nature of colonialism.³⁰ When the Romans referred to the Mediterranean as *mare nostrum* they were not simply affirming the unity of a geographical region. They were arrogantly affirming their imperial success in dominating the region by militarily eliminating all political rivals. It is a point that the American archaeologist, Brad Bartel, had picked up on twenty five years earlier.³¹ At that time, he detected a growing dissatisfaction with the objectives of classical archaeology which he concluded was due to inadequacies in

²⁷ Given (2004) cited in Harrison (2005) 80.

²⁸ The recurrent references to tax collectors as despised and hated members of the community in the Gospel stories of the Christian Testament provide evidence of how they were perceived among common people in the Roman Near East (*Matt.* 9.10-13; *Luke* 15.1-2, 18.9-14; 19.1-10). It is surely presumptive evidence of the severity of the tax rates and the harshness of their methods of collecting. On the process of bidding for tax farming rights in the region under the Ptolemies see (Joseph. *Ant.Jud* 4.4).

²⁹ On rebellions generally, Dyson (1971). Members of local elites providing leadership for rebellions include, for example, Vercingetorix (Gaul), Calgacus, Boudicca (Britain), Arminius (Germany), Josephus in the initial stages of the First Jewish Revolt (Judaea), and Zenobia (Palmyra).

³⁰ It is a point shared by two reviewers of Gosden's thesis who were uncomfortable with his benign depiction of pre-modern colonialism. See Dawdy (2005); Harrison (2005).

³¹ Bartel (1980).

research design. While Roman studies provided a large archaeological database, significant ethno-historical records, and cultural change in a colonial context on a grand scale, archaeological excavation continued along traditional lines of epigraphy, art historical analysis and descriptions of monumental architecture.³² Underpinning this poor research design, he argued, was a crude operational model based upon an urban/rural dichotomy with the societal value system dominated by the urban; economics controlled by crude advantage resulting from military conquest rather than rationality, calculations of profit and marginality of relative substantive priorities, and pre-occupation with status. Too often this crude model was applied to provincial settings with indigenous populations being seen as rigid homogenous groupings. He noted a lack of archaeological testing of these assumptions.³³ While there is an enormous literature on colonialism and its impact upon indigenous cultures and societies there is no comprehensive theory for the 'archaeology of colonialism'.³⁴ He then explored the nature of colonialism from an ethnological perspective with a view to 'operationalising' the concept archaeologically. He defined colonialism as essentially 'a form of domination-control by individuals or cultural associations over a combination of territory and behaviour of other individuals and social groups'.³⁵ He notes that domination can involve intra-group relationships as well as inter-group ones, thus introducing the need to consider the role of indigenous elites in the colonial social relationships.³⁶ Finally he emphasised the distinction between colonialism and imperialism.

Bartel was writing, of course, before the theoretical debate concerning the nature of romanisation had commenced and his criticism of a research design

³² Bartel (1980) 11.

³³ Bartel (1980) 12.

³⁴ Bartel (1980) 13.

³⁵ Bartel (1980) 14.

³⁶ Bartel (1980) 14-15. Plin. *Ep.* 9.5 provides an example of the imperial agent being sensitive to the impact of their relationship with elite and non-elite groupings within a colonial society. 'You are doing exceptionally well, I learn when I enquire, in administering justice with great courtesy in the province entrusted to you, and long may it continue. This particular duty is important in commending you to the most reputable. On the one hand it endears you to the lower social orders, while at the same time the leading citizens respect you.' (Egregie facis (inquiero enim) et persevere, quod iustitiam tuam provincialibus multa humanitate commendas; cui praecipua pars est honestissimum quemque complecti, atque ita a minoribus amari, ut simul a principibus diligare...')

based upon epigraphy, art historical analysis and architectural description of monumental architecture probably has less force today with the emergence of a postprocessual quest for evidence of the non-elites of ancient society. Nor, obviously, does he show any awareness of the argument that ancient colonialism is of a type that is to be distinguished from the modern experience as proposed by Gosden and Terrenato. Unquestionably also, fieldwork in both the western and the eastern provinces since 1980 has refined considerably the archaeological understanding of life in the Roman Empire. He does however show an appreciation of the role of the indigenous elite in colonial social and political relationships and it is worth noting that his complaint that indigenous populations were perceived as rigid culturally homogenous groupings was re-affirmed by Revell as recently as 2009.³⁷ His article, although now dated, is significant for two enduring reasons. First, the recognition that classical archaeology has been dominated by the evidence of the elites (epigraphy, art, urbanism, and public monumentalism) and that while such evidence may tell us something of Roman imperialism, it fails to provide us with insights into the indigenous experience of Roman colonialism. Second, his definition of colonialism as 'a form of domination-control ...' aligns better with the historical record of wars, rebellion, piracy and banditry, and subversive religious writings. My own view is that Gosden and Terrenato, both archaeologists, make important and fundamental distinctions in the nature of colonialism but they risk creating an image of ancient colonialism that is too benign by not giving sufficient weight to the literary evidence of invasion and domination. The fact is that both the Hellenistic kingdoms and the Roman Empire were established and maintained by military might; involved substantial land confiscations, harsh tax regimes, the imposition of slavery upon subject populations; were subject to armed rebellion and social banditry; and witnessed the decline of traditional Graeco-Roman religion in favour of neo-Platonism, and an emergent subversive apocalyptic literature and salvationist religions.

In summary then, Gosden and Bartel represent two divergent concepts of colonialism. Gosden's is grounded in the materiality of culture and cultural interchange, while Bartel's is grounded in the ideology of invasion, power and

³⁷ Revell (2009), especially 1-39.

dominance. But are these positions opposed? It seems to me, that Gosden has produced a useful typology of colonialism while Bartel get closer to the human experience of colonialism as oppressive. To understand adequately the personal experience of the social dynamics of identity and cultural interaction in the ancient colonial context one needs to acknowledge the oppressive character of colonialism and seek the subjective perception of the colonised. This can be achieved by the cautious use of the modern analogy.

The modern concept of identity

The use of the concept of identity has proliferated in the latter part of the twentieth century 'diffusing quickly across disciplinary and national boundaries, establishing itself in the journalistic as well as the academic lexicon, and permeating the language of social and political analysis'.³⁸ But what precisely is meant by the term?

Brubaker and Cooper '...argue that the prevailing constructivist stance on identity - the attempt to "soften" the term, to acquit it of the charge of "essentialism" by stipulating that identities are constructed, fluid, and multiple - leaves us without a rationale for talking about "identities" at all'.³⁹ They accept that it is in widespread use in modern social and political discourse as a category of practice (everyday usage of the term by people making sense of their daily experiences), but argue against its use as a category of sociological analysis.⁴⁰ They discern five differing and contradictory usages of term in its practical application —

- particularist self-understandings (race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation) as against universal self-interest (position in the market, occupation, mode of production) as a ground of social or political action;

³⁸ Brubaker and Cooper (2000) 2-3. Gleason (1983) provides a fascinating record of the proliferation of use of the term in the second half of the twentieth century. And the deluge continues: a November 2011 *JSTOR* search of archaeology, classical studies, history, political science and sociology journals using 'identity' as descriptor located 101,022 articles.

³⁹ Brubaker and Cooper (2000) 1.

⁴⁰ Brubaker and Cooper (2000) 4-5.

- the collective perception of sameness among group members, understood either objectively or subjectively; this usage is found particularly in the literature of social movements;
- as a core-aspect of selfhood ('deep, basic, abiding or foundational'); this psychological usage is especially attributed to the influence of Erikson;
- 'the processual, interactive development of the kind of collective self-understanding, solidarity, or "groupness" that can make collective action possible'; in this usage identity is both a contingent product of social or political action and also a basis for further action;
- 'the evanescent product of multiple and competing discourses, "identity" is invoked to highlight the unstable, multiple, fluctuating, and fragmented nature of the contemporary "self"; this usage is found in post-modern and post-structuralist literature'.⁴¹

'Clearly, the term "identity" is made to do a great deal of work' as Brubaker and Cooper observe. 'It is used to highlight non-instrumental modes of action; to focus on self-understanding rather than self-interest; to designate sameness across persons or sameness over time; to capture allegedly core, foundational aspects of selfhood; to deny that such core, foundational aspects exist; to highlight the processual, interactive development of solidarity and collective self-understanding; and to stress the fragmented quality of the contemporary experience of "self," a self unstably patched together through shards of discourse and contingently "activated" in differing contexts.'⁴² Examining several significant specific academic applications of the term they show that the actual analytical work is done by other concepts.⁴³ Finally, they tease out three separate clusters of concepts that would be more useful as a category of analysis: identification and categorisation; self-understanding and social location; commonality, connectedness, groupness.⁴⁴

Importantly, they note that the contemporary view of identity as 'constructed, fluid, and multiple' empties it of 'its analytical purchase'. 'If it is fluid, how can we

⁴¹ Brubaker and Cooper (2000) 7-8.

⁴² Brubaker and Cooper (2000) 8.

⁴³ Brubaker and Cooper (2000) 11-14.

⁴⁴ Brubaker and Cooper (2000) 15-21.

understand the ways in which self-understandings may harden, congeal, and crystallize? If it is constructed, how can we understand the sometimes coercive force of external identifications? If it is multiple, how do we understand the singularity that is often striven for – and sometimes realized – by politicians seeking to transform mere categories into unitary and exclusive groups?’

Brubaker and Cooper have been able to show how loose and ambiguous the use of the word ‘identity’ has become, not only in popular discourse but also in academic literature. By distinguishing variables of group membership they have made it possible to tease out the differing nature of the ‘vehemently felt groupness from more loosely structured, weakly constraining forms of affinity and affiliation.’ But I am not sure much has been achieved in understanding the dynamics of identity formation and operation. Unquestionably, ‘identity’ is an over-used and sometimes imprecise term and Brubaker, Cooper and others are right in cautioning against its over-use and urging greater precision in language, especially the language of analysis. But some of the imprecision and ambiguity that they criticise is a paradox inherent in the nature of identity. On the one hand, that which is being described is permanent, durable and recognisable. On the other, both its subjective intensity and its nature are capable of change as it adapts to changing circumstances.⁴⁵

Ethnic identity

A number of Roman archaeologists have seen the concept of identity as a means of cutting through the tired debate concerning romanisation. Potentially, the use of identity as an analytic category frees the debate from the Roman/native cultural dichotomy and enables ‘research into regional, sub-ethnic, gender, and class identities’.⁴⁶ Unfortunately, Pitts notes ‘the spread of shallow conceptualizations of identity in Roman archaeology, promoting interchangeability with the term "Romanization" without any real shift in analytical mind set.’⁴⁷ He reviewed the published literature on identity studies in Roman archaeology over the ten year period 1995-2005, categorising the published material as relating to cultural, class and status, or gender identity.

⁴⁵ Smith (1986) 32.

⁴⁶ Pitts (2007) 693.

⁴⁷ Pitts (2007) 693-4.

Notwithstanding the fact that socio-cultural change during the Roman era was increasingly seen as complex, diverse and regional, the primary pre-occupation was with cultural identity, Roman vs native, while neglecting the study of class, status and gender identities. In other words, discussion of a material expression of cultural identity risked being the old romanisation debate in another guise. Class and status identity was the second most commonly studied identity in the surveyed literature with a significant number of studies focusing on non-elite expressions of social differentiation through small finds assemblages, particularly in domestic settings.⁴⁸ He concluded that 'Although the recent attention given to identity in Roman archaeology is beginning to address neglected themes (i.e., gender) and reinvigorate the study of particular classes of evidence (i.e., small finds, pottery), there remains an inordinate degree of emphasis on cultural or ethnic identities, which seems rooted in the obsession with the concept of Romanization.'⁴⁹

Pitts notes the insufficiency of theoretical and methodological discussion of how to infer ancient identity from material culture and suggests that the simple ascription of certain combinations of material culture to groups of people is reminiscent of the old culture-historical approach.⁵⁰ Care must be taken to ensure identity is not simply imposed by modern analysis and, in the case of Roman archaeology the analyst is assisted by the surviving Roman literature and epigraphy in which ancient identities are expressed, albeit from an elite perspective. Of primary importance is the recognition that identity is grounded in continual daily practice or lifestyle and thus can be inferred from the material expression of that lifestyle. Evidence of consumption provide the most obvious correlates of identity – food preparation, diet, dress, funerary ritual and the organisation of domestic and settlement space.⁵¹ Thus the functional or social use of pottery artefacts, together with context, becomes much more important than their taxonomic categorisation on the basis of form, fabric, or decoration.⁵²

Pitts makes several important points. First, there is the risk that discussion of cultural and ethnic identity could be the old romanisation (or hellenisation)

⁴⁸ Pitts (2007) 696-7.

⁴⁹ Pitts (2007) 698.

⁵⁰ Retsö (2006: 14-5) concurs.

⁵¹ But see Retsö (2006: 14) on the use of domestic space as a correlate of identity.

⁵² Pitts (2007) 699-702.

model in drag. Second, any discussion of ancient identity needs to be nested in an adequate theoretical framework. Third, forms of consumption can be a useful indicator of identity. On the other hand, he fails Brubacker and Cooper's test of clarity of meaning in his use of the term 'identity' which he does not define. Furthermore, his suggestion that the surviving Roman literature and epigraphy provides guidance in establishing ethnic identity is more than a little hazardous. Considerable academic ink has been spilt trying to tease precision out of ancient ethnic terms such as σύριοι, σαρακηνοί, σκηνίται, Ἀράβιοι, Ἰουδαῖοι, Ναβαταῖοι, for example, and establish whether they were self-ascribed or other-ascribed.⁵³

Of particular concern to this thesis is how to distinguish ethnic identity. In a succession of articles and books Anthony Smith has explored the nature of ethnic identity and its relationship to pre-modern polities and the modern nation-state.⁵⁴ In *The ethnic origins of nations* he developed a detailed paradigm which encompasses the paradox of durability and change.⁵⁵ In this context 'identity' is 'a sense of community based on history and culture, rather than to any collectivity or to the concept of ideology'. Such communities will be characterised by exceptional durability of forms of cultural expression, identity, and the individual experience of shared meanings through myth, symbol and communication codes. In pre-modern societies change, especially in forms of expression, required major upheavals such as the Arab conquest or the establishment of the Hellenistic kingdoms. The durability of the ethnic community, the *ethnie*,⁵⁶ is not to be found in their location, class configurations, military and political configurations but in their myths and symbols. The myth-symbol complex of a particular *ethnie* provides a framework within which social and cultural processes and the impacts of external military and political forces can be absorbed. Thus, demographic changes, such as occupation and colonisation, are less important than the possible impact of cultural forces causing a radical discontinuity in the myth-symbol complex, especially in the

⁵³ Retsö (2006); Janowitz (2000); Ball (2000) 5-6, 31-2; MacDonald (2003), (1993).

⁵⁴ Smith (2009), (2004), (1986), etc.

⁵⁵ Smith (1986).

⁵⁶ Smith (1986: 21-2) prefers the French term to both the English 'people' and the Greek *ethnos* or *genos* because the French term conveys both a sense of historical community and cultural uniqueness.

community's *mythomoteur* (the constitutive myth).⁵⁷ This myth-symbol complex crystallises over time as a population of men and women reflect upon their shared experience and pass their reflections on to subsequent generations who in turn modify them as they reflect on their experiences. It is through this process of reflection and modification that the characteristics of the *ethnie* are constructed. These characteristics then limit and shape the perceptions of subsequent generations of the community.⁵⁸

Smith then develops what he calls the dimensions of *ethnie* which enables one to distinguish the ethnic community from other forms of community and territorial polity.⁵⁹ The *ethnie* will have a collective name, a common myth of descent, a shared history, a distinctive shared culture, an association with a specific territory, and a sense of solidarity.⁶⁰ Absent from these six dimensions are economic unity, common legal rights and common polity.⁶¹ The name is more than simply an identifying label; for the *ethnie* it is an emblem, a talisman, capturing the mystical potency and qualities of the community in its members' eyes, while for outsiders it may evoke quite different qualities. Myths of descent enable community members to explain their common characteristics through a perceived origin in one place and from a shared ancestor. The myth, however, is much more than a cognitive explanation of origin as, encapsulated in ballads, epics and chronicles, the myth conveys a powerful poetic expression of the dignity and identity of the community capable of inspiring and guiding the community in the present. An *ethnie* is an historical community with successive generations adding their experiences to the common history expressed in the values of the community. The shared forms of that history provide the framework which enables later generations to interpret and make sense of their own present experiences. That shared narrative has a further didactic role as the lives and events embody or reveal the virtues of the community. In addition,

⁵⁷ Smith (1986) 13-5. The French term, 'mythomoteur' combines *mythe* and *moteur* to convey a sense of the dynamic role of the founding myth in the community identity. For an extended discussion of the concept see Smith (1986) 61-8; Armstrong (1982) 129-67.

⁵⁸ Smith (1986) 21-2.

⁵⁹ Smith (1986) 22-31

⁶⁰ Retsö (2006: 14-6) argues that not all named groups are genealogically defined or definable. '...genealogically defined groups are not the only kind of collectives in antiquity.' He also argues for the continuous transformation of the identifying criteria for different groups in antiquity, instancing the terms 'Roman' and 'Arab'.

⁶¹ Smith (1986) 22-31. Hall (1997) and (2002) also uses these dimensions in his discussion of ethnicity in Greek antiquity.

the historical narrative must also heighten an awareness of common ethnic bond. The *ethnie* will also have a distinctive culture of shared traits such as language, religion, dress, institutions, law, music, architecture, and food. These distinguishing markers, because of their visibility, can intensify the sense of ethnic identity. The *ethnie* will have an association with a specific territory, a 'homeland', which is filled with symbolic significance as a land of dreams. The final dimension, a sense of solidarity, is critical and Smith distinguishes the 'ethnic category' which may have the first five dimensions but lacks the sense of solidarity that distinguishes the *ethnie*. Such ethnic categories may affirm an allegiance to valley, clan or tribe in preference to any sense of ethnic solidarity, while the latter, in times of stress and danger, would over-ride such class, factional or religious affiliations. Smith argues that by using these dimensions as tools of analysis it is possible to distinguish the *ethnie* from other common groupings such as class, religious affiliation or geographical community.

Ethnie are formed as a consequence of the interplay of three factors — sedentarisation and nostalgia for a former way of life, organised religion, and inter-state warfare. Smith adopts Coulburn's immigration crisis theory of the beginnings of civilisation which assumes immigration and settlement in the great river basins of the Nile, Euphrates-Tigris, Indus and Yellow rivers in the late Neolithic was a consequence of land desiccation in Central Asia and Russia by nomads and pastoralists. While the historicity of this theory is now questionable, the notion of nomads interacting with sedentary populations and themselves settling on the desert fringes of the Near East is well-attested and therefore relevant to our purpose. The *en masse* abandonment of a former way of life, adoption of new forms of farming, and the fear of social breakdown and anarchy precipitated by crop failure was a fraught even traumatic experience which precipitated new forms of organised religion and propitiation of the gods. Out of this process developed a new localism (villages, distinctive local culture, etc), new traditions, myths, legends, and dialects, and a nostalgia for a lost past. Pre-modern religion was identified with specific ethnic groups and formed both a focus for social organisation and also a symbolic code for communication. Foundation myths, in particular, located the *ethnie* in the cosmos while often providing a notion of divine selection and cosmic mission.

Religious sectarianism is often associated with ethnicity and organised religion also provides the personnel and symbolic language of the community, with priest and scribes acting as guardians of its symbols, myths and legends. Interstate warfare influences ethnic formation by increasing cohesion through propaganda, the communal experience of mobilisation and battle (especially for citizen or artisanal forces), incorporation of the experience in ethnic myths, and a heightened sense of the geo-political location of the community *vis-à-vis* other communities, especially chronic adversaries.⁶² Smith notes that although the interplay of these three factors may account for the formation of a specific *ethnie*, it does not account for the pre-existent cultural difference—of religion, language, customs, institutions, and so forth—from which the *ethnie* emerged.⁶³ This is a critical point for the argument of this thesis in exploring ethnicity in the Roman Near East.

The binary distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ in ancient world views — Egyptian/Asian, Jew/Gentile, Greek/Barbarian — has long been recognised, but Smith argues that the ethnocentrism of the *ethnie* is less concerned with the differences that separate members of the community from others than with the communal bonds that unite community members. Their common values, symbols, myths, language, dress and institutions are not simply cultural boundary markers; but, more importantly, they are what unites and holds the group together as a community of shared heritage, genealogy, pride and nostalgia, and, vitally, destiny. It is this emotional complex that provides the motive of movements of ethnic resistance and renewal as the *ethnie* strives to restore the homeland (by resisting invasion and colonisation or by re-acquisition), genealogical renewal and cultural renewal.⁶⁴ Smith’s study of ethnic communities exemplifies the basic point made by Brubaker and Cooper, namely that for effective analysis it is essential to get beyond the ambiguities of the generalised concept of identity and use an alternative terminology as part of one’s analytic toolkit.

⁶² Smith (1986) 32-41.

⁶³ Smith (1986) 41.

⁶⁴ Smith (1986) 47-57.

The postcolonial experience

At the beginning of this chapter I used a short quotation from Salman Rushdie's *The satanic verses* to introduce the notion of the postcolonial person — the hybrid individual who belongs to neither his indigenous nor the imperial culture. A substantial literature developed during the twentieth century that explores this experience and developed a number of concepts some of which have entered the vocabulary of ancient studies — hybridity, subalternity, cultural resistance, culture as fluid and constructed. Such usage is, of course, dependent upon the validity of the modern imperial analogy and, as noted earlier in this chapter, I have concluded that the cautious use of that analogy is valid.

Postcolonialism has been described as not being a systematic theory of historiography, but rather a perspective that repudiates the Enlightenment concept of history as human progress and seeks the suppressed histories of the defeated and dispossessed.⁶⁵ A core concept is that of the subaltern (any person or group of people in a society that is held in an oppressed social or cultural position). Such groups are marginalised, lacking direct political or social influence, and are interpreted by the dominant culture rather than having the ability to speak for themselves directly. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's *Can the subaltern speak?*, one of the seminal texts of postcolonial studies, explores how the British in eighteenth century India turned to another elite, the Brahman, to understand and legislate against *suttee* (*sati*), and neither group ever consulted the women concerned, nor were they even given opportunity to speak publicly of their decision. A Brahman rationale, for example, was that the women actually wanted to die. As a consequence, trapped between patriarchy and imperialism, the real women were invisible, silent, wraithlike figures denied full embodiment behind constructed images of 'good Hindu', 'bad Hindu', 'white men saving brown women from brown men' and so forth. She concludes that the subaltern cannot speak because western discourse, using the colonial archives in the first place, actually obscured the subaltern's experience. More recent attempts to represent the subaltern's views simply perpetuate her 'otherness' and her mute condition.⁶⁶ In a somewhat similar way, the

⁶⁵ Duara (2002) 417.

⁶⁶ Spivak (1988).

indigenous Egyptian voice is silent in Juvenal's *Satire XV* and in Plutarch's *de Iside et Isiride* which reflect Roman attitudes to conquered peoples, in this case Egyptians. Although very different in their presentations, they reflect very similar views of the Egyptians. In the context of this Roman ideology, the objectified Egyptian is silent.⁶⁷

It is, perhaps, because the subaltern is politically and socially silenced that resistance to the dominant culture is the only option. It is recognised in postcolonial studies that colonised and suppressed peoples contest domination in both active and passive resistance without such resistance necessarily developing into coherent political movements.⁶⁸ This is an important point when examining responses to Roman imperialism — the relative absence of evidence of *organised* resistance in the dominant literary record should not be interpreted to mean that resistance was lacking. Rather, the challenge is to find new historiographical tools for discerning it. Probably the most fully recorded act of resistance was the First Jewish War with Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum* providing a detailed report of events and interpretation of causes and motivations. As part of that report Josephus attempts to show that the armed revolt involved only sections of the Jewish populace, stirred up by religious extremists. In contrast, recent archaeological exploration of Judaeian sites from the period immediately prior to the First Jewish War finds evidence in domestic life of the re-affirmation of traditional Jewish beliefs in all social strata. Thus, evidence of the renewed use of the ritual bath is found in poor dwellings in Galilee, the homes of the priestly class in Jerusalem, and the Essene community at Qumran.⁶⁹ In other words, archaeology has provided evidence of heightened ethnic identification among *all* social classes in contradiction of the tendentious report of Josephus.

Postcolonialism does not look for subaltern culture in the public domain but in the private domain of home life. The Indian historian, Partha Chatterjee argues that under colonial rule, indigenous social life becomes segregated into two domains – the material (the public world of commerce, economy and statecraft dominated by the coloniser) and the spiritual (the private world of home).⁷⁰ If

⁶⁷ Alston (1996).

⁶⁸ Young (2003) 3.

⁶⁹ Wise (2007).

⁷⁰ Chatterjee (1993) cited in Sharp (2009) 75.

this observation has relevance to the Roman Near East then it suggests the importance of seeking indigenous resistance in domestic archaeology, reflections of private life in primary sources;⁷¹ private archives;⁷² and in private salvationist religious movements rather than in the public domain or in civic or imperial religion.

A further dimension of postcolonial studies relevant to cultural identity in the Roman Empire is Spivak's critique of nineteenth century English literature as a political tool that represented the superiority of British culture to its colonized subjects.⁷³ Similarly, Webster has demonstrated how Roman colonial discourse relating to Celtic society, as reflected in Classical texts, constructed a sense of *The Other* by developing the image of a pan-European, Celtic warrior elite — an image which she found continued to dominate discussion of the Celts.⁷⁴ A postcolonial critique of the literature of the Second Sophistic could well be fruitful in providing new insights. Is there significance in the way that Lucian of Samosata denigrates traditional Greek mythology with comic satire and parody but treats the Syrian indigenous deities with respect, even dignity?⁷⁵

In postcolonial theory the act of translation is also perceived as expressing imperial power relationships in which the colonial language becomes culturally more powerful, devaluing the native language.⁷⁶ Language is central to the expression and transmission of cultural values and the imposition of the imperial language both forces the need for translation and devalues the native culture. In an act of contemporary postcolonial cultural affirmation, for example, some Māori members of parliament on occasion today speak in *Te Reo* (the Māori language) thus forcing the reversal of the colonial translation transaction. Certainly the experience of *Te Reo* in New Zealand is instructive in demonstrating the impact of colonisation. In 1913, ninety percent of Māori children spoke *Te Reo*, but then during the first part of the twentieth century the government took active steps to suppress the language by prohibiting its use by

⁷¹ Such as, for example, autobiographical material embedded in Lucian's works.

⁷² For the Babatha archive from Zoara see Lewis (1989); Yadin *et al.* (2002). For the Dura Europos archive see Welles, Fink and Gilliam (1959). On the Petra papyri see *The Petra papyri* (2002, 2007).

⁷³ Spivak (1985).

⁷⁴ Webster, Jane (1996b).

⁷⁵ Butcher (2003) 335.

⁷⁶ Young (2003) 140.

Māori children at school, and it was not until 1987 that the Māori Language Commission was established and *Te Reo* became an official language of the nation along with English, the language of the settlers and imperial masters. Such a modern colonial experience should make us very cautious in making assumptions concerning linguistic practice in the Near East from the elite literature and epigraphy. Although, many Semitic terms may have been translated into Greek, it does not necessarily follow that that signifies the adoption of the underlying Greek concept. As a consequence, Sommer has drawn attention to the possibility of acts of translation obscuring issues of cultural difference.⁷⁷ For example, the use in eastern civic epigraphy of terms such as *boule*, *bouleutes*, *demos*, *gerousia*, need not signify the adoption of *polis* institutions and procedures by those towns. Instead, especially when referring to cities of the steppe and desert fringes, the use of such terms may be an example of translation obscuring indigenous tribal processes quite unrelated to Hellenic *polis* ideology.⁷⁸

In *Can the subaltern speak?* Spivak quotes from Macauley's *Minute on Indian education* in which he writes of the need '...to form a class of person, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions and in intellect.'⁷⁹ Putting aside the *Minute*'s blatant racist assumptions, it is a neat enough summary description of the effect of what is sometimes called cultural hybridity. The other, related postcolonial concept is mimicry and the 'mimic-man', often a figure of racist derision as in Kipling's description of the 1882 inauguration of Punjab University:

Just imagine a brown legged son of the east in the red and black gown of an M.A. as I saw him. The effect is killing. I had an irreverent vision of the Common room in a Muhammedan get up. At the end of the proceeding an excited bard began some Urdu verses composed in honour of the occasion. It was a tour de force of his own—but I am sorry to say he was suppressed,

⁷⁷ Sommer (2005).

⁷⁸ The most obvious example would be to interpret use of the Greek word *boulē* to describe any tribal or local deliberative meeting as implying the adoption of the *polis* institution and hence the 'hellenisation' of that community.

⁷⁹ 'We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions we govern ... To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.' Macauley (1979) 359, cited in Spivak (1988) 282.

that is to say, they took him by the shoulders and sat him down again in his chair. Imagine that at Oxford!⁸⁰

The two quotes, both exuding racist attitudes, reflect differing purposes. Macauley's high purpose was the inculcation of western culture, or its English variant, whereas Kipling's is derision of the Indian mimic-man. But the dynamic is different in that mimicry is an act of the indigene emulating the dress, practices and so forth of the imperial 'superior'. Ghandi, Nehru and Jinnah each had a western university education and were culturally hybrid, but Jinnah adopted the dress and manners of the westerner while Ghandi and Nehru reverted to traditional dress and practice. Much twentieth century colonial and postcolonial literature explores the subtleties and ramifications of these types.

Cultural hybridity is a central concept in postcolonial studies with Homi Bhaba's *The location of culture* being a key collection of essays exploring the concept.⁸¹ It refers to the cultural mixing that occurs in colonial contexts and in modern migration to the imperial metropolis. It is inevitable that the term has been appropriated for use in discussion of cultural change in ancient colonial contexts also. Inherent in the concept is the notion of the bounded nature of different cultures with hybridity occurring as a sort of aberration at the cultural boundary – Māori/Pakeha, Indian/Englishman, Roman/native. But if culture is seen as being unbounded and fluid then the notion of hybridity loses some of its force. Its use is therefore minimised in this thesis.

A related, but more specifically defined, concept which offers greater analytic purchase is that of creolisation. Originally a linguistic term, it refers to the process by which a new language is developed out of two parent languages and which has been adopted by children as their first language, unlike pidgin which is a second language. Its key characteristics are the mixing of parent languages, stability, and its use as a first language. More recently, the concept has been used in studies of colonialism and slavery in the New World. In a Creole culture the artefacts may be from the dominant culture but their use reflects the practices of the dominated culture. The creolisation model suggests the likelihood of the emergence of a *popular* culture, including religious belief, resulting from the blending of two disparate material cultures in 'a clearly non-egalitarian social context'.⁸² It is a model which Jane Webster has applied to the

⁸⁰ Kipling (1882) Letter to George Willes, cited in Singh (2009).

⁸¹ Bhaba (2004) [1994].

⁸² Webster (2001). 218.

analysis of cultural interaction in the western provinces of the Roman Empire.⁸³ To understand the experience of a non-élite provincial subject of the Roman Empire it is necessary to understand how they negotiated these 'Creole' processes. This understanding can only be gained through the artefacts of the material culture. Webster notes that religion is central because religious belief has been either the focal point for overt resistance or the aspect of indigenous cultural life most resistant to change.⁸⁴ She instances Santería, the Cuban Creole religion which is a fusion of Spanish Catholicism and Yoruba (African) deities created by the urban poor over several centuries.⁸⁵ Continuity of the subaltern culture is maintained, sometimes at some risk; and the process should be seen as 'a process of *resistant* adaptation'.⁸⁶ This is a much more subtle model of the interactions between Roman values and the provincial masses as mediated by the provincial elites than the traditional models of romanisation or hellenisation.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the validity of analogy between ancient imperialism and colonisation and its modern counterpart with a view to finding new tools for exploring cultural relations in the Roman Near East. If it is accepted that control, domination, subjugation is central to the experience of both modern and ancient imperialism then the modern analogy provides the ancient historian with a alternative analytical toolkit for use in examining cultural interaction and change in the Roman Near East. Of obvious relevance is the modern notion of identity with its paradoxical qualities of durability and fluidity. Although much over-used, and sometimes fraught with ambiguity, it can when used carefully provide genuine insight as with Smith's analysis of the nature of ethnic communities and their formation. Finally, some of the central concepts of postcolonial studies were considered. In the next chapter these concepts are used to create an interpretive model of cultural interaction and change in the Roman Near East as an alternative to the dominant model of hellenisation.

⁸³ Webster (1997), (2001), (2003), (2008a) (2008b).

⁸⁴ Webster (2001) 219.

⁸⁵ Webster (2001) 219-220.

⁸⁶ Webster (2001) 218.

Chapter four

Putting it together: developing an interpretive framework

*'History, like jazz, is an improvisational medium, its notes and beats
incorporating old songs in new ways.'*

- N. Eustace (2003) 'When fish walk on land: social history in a postmodern World' *JSH* 37 1:80.

As Bartel noted more than thirty years ago, the Roman Empire provides a unique database combining material culture and an ethno-historical record with a variety of situational examples of colonialism 'on a grand scale'.¹ That database, in the Roman Near East specifically, has continued to grow since he wrote in 1980. Yet for his part, Millar argued in 1993 that the data was insufficient for a social history of the region ever to be written.² While reviews of his magisterial *The Roman Near East 31 BC – AD 337* have admired his achievement in marshalling a mass of evidence, several have been less comfortable with his conclusion that it was impossible to detect any indigenous ethnic or cultural identity in the region other than the Jewish.³ As Liebeschütz observed 'This is a remarkable state of affairs ... The question remains whether Millar is right?'⁴ Liebeschütz goes on to suggest that Millar's conclusion may be directly related to his methodology, noting that Millar

'derives from the Oxford Greats School of Ancient History and, in the traditions of that school, and even more rigorously than most, is consistently careful to relate generalisations closely to the wording of the texts on which they are based ... The drawback of this method is that it discourages scholars from taking into consideration factors that do not appear in written sources, in this case the possibility that important pre-Hellenistic institutions, ceremonies and patterns of thought survived under their more recently acquired Greek names and titles.'⁵

I suggest that Liebeschütz's critique gets to the nub of the issue confronting today's historian and archaeologist of the Roman Near East, namely the establishment of a robust interpretive framework which

¹ Bartel (1980) 11.

² Millar (1993) 517.

³ Shahîd (1995b); Shaw (1995), Liebeschütz (1995), Kennedy (1999), esp. 102-4.

⁴ Liebeschütz (1995) 140-1.

⁵ Liebeschütz (1995) 141.

integrates all the evidence, textual and material, and which avoids the flaws already discussed in the hellenisation/romanisation model.⁶

At the heart therefore of this thesis is the question: can new insights be gained by interrogating the existing evidence from the Roman Near East with questions deriving from a different theoretical position? From what I have already written it is clear that I believe the answer to that question must be in the affirmative. Furthermore, I suggest that such an alternative methodology will be characterised by four principles and seven interpretive modalities as set out below.

Principles

1. Postmodernity;
2. Interdisciplinarity;
3. Sensitivity to indigenous symbolic values;
4. Recognition of durability and continuity of indigenous cultural symbolic values.

Interpretive modalities

1. Sensitivity to the asymmetric power relations inherent in imperialism and the impact of that asymmetry on social and cultural relations in the Roman provincial context;
2. Sensitivity to the evidence of the experiences and articulated views of the various cultural and social groupings of the region, particularly the more marginalised;

⁶ A number of authors have offered alternative ways of looking at social and cultural change in the Roman Empire: Millett (1990a, 1990b) suggested elite emulation; Webster (2001), creolisation; Hitchner (2008), globalisation, LaBianca (2007), great and little traditions; Revell (2009), structuration theory.

3. Sensitivity to the importance of private and non-monumental spaces as the *locus* for the expression of subaltern culture;
4. Recognition of the active agency of local populations (both elite and non-elite elements) in adapting to the intrusive culture and thereby initiating cultural change;
5. Recognition of the diversity of local responses;
6. Application of insights from the modern imperial experience and postcolonial studies; and,
7. Application of the social theory of identity.

The principles

Principle one: Being Postmodern

We cannot recover past reality. The best we can do is to write about it with varying degrees of plausibility and coherence. I suggest that our theoretical stance in writing histories of the Roman Near East therefore should be postmodern in at least two respects. First, we should be sceptical of the use of traditional metanarratives such as history as progress, cultural change as evolution and, of course, hellenisation and romanisation. Any single authoritative narrative is a social construction reflective of the values and ideologies of the narrator rather than being a definitive description of a past reality. Thus Droysen's concept of hellenisation is reflective of his Eurocentric perspective, his perpetuation of classical views of the Orient and the imperialist ideology pervasive during his lifetime as well as and his Christian beliefs. But if we cannot recover a definitive statement of past reality then the corollary is the need to be sensitive to alternative, even multiple, voices giving alternative, even conflicting interpretations of past events.

The central dilemma in attempting an ancient history that aspires to be more than simply a political narrative of the doings of the male elite is the insufficiency

of material from a non-elite grouping in an ancient society. Under such circumstances it becomes very difficult to explore intentionality and individual agency among non-elite groups in any coherent way.⁷ Even though the historian inevitably turns to archaeology to provide some compensation for the paucity of literary evidence relating to the ordinary folk of the ancient world, conclusions must still be drawn from sometimes very limited evidence. Thus, for example, Baadsgard has provided a fascinating and insightful analysis of ovens from 18 Iron Age sites in Syro-Palestine in an effort to better understand the role of women and the social relationships existing among them. Impressive though the analysis may be, it is salutary to reflect that his conclusions are based upon a sample of 235 ovens from the entire eastern Mediterranean littoral over a time span of approximately 700 years.⁸

The extant epigraphy of Gerasa provides some notable examples of personal names capable of differing interpretation. In the first century CE, Aristomachos chose to give his son the Semitic name, *Zabdiōn*. He was not alone in apparently crossing an ethnic or cultural divide.⁹ Aristomachos and *Zabdiōn* were members of the Gerasene elite memorialising their euergetism and status in inscription, for *Zabdiōn* was priest of the imperial cult at the time of Tiberias and benefactor of the temple of Zeus. Aristomachos' name is manifestly Greek and the obvious inference is that he was a descendant of one of the original settler families of the Seleucid foundation. Or could he be of indigenous Aramaean descent whose father gave him a Greek name as a part of the family's adaptation to the colonising culture? But a much more interesting question is why he and others chose Semitic names for their sons? Was Aristomachos a Greek who had married locally and had complied with his wife's request when naming the son? Was he consciously affirming something about their family identity at a time of rapid social and cultural change? Or did he

⁷ Thus, for example, despite the meticulous and professional excavation of the Gerasa hippodrome over more than two decades, including the workshops and the analysis of the huge volume of pottery waste, Ostrasz and Kehrberg have not been able to tell us much about the individual lives of the potters and their families because not much domestic material was found. (Kehrberg, *personal communication*, 2012).

⁸ Baadsgard (2008).

⁹ Ζαβδίων Ἀριστομάχου (Welles (1938) inscription 2). Note also Ἀσκληπιόδωρος Μάλχου τοῦ Δημητρίου (Welles (1938) inscription 10); Μάλχος Δημητρίου τοῦ Μάλχου (Welles (1938) inscription 15; Δημήτριος καὶ Μαλχαῖος καὶ Μάρσος ἐπίτροποι τέκνων Ζεβέδου ἀδελφοῦ αὐτῶν (Welles (1938) inscription 54); ἐπιμελητοῦ τοῦ Θεοδώρου Ζεβέδου ... (Welles (1938) inscription 154).

simply like the sound of the name? Each of those questions pose equally plausible, but contradictory, explanations. And what is to be made of Ἀσκληπιόδωρος Μάλχου τοῦ Δημητρίου ('Asklepiodoros (Greek) son of Malchos (Semitic) son of Demetrios (Greek)')? Such questions are impossible to answer from the epigraphic evidence alone and the preferred answer will depend upon how the individual historian chooses to interpret other related evidence of the social and cultural history of the city. But one point is certain: the naming of his son was an act of intentional individual agency by Aristomachus and the other fathers and reflective of something.¹⁰

Being postmodern does not mean that anything goes; rather, that the standards by which an historical interpretation or theory are to be accepted are different from those of positivist-empiricist science. On the one hand, scientific theory is expected not only to explain empirically observed data but also have some predictive capacity based upon newly recognised objective 'laws of nature'. In contrast, there is no expectation of prediction in the humanities, instead explanatory capacity, together with coherence and plausibility, is critical. For example, von Däniken's populist theory of extra-terrestrial influence in human history provides an explanation of the selected data that is coherent, but surely fails on the grounds of plausibility.¹¹ More relevantly, the concept of romanisation provided a coherent and plausible explanation of the data available to Haverfield at the high point of European imperialism. Today, the model is increasingly seen as lacking coherence and even plausibility in providing explanation of today's more complex archaeological evidence; while the underlying analogy with the Victorian vision of the civilising mission of modern European imperialism is repudiated by modern scholars.

If past historical and archaeological research in the Roman Near East has tended to privilege classical texts and adopt a Eurocentric, or at least hellenocentric, perspective while reflecting orientalist, or worse, racist, attitudes, then inevitably the alternative voices from the indigenous societies and the sectional interests of marginalised groupings will be lost.

¹⁰ Kennedy (1999) 103. On the risks of drawing conclusions from personal names see Macdonald (1999) esp. pages 254-7.

¹¹ Däniken (1971); Story (1976).

In something of a reaction to the grand metanarrative of Droysen's hellenisation of the Near East more recent work has moved to being studies of the local and specific. Although several attempts have been made at synthesis in the last couple of decades they have been flawed in my view from a lack of discussion of historical theory. Millar, Ball, Sartre and Butcher, for example, have each discussed the nature and limitations of the evidence available, but with the exception of Ball, none has directly challenged the Eurocentrism of the hellenisation/romanisation paradigm.¹² But while he provides a comprehensive, if at times unnecessarily polemical, challenge to the paradigm, Ball fails to engage with its underlying dichotomies and its use of the notion of cultures as bounded entities. Although he rejects western acculturation of the east, he does so by merely turning it on its head and affirming eastern influence on the west. The archaeological evidence he marshals and his interpretations while both challenging and often convincing, are still flawed by the lack an adequate historiographical theoretical framework.

Principle two: Interdisciplinarity

The second principle is an obvious one: textual, archaeological, epigraphic and numismatic evidence should be used in an integrated way. But while the principle may be obvious, putting it into action is much more difficult as can be seen in the extensive literature on the theoretical problems of historical archaeology (see pages 52-4 above). The syntheses discussed earlier illustrate the problems well. Millar's *The Roman Near East* was praised for its use of epigraphy but criticised for its inadequate engagement with the archaeology of the region; for equating public writing with cultural penetration and not engaging more fully with anthropological works on ethnic and cultural identity;¹³ and for an inadequate treatment of Arabic sources and Arabic identity.¹⁴ As noted earlier his historiographical methodology was questioned.¹⁵ Ball was critical of Millar's use of epigraphy and limited use of archaeology, only in turn to be praised for his use of archaeology; and criticised for the inadequacies of his historical

¹² Millar (1993); Ball (2000); Sartre (2005); Butcher (2003).

¹³ Shaw (1995).

¹⁴ Shahîd (1995).

¹⁵ Liebeschütz (1995).

chapters and historical judgements.¹⁶ Sartre's *The Middle East under Rome* is criticised for not nestling the Syrian province in the context of the whole empire by comparison with other provinces; for not discussing regional variation in the distribution of evidence types; lack of reference to the debate concerning the nature of romanisation in the western provinces.¹⁷

Principle three: Sensitivity to indigenous symbolic values

Postprocessual archaeology marks a fundamental shift in the approach to material culture, reflected in the desire to move beyond taxonomies and to explore issues of agency, intentionality and socio-political trends. Inevitably, it reflects a move away from an anthropological concern with culture and a move towards the concerns of the historian. Such a stance is not a rejection of taxonomy. It is fundamental to any discussion of intentionality and agency as it is only by having a comprehensive description of the norm that it is possible to identify variation and then explore its causes in the context of function and social milieu as proposed by Binford, Hodder and Pitts.¹⁸ It is in going beyond taxonomic classification that analysis of the artefact begins to explore the symbolic values inherent in the material evidence. For example, excavation of the hippodrome at Gerasa, originally constructed in the mid-late second century, demonstrated that a failure in the construction quickly resulted in its abandonment for racing and its subsequent use as a Late Roman and Early Byzantine industrial quarter for potters and tanners.¹⁹ The scale of this later pottery operation, together with evidence of its use in the wider region, indicate that this was a large scale commercial production. Kehrberg (2007:46) suggests that such large scale production of forms popular in the army was related to military supply.²⁰ In other words, discussion had moved far beyond description of hippodrome architecture and classification of pottery sherds to examination of agency, intention and socio-political context.

In analysing archaeological data for evidence of cultural adaptation, the interplay of three factors seem to be of critical importance — the symbolic

¹⁶ Kennedy (2006) 365; Whitby (2001); Sartre (2002); Lightfoot (2002).

¹⁷ Isaac (2000); Whitby (2001); Lightfoot (2002); Sartre (2002); Kaizer (2003).

¹⁸ Binford (1965) 205-9; Hodder (1985); Pitts (2007) 699-702.

¹⁹ Kehrberg and Ostrasz (1997) 169; Kehrberg (1989), (1992), (2007), (2009).

²⁰ Kehrberg (2007); Kehrberg (*personal communication*, 2012) advises between 15-17 million pottery sherds and waste were recovered.

values adhering to the artefact, its functional use, and the specific context.²¹ Take an imaginary example in which sherds of sigillata ware were found in an undisturbed context during excavation of a triclinium associated with a Nabataean tomb. The functional use of such ware in such a context suggests cultural continuity of the Nabataean practice of funerary banqueting with all that implies of cultural values. The fact that the pottery was sigillata ware and not traditional Nabataean pottery, however, suggests cultural discontinuity and the production or importation of Roman-style tableware. But such a conclusion is only one of several options. For example, the use of sigillata ware may simply be related to market availability and have little to do with consumer preferences and changed cultural values. (Although such a shift in availability in the marketplace probably involves some other process related to the evolving coloniser/colonised encounter). In fact, Smith has emphasised the durability of traditional cultural values particularly during periods of cultural stress (such as the Roman annexation of the Nabataean kingdom and its aftermath).²² Similarly, the evidence and experience of modern imperialism is full of examples of colonised peoples readily adopting the new technologies of the settler society and using them in ways that perpetuate their own traditional cultural values.

Textual sources pose their own problems in trying to clarify indigenous symbolic values. Statements from authors such as Strabo or Livy are problematic since they were reliant in the main on other authors and must be subject to the same limitations as modern colonial ethnography (see pages 45-6 above). For example, Strabo's description of Nabataean culture is manifestly second hand and must be used with extreme caution. No modern Nabataean scholar would suggest that the Nabataeans regarded their dead as no better than dung and buried their kings beside dung heaps! (*Strab.* 16.4.26.) If we are unlikely to find reliable evidence of indigenous cultural values in the Graeco-Roman literature then it is necessary to turn to archaeology. But then we encounter another problem: cultural values do not always leave a material correlate.

²¹ Pitts (2007) 700-9.

²² Smith (1986) 46, 50-7. For discussion of the reversion to traditional Jewish tableware in the Galilee in the tense period just prior to the First Jewish Revolt see Berlin (2002).

Principle four: Recognition of the durability and continuity of indigenous cultural symbolic values

The eminent social theorist, Anthony Smith, has argued in a series of studies that the primary symbolic values of a culture are durable even when the society comes under stress through war, colonisation, cultural contact, and so forth.²³ His theories are spelt out more fully in the next chapter when examining ethnic and cultural identity in the Jarash Basin. Webster makes a similar point when she draws upon a number of studies of later colonialisms to argue that the adoption of a dominant alien material culture does not necessarily imply the acceptance of an alien world view and that embracing new forms of material culture is not necessarily 'acculturation'.²⁴

The point is fundamental to the understanding of cultural change in the Hellenistic and Roman Near East. Butcher, for example, has characterised much of the historiography of the Roman Near East as a 'battleground' between 'hellenizers' — those who claim for the region an 'essential Greekness' — and 'indigenizers' who 'emphasize the "authentic" and indigenous lurking beneath a Western veneer'.²⁵ I believe that this polarity of perspective is reflective of a growing dissatisfaction with the underlying assumptions of the hellenisation/romanisation model and the lack of an alternative interpretive model such as is being proposed here. Central to such an alternative is the principle of the durability of primary cultural symbolic values even when the society being studied is under stress. Furthermore, those values will be given expression in both material and textual evidence. Taking a long view of history is critical to recognising durable indigenous values. Thus, for example, ancestor veneration in the region may be seen expressed as early as the Early Bronze Age at the Jabal al-Muṭawwaq dolmen field and as late as the first century BCE in the funerary *triclinia* of Palmyra and Petra.²⁶ In other words, that symbolic value survived for millennia through major socio-political change, including invasion, mass deportation, colonisation and cultural change. When we give a single event, such as Alexander's military conquest of the Near East,

²³ For example, Smith (1986), (2004), (2009).

²⁴ Webster (1997) 326-327.

²⁵ Butcher (2003) 15-6.

²⁶ Velasco (2001); Gawlikowski (2005); Wadeson (2011).

pivotal significance in the cultural evolution of a region we risk failing to recognise cultural continuities.

Interpretive modalities

I see the four principles outlined above as fundamental to all cultural and social history of the region, while the operational modalities listed below will be given different emphases in different contexts.

Modality one: Recognition of the asymmetric power relations inherent in imperialism

In giving primacy to cultural discontinuity as the defining indicator of imperialism, concepts such as hellenisation and romanisation run the risk of obscuring and minimising an ugly but fundamental fact: 'empires are products of military conquest and depend on the military hegemony of their cores'.²⁷ Conquest, continuing occupation and economic exploitation produce differing responses from the conquered population. The usual response to the immediate threat of conquest is greater cohesion and unity of all social strata in resisting the incursion.²⁸ After conquest, however, leading elements of the indigenous elite usually quickly make an accommodation with the imperial powers in order to preserve their status and privilege in the indigenous community. That accommodation is most visible in the use of language, literature, forms of governance, education, public architecture and town planning. It is this elite emulation which is often mistaken for acculturation of the entire indigenous society.²⁹ But the notion of elite emulation should not be used as a gross generalisation. For example, in both modern and ancient resistance to continuing colonial occupation and economic exploitation leadership is often provided by members of the indigenous elite (even if in some cases, such as the First Jewish Revolt, they find they have a tiger by the tail). But even if accommodation and emulation is accepted as the normative elite response, then equally it needs to be noted that the common people are likely to hold fast to their traditional values and practices, continued expression of

²⁷ Sommer (2004) 239.

²⁸ Smith (1986 46, 50-7) makes the point that cultural symbolic values are more strongly held in a society under threat.

²⁹ On elite emulation in the Roman Empire see especially, Millett (1990a), Freeman (1993).

which often becomes forms of non-violent cultural resistance to the imperial power.

In discussing Roman expansion in Italy, Terrenato suggests that rather than using modern colonial models it would be better to examine broad social groupings across the empire without recourse to ethnicity (see pages 62-3 above). In this view,

‘almost everywhere rural peasants were bound by customary obligations to their lords and formed cohesive small-scale social entities that were resistant to change. The same can be said for all those other social actors – servants, small-scale craftsmen, clients, and so on – who could only function with the protection and brokerage of their patrons. Individuals fitting within these networks clearly represented the vast majority of Mediterranean society, both before and after the conquest. Their cultural make-ups displayed a great variety, but they generally shared a stable, coherent and self-replicating world-view, which helped them to make sense of their experience.’³⁰

Terrenato’s model ignores several points.³¹ First, armed rebellions when they did occur were directed against Rome, not against the power structures of the local community. Second, although these rebellions were usually led by members of the indigenous elite (Boudicca, Vercingetorix, Arminius, Josephus, Xenobia, for example) they were popular movements. Third, the Roman fear of internal rebellion and political banditry seems to have been as much a cause of its huge military commitment as defence of borders.³² In other words, it was the imposed and alien asymmetric power relations of *imperialism* that was the primary cause of unrest rather than the asymmetric social relations of local indigenous society. Furthermore, it should be noted that such rebellions followed *ethnic* lines, not empire-wide *social* divisions. Thus the ethnically defined First Jewish Revolt never spread to non-Jewish ethnic groupings in the adjoining provinces who were subjected to the same forms of colonial domination, while conversely, the class-based, non-ethnic, Spartacus revolt never acted as a flash-point for slaves elsewhere in the empire.

In discussing the impact of imperialism, it is essential to distinguish the initial invasion-engendered vertical social cohesion in the indigenous society from the

³⁰ Terrenato (2005) 67.

³¹ For a detailed discussion of the economy of Judaea/Palestine see Safrai (1994).

³² Isaac (1984).

subsequent longer term differing responses of the local aristocracy and other classes to the imperial presence.³³ It is in the second post-conquest phase that the local society is likely to show internal stress and class-based tension as local elites pursue policies of accommodation and emulation, while popular resentment and hostility to continued colonial domination (and its tributary exactions) builds among ordinary people, both rural and urban. It is discussion of this phase that, in discussion of modern colonial contexts, has given rise to the postcolonial concept of subalternity. But again we need to avoid homogenising generalisation, for analysis of the elite literary evidence can sometimes find an ambiguous elite provincial voice. Thus, Richter has noted that Lucian of Samosata blurs the distinction between author and persona by giving his characters names similar to his own and through whom he then mocks the intellectual life of the second century Roman Empire.³⁴ In other words, far from being a staunchly hellenised elite member of the empire, Lucian, articulate and well-versed in Hellenistic culture, speaks with an ambiguous voice and can be seen as something of a classical equivalent of a modern postcolonial writer such as Salman Rushdie.

Modality two: Sensitivity to the subaltern culture and marginalised social groups

In a postmodern world a single authoritative narrative is now recognised as being socially constructed and reflective of the values and ideologies of the narrator rather than as being a definitive description of a past reality. The implications of that principle for the interpretation of ancient sources are significant, especially when the narrator is a member of the Roman elite. On the other hand, archaeology does provide some opportunity to explore views and experiences of the non-elite through the excavation and interpretation of non-monumental and non-public spaces and artefacts – workshops, ateliers, shops, domestic architecture, local cult centres, culinary practices, terracotta figurines, and so forth. But postprocessual archaeology cautions that even

³³ See, for example, *I Macc. esp.* chs.1-2.

³⁴ Richter (2005) 75. Richter's article provides a fascinating study of how the discussion of Lucian's biography (Is he Greek or is he Syrian?) and his popularity in classical studies reflects academic attitudes to hellenism and orientalism. As orientalist discourse developed and played an increasingly significant role in the nineteenth century development of classical studies and Indo-Europeanism so too Lucian's reputation declined.

such excavation strategies can serve modern colonial purpose as when the excavation of Iron Age domestic architecture in Israel/Palestine is used to bolster Israeli ancestral claims and the formation of the modern nation-state by European immigrants.³⁵ The American-Palestinian anthropologist, Abu El-Haj, has argued in her controversial study of Israeli archaeology that the post-1967 Israeli excavation of the Jewish quarter in the old city in Jerusalem prioritised, sought and produced evidence of an historical narrative supportive of modern nation-building. More recent Byzantine, Islamic and Crusader stratification were only cursorily excavated, literally bulldozed away on occasion, in order to get to the evidence of prior Jewish national history. Evidence of Jewish residential living from the Roman period was interpreted solely in terms of the national narrative of heroic defence of the ancestral city during the Roman siege while the opportunity to shed light on the private social history of the time was ignored. From Josephus' account of the siege, excavated evidence of fire and human remains was capable of two interpretations – the Roman assault or alternatively, intra-Jewish social conflict during the siege. Both are equally plausible explanations of the archaeological evidence, using Josephus' narrative (*Bell.Jud.*5.12.3; 5.13.1-6; 6.2.2-3; 6.5.1-5; 6.7.1), only one supported the national narrative of 'ancient ascendance, destruction, and an ongoing desire to return'. It was that explanation that was adopted in public explanatory captions.³⁶

Modality three: Recognition of the importance of private and non-monumental spaces

Chatterjee has argued, in relation to the British Raj, that the home was a gendered domain of cultural resistance. While the colonial power dominated the 'material' male-oriented public spaces, it was in the 'spiritual' private space, the domain of colonised women, that the imposed culture could be subverted.³⁷ Of course, Chatterjee's analysis is specific to colonial India and the development of an Indian nationalist ideology and his conclusions cannot be applied directly to another colonial context. Nevertheless, his recognition of the

³⁵ For an American-Palestinian anthropologist's analysis of archaeology in the region from the nineteenth century Palestine Exploration Fund's first efforts through into the modern Israeli period, see Abu El-Haj (2001).

³⁶ Abu El-Haj (2001) 130-62.

³⁷ See for example, Chatterjee (1989) 623-5.

home as a locus of cultural resistance in a colonial context may well be of wider relevance. For in a colonial society it is surely in private spaces that the continued primary affirmation of traditional values is likely to occur through private religious practice, diet and culinary practices, naming of children, child rearing practices, dress, and so forth. By way of example, Berlin argues that anti-Roman sentiment is evident in the domestic archaeology of the Galilee in the period prior to the First Jewish Revolt.³⁸ But if private spaces may be a locus of cultural resistance, it is in the public spaces that the individual negotiates their adaptation to the intrusive culture through the conduct of their daily public activities in the buildings and streets of the urban environment.³⁹

If it is through the excavation of domestic space rather than public space that expressions of cultural continuity are most likely to be found, it must be noted that excavation of the Roman Near East has tended, until recently, to be focused on the public and monumental. Excavation strategies that have produced this result are driven by at least three agendas: the need to stabilise and restore deteriorating structures, the classical and Christian orientation of earlier European archaeologists unconsciously privileging the spectacular public evidence of the Roman presence and of early churches, the desire of poor nation states such as Jordan to develop monumental archaeological sites for tourism, most notably Petra, Jarash and the citadel of Amman.

Modality four: Recognition of the active agency of local populations

Inherent in the early statements of hellenisation and romanisation were assumptions of cultural superiority, civilising mission and native passivity. While few, if any, scholars today are likely to hold such views, any interpretive paradigm should explicitly incorporate the notion of the active agency of segmented elements of local populations.⁴⁰ Cultural adaptation is not so much imposed by the colonising power as generated by colonised individuals, sub-groupings and larger social groups actively responding to the new situations —

³⁸ Berlin (2002).

³⁹ Revell (2009).

⁴⁰ On the privileging of western agency inherent in romanisation and hellenisation models see, for example, Hall (2002) 107; Levine (1998) 16-7; Erskine (2003) 3, 12; van Dommelen (1997) 307-8 who quotes Morel (1984: 132) with approval, 'we are witnessing a change in the longlived and excessive tendency to consider the natives only as passive and receptive elements.'

talking, considering, evaluating options, nurturing grievances and resentments, contemplating opportunities. Some responses may be nativistic; others may be focused on religion and cult or other defining characteristic. Some responses may reflect the interests of a social class rather than kinship or ethnicity.

Josephus is illustrative of this point when he records the differing responses to Roman imperialism within the Jewish society of the province of Judaea. The priestly temple-based leadership in Jerusalem seek an accommodation with the Romans (Joseph. *Bell.Jud.* 2.16.2); at the other extreme, the Sicarii use public assassination as a tactic to eliminate those seeking such an accommodation (*Bell.Jud.* 2.13.3); the Zealots seek armed confrontation with the Romans (*Bell.Jud.* 2.13.6); false prophets stir up unrest (*Bell.Jud.* 2.13.4-5); the Essenes withdraw from society and pursue communal religious purity as they await an eschatological future (*Bell.Jud.* 2.8.2-13). Similarly, Gruen challenges the common assumption of straightforward confrontation between undifferentiated and homogenous models of Judaism and Hellenism in the Maccabean rebellion against Antiochos Epiphanes.⁴¹ He notes, for example, that the primary text of Jewish resistance, *II Maccabees*, is written in Greek for a Greek-reading audience. By analysing a number of Jewish legends current during the Seleucid period, he shows that those Jews fluent in Hellenistic literature and culture did not openly challenge the political power of the Hellenistic authorities, but selectively adopted forms of the hegemonic culture to assert Jewish values and special identity through the stories.

The tomb facades of Petra provide another example of the active agency of elements of an indigenous community in negotiating their relationship to a facet of Graeco-Roman culture. Brünnow and von Domszowski in 1898 were the first to study the tombs in detail with the latter establishing a typology and suggesting that the different types of tombs formed a chronological and developmental sequence from the simple facade decoration to the more elaborate.⁴² After studying the Nabataean tombs of both Medain Saleh (where inscriptions provide a solid chronology) and Petra (where inscriptions are largely lost), McKenzie reached the opposite conclusion, namely that the chronological

⁴¹ Gruen (1997).

⁴² McKenzie (1990) 1-5.

progression in facade ornamentation was from elaborate to more simple. Furthermore, she concludes that

The information provided by the inscriptions at Medain Saleh suggests that there is a relationship between the tomb type (facade design) and the socio-economic position of its owner. This suggests that the distinctively Nabataean combination of Near Eastern and classical architectural elements is the result of *deliberate choice or custom*, rather than chronological development ... Thus, the distinctively Nabataean combination of Near Eastern and classical elements used on the Pylon, Step, Proto-Hegr and Hegr tombs appears to be related to *deliberate choice, custom and cost, rather than merely dependent on dominant outside cultural influences* [my italics].⁴³

Dio Cassius recognised that cultural change was driven by the colonised rather than the coloniser nearly two millennia ago when he wrote ‘The barbarians *changed their world* ... However, they had not forgotten or rejected their ancestral ways that they had been born with and which unified them...’ (Dio Cass. 56.18, my italics).⁴⁴

Modality five: Recognition of the diversity of local responses

Spivak insists ‘that the colonized subaltern *Subject* is irretrievably heterogeneous’.⁴⁵ But that heterogeneity tends to become blurred and homogenised by the generalisations of the dominant culture. The Romanist Louise Revell has noted that generalisations such as the concepts of romanisation and hellenisation assess cultural change on a single variant and can reflect ‘an idealised homogeneity’.⁴⁶ She is the latest in a series of scholars who since Mommsen and Haverfield have wrestled with the nature of cultural change in the western empire. The debate has shifted from the concept of Roman and ‘native’ cultures as opposed, discrete and bounded entities to more nuanced models of cultural change locally, even individually, negotiated. Revell

⁴³ McKenzie (1990) 115.

⁴⁴ ἔξ τε τὸν κόσμον· σφῶν οἱ βάρβαροι μετερρμίζοντο ... οὐ μέντοι καὶ τῶν πατρῶν ἡθῶν τῶν τε συμφύων τρόπων καὶ τῆς αὐτονόμου διαίτης τε ἐκ τῶν ὅπλων ἐξουσίας ἐκλελησμένοι (Referring to the Germans at the time of the appointment of Quinctilius Varus).

⁴⁵ Spivak (1988) 79.

⁴⁶ On the diversity of local responses to romanisation throughout the empire: Revell 2009, 1-39, 191-3. See also: Foxhill (2000); Meskell (2002) 281, 292; Roth and Keller (2007); van Dommelen (1997); Woolf (1997).

explores the diverse responses to Roman imperialism in different urban settlements of the western empire.⁴⁷ She fragments the traditional image of Roman identity (the wealthy, adult, free-born male) and through an exploration of the differing urban settings of her case studies is able to illustrate how differing social groupings were able to negotiate their individual diverse Roman identities, be they slave, magistrate, woman, child, artisan, peasant, and so forth. A further example of the diversity of cultural responses within a single community is provided by the excavated synagogues of Late Roman Scythopolis, in the Galilee discussed on pages 15-6, which were notable for the diversity of their responses to the Judaic prohibition on representational iconography.⁴⁸

Language use, generally considered a primary marker of cultural and ethnic identification, provides useful evidence of Revell's argument that cultural interaction is an individually negotiated process.⁴⁹ For despite common generalisations concerning Greek as a *lingua franca* in the Roman Near East, actual linguistic practice seems to have been much more complex. On the one hand, Libanius of fourth century Antioch, a man who was thoroughly immersed in Greek cultural life of the early Byzantine period could not talk with the peasants on his family estate because he either disdained to use Syriac or was unable to do so; he also refers disparagingly to Syriac speaking tinkers in the city (Lib.Or.42.31). Similarly, Egeria, a late fourth century western pilgrim, notes that in worship in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem the bishop, fluent in both Greek and Syriac, never used Syriac in church and always had a priest beside him who translated what the bishop said into Syriac for those who did not understand Greek (*It. Eg.*XLVII.3). In the same way, the Christian priest, John Chrysostom, also of the fourth century, preached in Greek to his congregation and makes reference to the strange tongue spoken by the villagers who had come to Antioch for Easter Day.⁵⁰ In each case, the hellenised orator, bishop, and priest demonstrate apparent disdain for the local

⁴⁷ Revell (2009).

⁴⁸ Stern (2000).

⁴⁹ For a more extended discussion of the linguistic practices in the Roman Near East see Sartre (2008) 28-33.

⁵⁰ Cited by Liebeschuetz (1972) 62. For discussion on the use of Greek and Syriac in Theodoret's writings see Urbainczyk (2001) 255-261. For a summary of the significant literature on language in city and country in Late Antique Syria see note 16 in the same work.

language and use Greek as their first language. But the anecdotes also demonstrate that large numbers in the same community did not share that view and suggest cultural, social and linguistic diversity between the different classes and groupings rather than thorough-going hellenisation. If that was the linguistic situation in such a major Hellenistic centre as Antioch after nearly 700 years of exposure to hellenism, it must have been even more diverse in the earlier years of the Graeco-Roman period in the Near East. Incidental evidence for this is provided by Jesus' *titulus crucis* as preserved in John's Gospel (*John* 19.19-20) which was written in Greek, Latin and Hebrew.⁵¹ By way of further example, Eusebius reports that in the reign of Diocletian in the late third century, the Christian congregation in Scythopolis needed the Greek scripture to be translated into Aramaic — despite the city being a Seleucid foundation and a leading member of the Decapolis;⁵² while Theodoret, the early fourth century bishop of Cyrrhus, scholarly and thoroughly educated in Greek *paideia*, dreamt in Syriac, or at least reported that the devil, in a dream, spoke to him in Syriac.⁵³

It is sometimes assumed that the near universal use of Greek in epigraphy in the eastern provinces is evidence of hellenisation. It is a false assumption. Greek is unquestionably the dominant epigraphic language of the Near East. In Gerasa, for example, of the nearly six hundred public inscriptions that have been reported there, only twenty-one are in Latin and only four are in a Semitic language.⁵⁴ On the face of it, such disparity suggests a high degree of hellenisation. However, caution is needed as the Israeli ancient historian, Benjamin Isaac, has emphasised pointing to some modern post-colonial linguistic situations.⁵⁵ Isaac also noted that the everyday use of Aramaic, Greek, or even Latin differed from language use in epigraphy where, he argues, the choice of language is a conscious form of cultural identification.⁵⁶ Eck has

⁵¹ Eck (2009) 17-9.

⁵² Cited in Chancey (2005) 154.

⁵³ The implications of this incident are explored in Urbainczyk (2001).

⁵⁴ Welles (1938) lists 361 inscriptions and according to Kennedy (2007: 35) nearly 200 have been published subsequently. On the Latin inscriptions of Gerasa and their significance: Isaac (2009) 62-3.

⁵⁵ English, as *lingua franca* in independent India, contrasted with Dutch in independent Indonesia, French in Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia and German in Occupied France. Isaac 2009, 45.

⁵⁶ Isaac (2009) 66-7.

also noted that there were two classes of public inscription. The surviving class that we are most familiar with throughout the east, and which almost invariably is in Greek, has been inscribed on stone, and occasionally bronze, serving primarily as an enduring public memorial. However we have lost the more ephemeral and more numerous public texts written on whitewashed boards and walls, which were intended to be widely understood and could be multi-lingual. Jesus' *titulus crucis* provides a rare example of such a multi-lingual ephemeral public notice.⁵⁷

Such incidents and anecdotes indicate that the actual linguistic practice was much more complex than should be assumed from either the elite literature or public epigraphy. This is scarcely surprising, given modern sociolinguistic understanding of the complexities of communal linguistic practice. We now know, for example, that dialectal differences may be communally based as well as regional. Thus, three separate dialects of Baghdadi Arabic were spoken in twentieth century southern Iraq — Muslim Baghdadi Arabic, Jewish Baghdadi Arabic, and Christian Baghdadi Arabic. Each was spoken in the home and in the respective religious communities, while Muslim Baghdadi Arabic acted as a *lingua franca* that was spoken publicly by all three communities when communicating with each other.⁵⁸ Similarly, today we have various versions of English spoken by different communities and social classes within the same cities (one would not expect to hear the ghetto 'rap' of Watts, for example, at a cultural soirée at the Getty Center in Los Angeles). We know that the cities of the Roman Near East were segregated by ethnic group and trade and it seems likely that linguistic practice, even in the use of Greek, Aramaic and Syriac, could have reflected similar communal complexity of practice.

We will never know whether Libanius could speak or understand Syriac, but we can be confident that his use of Greek was an act of identification with Hellenistic culture. Similarly, we do not know whether the Jerusalem bishop who could speak Aramaic, but refused to do so in the church, was affirming religious Orthodoxy, or social status, or both, in speaking Greek. On the other

⁵⁷ Eck (2009) 17-9.

⁵⁸ Holes (1995) 281-5. Dr Alex Bellum (British Institute, Amman) drew my attention to this seminal social linguistic study of dialectic change to the Arabic language in the twentieth century Near East. It seems reasonable to assume that comparable linguistic complexity and modification occurred in the Roman Near East,

hand, Theodoret's report that the devil spoke to him in Syriac may reflect an intuitional recognition on his part that by discussing temptation in the vernacular he had a greater chance of influencing his congregation. Underlying such speculation however is one incontrovertible fact: linguistic practice is a complex marker of communal, social and regional identity.

Modality six: Application of the modern imperial analogy

The use of the modern European imperialism analogy in gaining insights into the processes of the ancient world is not new. In 1997 Bagnall reflected on Will's important 1985 article *Pour une "anthropologie coloniale" du monde Hellénistique*, noting earlier works by Bergen, Préaux, and Orrieux which also used the colonial paradigm.⁵⁹ Bagnall summarised Will's critique of earlier historians, including the pre-war work of Rostovtzeff and Préaux as —

... insufficiently interested in the agrarian world, too much interested in the state and its role, and too much devoted to the point of view of the dominating power, the Greek settlers and the Macedonian rulers. This last defect was reinforced by the lack of any critical self-consciousness about European colonization and imperialism. Problems were framed in terms of hellenization, that is, of what might now be called the imposition of the culture of the rulers upon the ruled. In short, the problem that Will describes was not so much one of ignorance of the colonial experiences as an unthinking but positive outlook on the whole business from the point of view of a citizen of a colonizing power.⁶⁰

While Bagnall did not agree with Will's effort at substituting a colonial paradigm for an Hellenizing one, he did agree that colonial sociology and colonial and post-colonial fiction could stimulate new insights into ancient cultural relations by raising new questions for investigation.

But while a substantial literature has developed using insights from modern colonial and postcolonial studies, especially with reference to the western provinces of the Roman Empire, the analogy has not been without its critics. Alston, for example, has argued that the 'mentality of Roman cultural imperialism' is fundamentally different from modern European imperialism; that

⁵⁹ Bagnall (1997) 225; Will (1985).

⁶⁰ Bagnall (1997) 226.

the Roman elite was willing to integrate elements of subject cultures into their own, and that Roman interpretations of subject cultures examined them in a Graeco-Roman context. Furthermore, by providing indigenous elites with concrete benefits the Romans ensured they adopted Roman imperial culture.⁶¹

Terrenato has suggested that the Roman/modern European imperialism analogy might be 'a deceptive archetype' and while acknowledging that many are excited by the new approaches, he urges caution, emphasising deep structural differences between the Roman Empire and modern ones.⁶² In his view, this is part of a more general flaw in classical studies, the tendency to perceive classical antiquity 'as containing prominent modern traits. There is a complementary reluctance to attribute any 'primitive' trait to the Classical world, as if this would defile our ancestry. This is also probably the main reason why Greece and Rome are seldom included in any broad comparative framework, side by side with non-Western 'savage' cultures.'⁶³ He takes the argument further noting that all schools of thought (nationalist, positivist, Marxist, or postcolonial) no matter how little they have in common 'take for granted that a straight-forward and unquestioned similarity between Classical antiquity and Western modernity exists. The westerners are those whose culture is rooted in the Classics and the Classical world is the one whose values live on in Western culture.'⁶⁴ The fundamental assumption underpinning all views of the Roman Empire since the Renaissance, 'that Roman had been the closest pre-modern approximation to modernity', has been unchallenged.⁶⁵ Once challenged, however, new interpretive possibilities emerge based upon horizontal social mobility among elites and the minimisation of ethnicity as a cultural determinant.⁶⁶

Modality seven: Application of the social theory of identity.

Earlier, I briefly reviewed the modern concept of identity noting its popularity, multiple, sometimes ambiguous, meanings; and summarised Smith's

⁶¹ Alston (1996).

⁶² Terrenato (2005).

⁶³ Terrenato (2005) 61.

⁶⁴ Terrenato (2005) 62.

⁶⁵ Terrenato (2005) 65.

⁶⁶ Terrenato (2005) 66. But see pages 95-97 above for a qualification of this interpretive possibility

exploration of the concept of ethnic identity (see pages 71-4 above). Today, the concept of identity, personal, social, ethnic and cultural, is in widespread use in classical studies, often without much care being taken in defining it in its particular application.⁶⁷ Furthermore rarely, if ever, is any justification given for this use, perhaps reflective of the term's contemporary popularity. As far back as 1983, Gleason cautioned historians on the use of the term. Gleason emphasised that its origins were in the social sciences and that historians need to be both critical and precise in their use of the term because of its diverse and sometimes ambiguous meanings: '...a good deal of what passes for discussion of identity is little more than portentous incoherence and the historian need not be intimidated into regarding it as more than that.'⁶⁸

These concerns have continued and recently Pitts reviewed its usage in Roman archaeology and expressed concern at the lack of rigour in its use. He argued that its ambiguity has encouraged 'shallow conceptualizations of identity in Roman archaeology'.⁶⁹ He notes that it has been seized upon by archaeologists anxious to free themselves of the tired Roman/native dichotomy inherent in the concept of romanisation, that it encourages research into regional, sub-ethnic, gender and class identities, but concludes that loose usage of the term is illusory in effecting a shift from the Romanisation model of cultural change.⁷⁰ His analysis of the literature points to a lack of theoretical and methodological discussion on how the archaeologist can best make use of the concept and he fears the risk of Roman archaeology falling into the trap of culture-historical analysis in which ancient peoples are equated with specific categories of material culture.⁷¹ Rather than linking identity with types of material culture (loom weights/women; sigillata ware/Roman, for example) he favours archaeological definitions that link it to social practice and agency (consumption, dress, personal hygiene, funerary ritual, and the organisation of settlement and domestic space) and their material correlates. With reference to

⁶⁷ For example, a search of the classical studies journals indexed in *JSTOR* for the period 1900-1950 using 'identity' as the search term located 1817 articles. The same search for the period 1951-2011 located 7999 articles. For a quantitative survey of the use of the term in Roman archaeology see Pitts (2007).

⁶⁸ Gleason (1983) 930-1.

⁶⁹ Pitts (2007) 693.

⁷⁰ Pitts (2007) 693.

⁷¹ Pitts (2007) 699.

pottery such an approach shifts the focus from culture-historical descriptive typologies to the functional use of ceramic artefacts in combination.⁷² Pitts argument for analysis by function rather than typology seems to reflect Binford's call, nearly fifty years earlier, for a shift from classification of ceramics by morphology and decoration to a taxonomy based upon primary and secondary function as a means of clarifying social context and cultural boundaries.⁷³ It is, perhaps, also worth noting that a shift from morphological taxonomy to context and function enables the recognition of market dynamics in any given situation. Thus, use of sigillata ware at a specific location may have more to do with supply than demand and absolutely nothing to do with cultural identification. Even if reflective of demand, the consumer's choice may simply reflect a personal preference that also has nothing to do with cultural identity. (How many modern protestors against American cultural imperialism have demonstrated in Levi jeans after snacking at the local MacDonalds or KFC outlet?) Although Pitts explains how to better detect identity archaeologically, a notable flaw in his argument is the absence of any definition of what he means by identity and its applicability to ancient society and people.

In studying issues of identity then, historians and archaeologists need to be precise in the nature of their analysis. It is here that Brubaker and Cooper's three separate clusters of concepts have value. Rather than use the term 'identity', they propose distinguishing between *identification and categorisation* (self-identification, identification by others, the state as identifying agent; personal name, gender, occupation, etc); *self-understanding and social location* ('situated subjectivity'); *commonality, connectedness, groupness* ('the emotionally laden sense of solidarity or oneness with fellow group members and a felt difference from or even antipathy to specified outsiders').⁷⁴

Interpreting the evidence

I suggest that the adoption of the principles and operational modalities outlined above would enable the historian and archaeologist to avoid the flaws that have become increasingly apparent in the hellenisation/romanisation paradigm. As

⁷² Pitts (2007) 701-2.

⁷³ Binford (1965) 205-209.

⁷⁴ Brubaker and Cooper (2000) 15-21.

already mentioned, romanists researching life in the western provinces have engaged in a substantial theoretical debate concerning these flaws and have come up with several alternative models as a result. I discuss two recent approaches below.

Louise Revell uses Giddens' structuration theory in her case studies of how different local communities in three different western provinces effected their divergent responses to Roman imperialism.⁷⁵ One of the primary tensions in social theory is the relationship between individual 'selfdom' (the Eriksonian concept of an enduring 'self' surviving through the vicissitudes of continuing experience) and society (as the primary determinant of 'selfdom' through the internalisation of the requirements of socially assigned and sustained roles).⁷⁶ Giddens' structuration theory is a recent and influential attempt at finding a means of resolving this dichotomy by giving primacy to neither structure nor the individual agent.⁷⁷ Instead, Giddens argues that the individual and society should be seen as a duality rather than a dichotomy, with each both the precondition and the product of the other.⁷⁸ Central to this proposition is the notion that

'The basic domain of study of the social sciences is ... neither the experience of the individual actor, nor the existence of any form of societal totality, but social practices ordered across time and space ... Human social activities ... are not brought into being by social actors but continually recreated by them via the very means whereby they express themselves as actors. In and through their activities agents reproduce the conditions that make these activities possible ... Continuity of practices presumes reflexivity, but reflexivity in turn is possible only because of the continuity of practices.'⁷⁹

Giddens also distinguishes between practical consciousness — getting on with the habitual routines of social life (acting on autopilot) — and discursive

⁷⁵ Revell (2009).

⁷⁶ Gleason (1983) 918-920.

⁷⁷ Giddens (1984).

⁷⁸ Giddens (1984) 25.

⁷⁹ Giddens (1984) 2-3.

consciousness — the deliberative monitoring of actions and the flow of everyday life.⁸⁰

What is the relevance of such sociological theorising to the understanding of cultural change in the Roman Near East? Consider a peasant in one of the provinces working his land at the time of the imposition and consolidation of Roman rule. While engaged in tending his crops in accordance with traditional local practice learned from his father he is utilising a practical consciousness in perpetuating customary social practice. As he takes his harvest into the local urban market he may note progressive physical changes in both the urban spaces and social practices, such as, for example, the establishment of the role of ἀγοράνομος — changes that require modifications in his behaviour, both minor and significant. As he makes decisions of how to act in this changing environment he is displaying a discursive consciousness and in the process modifies social practice. In short, he both recreates and modifies social practice through his actions. While it is impossible to know the nature of his internal discourse (indifferent, curious, suspicious, resentful, hostile, resistant), it is possible to find material, and occasionally, literary, evidence of its expression. While there is an unthinking passivity in following habitual routines, discursive consciousness recognises the active agency of the actor in modifying social practice. It is the sociological mechanism by which a colonised people actively adapt to the practices of the colonising people. But does structuration theory adequately address the subjective perception of oppressive change in a colonial situation? As noted earlier Revell distinguishes the transitional period when there is a memory of a pre-Roman past based upon experience and the time when later generations respond to a constructed memory which may or may not be realistic. She also notes that it is impossible to know what people are thinking and that for a peasant and a member of the elite there will be very different responses to a shared experience of, say, walking down the *cardo* to the marketplace. Viewed statuary, for example, may represent aspiration or oppression. Similarly, while the literate can read the inscriptions and understand their full significance, the illiterate also learn that the symbols SPQR represent power, hegemony. She suggest that this is the point of talking of a

⁸⁰ Giddens (1984) 2-8.

discourse – all have to engage with the idea of Rome in its physical manifestations and in their daily routines, but each does so with different attitudes, beliefs, etc.⁸¹ While this is adequate as far as it goes, for me it does not acknowledge the impact of the trauma the region experienced over several centuries from the initial invasion by Alexander, including the subsequent Syrian Wars, the Maccabean rebellion, the land confiscations inherent in the Macedonian foundations, appropriation of existing temples by Greek deities, Roman annexations and pacification of the region, replacement of established rulers with the apparatus of provincial rule, failure to always respect ethnic groupings in establishing provincial boundaries, the introduction of new tax regimes, the establishment of military garrisons, adapting traditional power relationships to the new provincial structures, introduction of Roman urbanism and new coinage.

An alternative approach proposed by Jane Webster is the use of the concept of creolisation. She has suggested that one's willingness to recognise and discuss the implications of asymmetric power relations in the context of the Roman Empire reflects one's political stance in the modern world.⁸² Whether or not her observation is valid as a generalisation, I know as someone who has lived my life in a postcolonial society that colonialism is an oppressive and traumatic process for the indigenous population engendering resentments that continue to simmer long after any injustice was perpetrated. Like Webster therefore, I am sceptical of interpretive models that present the experience of the Roman Empire as neutral and benign.

The use of the concepts of syncretism and hybridity to describe contested cultural fusions are examples of neutral terms that fail to explicate the process of cultural imposition and negotiation that is often involved. Webster, for example, has challenged the traditional interpretation of images of Mercury and Rosmerta (an indigenous Celtic goddess) which have been found dispersed widely over Gaul, Germany and Britain. Traditionally, these images have been seen as 'the ultimate expression of Romano-Celtic syncretism. This is a syncretism envisaged as a partnership between Roman and Celtic religion ... a

⁸¹ Revell (2011) *personal communication*.

⁸² Webster (2011) *personal communication*.

politically neutral, laissez-faire syncretism which was not imposed upon the provinces from outside, but reflected the spontaneous desire of polytheistic peoples to accommodate each other's gods'⁸³ In contrast, Webster questions such interpretive neutrality and suggests that at the very least religious syncretism reflects complex negotiation especially among the indigenous non-elites.⁸⁴ The traditional neutral interpretation of religious syncretism in the Roman provinces is consistent with the notion of the benign, civilising interpretation of the Roman Empire, but obscures several telling points including the asymmetric power relations, and the active role of the indigenous population, especially the non-elite in developing a religious syncretism through 'localized negotiations, adaptations, and resistances'.⁸⁵

Similarly, the concept of hybridity is borrowed from biology where the hybrid is the result of inter-breeding between two different species. It has become a popular metaphor of combination in both popular culture and postcolonial discourse. Its use as a metaphor of combination in discussion of cultural fusion in the Roman world is unhelpful precisely because it implies that Roman and indigenous culture, like two mating animals, are discrete, bounded entities. It fails, also, to address the dynamic of unequal cultural relationships. Hybridity also has a specific meaning in postcolonial discourse in describing the cultural results of indigenous contestation and negotiation of inequality and social injustice (see page 79 above), but this meaning is rarely reflected in Roman studies.

In rejecting neutral or benign syncretism, Webster turned to the concept of creolisation – a linguistic concept more latterly used by archaeologists in the Americas.⁸⁶ In essence, Creole material culture represents the blending of two different ways of life in a non-egalitarian social context. For example, the material culture of Carolina plantation slaves was of necessity European American, but its use tended to be in accordance with African values initiating a

⁸³ Webster (1997) 326.

⁸⁴ Webster (1997) 328.

⁸⁵ Webster (1997) 335.

⁸⁶ Webster 1997, 2001, 2003. On the use of the related concept of hybridisation in the ancient Mediterranean see, for example, van Dommelen (1997).

process that culminated in Black American culture. Furthermore, Creole practices, utilising material artefacts from the dominant culture and drawing upon traditional values in an asymmetric political and social context, may reflect a process of resistant adaptation. In a series of studies, Webster has used the model to re-interpret Romano-Celtic art and iconography as a contested or negotiated use of Roman values and symbols.

It seems to me, that the value of the concept of creolisation is precisely because it provides an interpretive paradigm which is capable of going beyond the usual exposition of elite emulation of imperial practices and values to explore the experience of other classes of a society. Secondly, it is capable of encompassing the localised choices of communities negotiating their own local relationship with Roman values. Finally, the model acknowledges that imperialism involves asymmetric power relations; and that cultural change in such a context involves more than simply changed social practice but at least some degree of contestation and resistance.

Conclusion

Traditionally the history of the region during the Graeco-Roman period has tended to focus on the narrative of states and the doings of their kings as reflected in the surviving Classical literary evidence, the epigraphy of the elites, and the monumental archaeology of the same elites. The result is a history that inevitably privileges the role of male elites who were Macedonians, Greeks, Romans or others culturally fluent in Graeco-Roman culture. Women, children, slaves, artisans, traders, peasants - the general populace – are marginalised and even invisible in such a history. More recently, the focus has shifted to cultural change in the region, but again the underlying assumptions has led to a cultural history in which the primary research question has concerned the degree to which the evidence demonstrated the penetration of indigenous and popular cultural life by Greek culture. Literature, linguistic practice, epigraphy, and, to a lesser extent, archaeological evidence have all been subjected to the same template. If there is merit in an approach that draws upon the modern colonial studies then it will be precisely in establishing a different template, different research questions, and, hopefully, fresh insights.

It is incontestable that in the centuries following Alexander's invasion and conquest of the Near East elements of Greek culture – language and literature, *polis* ideology and offices, deities, architectural forms and decorative iconography, and so forth – were introduced into the region. Although the cumulative impact was considerable, this cultural interchange needs to be placed within the context of relations that date back into the Bronze Age: the Macedonians and Greeks were not unknown intruders. Second, the cultural flow was not one way. In the later centuries particularly, there was a significant westward flow of trade, ideas and influence, not least being the diffusion of Christianity. During the period of Alexander and the Hellenistic states, Hellenistic culture seems to have been confined to the city centres and colonial foundations.⁸⁷ And even by the fifth century CE, the diffusion of Greek culture was uneven both geographically and socially.

Arguing that it is time that hellenisation was replaced as the principal interpretive paradigm of cultural change in the Near East is neither to deny the impact of hellenism nor to denigrate the role of the concept in stimulating past research and in providing an initial interpretation of the evidence. Rather it is to recognise that insights from more recent postcolonial studies and social theory have a relevance which is not encompassed in the concept. Furthermore, if it is accepted that the cultural and social context of the individual researcher influences their intellectual judgment then one is able to move beyond the positivism implicit in the hellenisation model and acknowledge the notion of multiple voices in historiography.

In this chapter therefore, I have proposed a modern interpretive model of cultural change in the Roman Near East characterised by four fundamental principles and seven operational modalities. While I see the four principles (postmodernity, interdisciplinarity; sensitivity to indigenous symbolic values, recognition of the durability and continuity of those values) as fundamental, different emphasises may be placed on the operational modalities depending upon the nature of the evidence and the type of history being written.

⁸⁷ 'The conquerors' artificial islands of culture were at first no more acceptable than a wrongly matched heart transplant.' Green (1990) 323.

Part two

Applying the alternative
interpretive
framework

Part two

Applying the alternative interpretive framework

Introduction

In Part Two, I examine the evidence relating to Gerasa, a Decapolis city in north west Jordan from the perspective of the local populations rather than from the perspective of the intrusive Graeco-Roman culture. Traditionally, Gerasa is presented as a small rural Semitic settlement that was hellenised and then romanised. Unquestionably, the surviving ruins and the limited references to the *polis* in the classical literature lend themselves to such an interpretation if one adopts the hellenisation/romanisation interpretive model. But what if one attempts to use an alternative model? In the following chapters I eschew the hellenisation model, therefore, and review the evidence relating to Gerasa — archaeological, epigraphic, literary and numismatic — from a postcolonial perspective. Rather than adopting a focus on the expressions of Hellenistic or Roman architectural forms and artistic style, I attempt to explore the dynamics of cultural interaction as members of the local indigenous community negotiate their individual and group relationships with their imperial masters within the context of asymmetric power. The result is a dynamic picture of social and political conformity, forms of resistance, and cultural resilience. I analyse my material using postcolonial categories drawn from modern imperialism and modern social theory. In other words, I seek evidence of how the indigenous population negotiated the cultural intrusion, preserving their own culture, sometimes resisting, sometimes adapting, sometimes adopting elements of hellenism and *romanitas*. In doing so, I freely acknowledge the subjectivity inherent in my data selection and interpretation and do not for a moment

suggest mine is the only valid interpretation. I hope however, that by using postcolonial theory I provoke new questions and lines for further research.

Smith emphasises that it is not simply the geo-political location (agreed or contested boundaries, defensibility) itself that matters, but the land's symbolic values and the folk memories associated with it, a sense of 'homeland'.¹ 'What mattered to the Judaeans exiles in Babylonia was Cyrus' recognition of their association with a homeland around Jerusalem, rather than the extent or defensibility of the obliterated former kingdom of Judah.'² Smith emphasises the extraordinary durability in adversity of such symbolic complexes attached to a territory by diasporic communities such as Jews, Armenians and Kurds. In today's world, one should also add the Palestinians. Landscape, then, is a useful starting point for exploring indigenous cultural identities in the ancient world. It is by inhabiting a land that we acquire a sense of identity, of who we are and where we belong — learning the values, be they commercial or spiritual, that one's society associates with its different physical features; experiencing the numinous in groves, rocks, springs, and high places; extracting a living from the land by hunting, gathering, tending herds, tilling the soil, mining metals and minerals; burying family members and memorialising them in dolmen, cairns, rock cut tombs; noting the landmarks created by humans, ancestors, rival groupings and invaders.

For pre-Enlightenment peoples, humans and animals were not the only inhabitants of the land. Gods and other spirits were associated with different features of the landscape and needed to be placated and worshipped.³ Land and religious experience together, therefore, constituted a nexus rich in symbolic values, associations and memories.⁴ The interconnection of land, religion and people in the ancient Near East is powerfully expressed in the

¹ Smith (1986) 92-8.

² Smith (1986) 93-4.

³ The Hebrew and Christian Testaments together with the Koran, for example, make reference to a wide range of supernatural creatures – Lilith, sea serpents, *behemoth*, ghosts and witches, *seraphim*, *cherubim*, *ophanim*, angels, *nephilim*, *gibborim*, dragons or fiery serpents, *re'em* or unicorns, *jinni* and unspecified devils and demons. For a popular discussion of *masseboth*, sacred stones, in the Negev and south Jordan deserts see Avner (2001).

⁴ Steinsapir (2005) attempts to reconstruct cult practices in rural sanctuaries of Roman Syria. Necessarily conjectural and speculative, the study is effective however in demonstrating the importance of landscape to local religious practice. Also Steinsapir, (1999).

Hebrew Testament in the *mythomoteur* of a divinely chosen people being given a chosen land, 'flowing with milk and honey'. However old its antecedents may have been, this *mythomoteur* as expressed in the books of the Hebrew Testament should be dated to the post-exilic period during the Achaemenid Empire and possibly as late as the early Hellenistic period.⁵ The underlying motif was so strong that it was carried forward into the Christian Testament,⁶ where this notion of the Jewish people being a chosen people is given brutal expression in the New Testament Marcan *pericope* of the Syro-Phoenician woman. Ethnic relations in first century CE north Galilee were deteriorating when Jesus, 'near the borders of Tyre and Sidon', was approached by a woman from Phoenicia asking him to heal her daughter. He spurned her harshly, referring to Gentiles as 'dogs' (Mark 7.24-30) — even today a very nasty Middle Eastern insult. The very harshness of Jesus response is taken by some New Testament scholars to indicate that it was probably an authentic saying reflecting the ethnic tensions during Jesus' lifetime and inconsistent with the later Christian message of the messianic kingdom being open to both Jew and Gentile.⁷

The Roman period Levantine peasant, guarding his herd of goats and sheep as they foraged around dolmen and menhir,⁸ or through an abandoned Iron Age settlement, was very aware of both the seasonal rhythms and also the cultural memory embedded in the landscape in which his family dwelt and worked. And when he and his family came to town to sell produce in the market, the landscape through which they walked, including the approach road to the city or town, was different from that which we may walk down today. In entering a Graeco-Roman *polis* such as Gerasa, we may walk on the same paving stones as the peasant farmer, but we see a different cultural landscape, one which bears only an approximate physical resemblance to that in which the peasant lived, but which is now stripped of the complex of symbolic values which gave

⁵ For a summary of recent scholarship on dating ancient Jewish texts see Jigoulov (2010) 132ff.

⁶ For Christian uses of the imagery see, for example, *1 Pet.* 2.9, *Gal.* 3.29.

⁷ See for example, Hurtado (1989) 115-6. *Contra*, Funk *et al.* (1997) 70.

⁸ Scheltema (2008) provides a useful overview of the frequency, diversity, dating and nature of the various forms of prehistoric megalithic structures in the Roman Near East including dolmen, standing stones, stone alignments and circles, cairns, cists, cup holes and rock-cut tombs.

rich meaning to his life. It is easy then, when surrounded by Roman monumentalism, to focus on the degree to which Graeco-Roman cultural norms and practices may have been adopted in the Near East and sometimes to lose sight of the degree to which there was a vibrant indigenous culture embedded, not only in the social practices of the local people, but written as cultural memory in the very landscape. As the peasant family walked toward town, the parents could educate their child in the ways of their land: there a forebear had been killed by a passing Hasmonean force; beware the *ghoul* that inhabited the mysterious dolmen built by giants of times past; before we sow next season's crop, we need to make offering to the deity or spirit residing in that grotto over there, and so forth. We know that the Jarash Basin has been more or less continuously inhabited from at least the Neolithic on. In the initial chapter of Part Two, therefore, I attempt to trace the origins of that rich complex of values from the Neolithic until the arrival of the Macedonians in the region in the mid-fourth century BCE. It seems to me that it is only by having some understanding of such a cultural heritage that we can begin to understand how the indigenous Gerasene perceived and reacted to the European intrusions of the following centuries. Yet in undertaking that exercise there are several issues that can affect any historical interpretation in the region.

First, the texts and much of the material culture that have survived from the Graeco-Roman period, at best, provide only glimpses of this indigenous world. Even when authors such as Strabo attempt to provide knowledge of other people, we need to bear in mind the experience of modern anthropology – the observer, in imposing his/her categories of analysis, is viewed by colonised people as merely a despised adjunct to imperialism to be amused by, tolerated perhaps, or simply deliberately misled.⁹ An ancient example of this process of deliberate misleading is to be found in the numerous outrageously improbable stories that locals fed Herodotus. In examining cultural adaptation in the Roman Near East, we need also to bear in mind Smith's point that in adversity traditional cultural values and 'symbolic complexes' are held with greater tenacity.¹⁰

⁹ Smith, L.T. (1999), esp. 1-18.

¹⁰ Smith (1986) 92-125.

This point is well-illustrated archaeologically in the growing ethnic tension in north Galilee during the first century CE. Phoenician storage jars, evidence of commercial activity, are to be found in Bet Zenata, outside the Jewish part of the Galilee, for all periods from the Hellenistic through to the early Roman period of first century CE. In contrast, in the Jewish settlement of Yodefat, they may be found during the more cosmopolitan phase of social life from the Hellenistic period until Herod the Great, but cease as religious separation and isolation became stronger social forces prior to the Jewish Revolt.¹¹ This pattern was found also when Berlin surveyed house decor and arrangements (stucco decoration, wall painting, and special function architecture such as *mikva'ot*), table vessels, cooking vessels and lamps in pagan, mixed and Jewish sites.¹² She found that from the later second through the later first centuries BCE there was little interior decoration or special function architecture. On the other hand, at every site people used the same imported tableware and mould-made lamps and the same cooking utensils. By the last part of the first century BCE interior wall painting and stucco decoration was appearing at some sites (pagan, mixed and Jewish) while a new Roman type of cooking vessel, reflective of a new cuisine, was sufficiently popular for three local suppliers to start producing it. But then suddenly from the beginning of the first century CE, Galilean Jews stopped using imported red-slipped tableware and mould-made lamps and reverted to plain buff local ware and wheel-made lamps. This changed pattern of use is to be contrasted with the continuing use of imported wares among the elite of Jerusalem. One explanation uses the anthropological concept of identity-signalling by accentuating selected social behaviours and their material artefacts in the context of a mixed population. Certainly, Strabo (16.2.34) notes the mixed nature of the population of Galilee. Berlin concludes that the evidence reflects an anti-Roman animus consequent upon the establishment of a Roman *colonia* at Berytus in 15 BCE, peopled by two legions and with an extensive *territorium*, which made a profound impact upon the cultural landscape of the region. The Marcan *pericope* discussed earlier is consistent with this interpretation and probably reflects something of this increasing ethnic tension.

¹¹ Avshalom-Gorni and Getzov (2002).

¹² Berlin (2002).

The example of north Galilee in the first century CE is instructive. First, it highlights the importance of using text and material culture conjointly in constructing a more nuanced analysis of a past situation. Second, it demonstrates the critical importance of domestic archaeology in exploring socio-cultural contexts of the past. Third, our evidence is exceptionally rich for the Jewish Revolt as a whole and the Galilean context in particular.¹³ Fourth, the Galilean cultural and social mix was at flashpoint with a multi-ethnic population, deteriorating relations with the Gentile population of adjoining Phoenicia, rising religious feelings, growing messianic expectations and the establishment nearby of a large Roman *colonia* of two legions with a very extensive *territorium*. Finally, it demonstrates the need for a robust and multi-faceted interpretive methodology to analyse such a complex of social, religious and political forces.

The second historiographical problem relating to the Roman Near East concerns the socio-cultural context of the First and Second Jewish Revolts: to what extent should they be regarded as unique, a part of Jewish exceptionalism, and to what extent can they be regarded as reflective of wider attitudes to Roman rule in the Near East? If the revolts are seen merely as particularly well-attested armed resistance to Roman rule among numerous less well-attested rebellions then, perhaps, they can be used as significant markers of resistance in the region as a whole from which qualified generalisations can be made.¹⁴ If on the other hand, they are regarded as expressions of Jewish cultural exceptionalism, then no conclusion can be derived from them other than that the populations of Judaea and Galilee attempted unsuccessfully to rid themselves of Roman rule. The question can be posed another way. To what extent is the argument for Jewish exceptionalism a result of the privileging of Jewish history and religion in the western Judaeo-Christian tradition? In short,

¹³ Overman (2002) notes that in 68-9 CE there were three more or less simultaneous rebellions against Roman *imperium* (the Jewish, Gallic and Batavian), yet it is only the Jewish which figures large in Flavian historiography. Only the Jewish rebellion is portrayed as an Empire-threatening crisis and its suppression is central to Flavian propaganda legitimating Vespasian's usurpation of power. Josephus is our primary textual evidence and his Flavian patronage contributed to his works' survival and prominence. Josephus himself was a major protagonist in the Galilean rebel forces (their Jerusalem-appointed commanding general) and an eye witness with a vested interest in the record of events in the Galilee.

¹⁴ Dyson (1971) has drawn attention to persistent native revolt in the western empire among people who were regarded as basically conquered and in the process of romanisation.

to what extent is it a form of eurocentrism – a part of the western appropriation of the Near East as the source of ‘our’ history and culture? Certainly, the textual sources relating to the province of Judaea are more comprehensive than from any other province in the Roman Empire, having been preserved as part of the literary heritage of the two mainstream modern European religions. But while the Jewish and orthodox Christian sources were being preserved so too in the same historical cultural context other textual sources were being lost through neglect or hostile destruction.

In this study, I have eschewed arguments based upon Jewish exceptionalism. The whole point of Berlin’s analysis of Galilean domestic archaeology, for example, is that at different times the local Jews did participate in the regional cultural and social life as indicated by the use of stucco wall decoration, wall painting, eastern sigillata A tableware, imported mould-made lamps, and regional cooking ware.¹⁵ Similarly, mass produced lamps of the first through fourth centuries CE used by the common people of Galilee carried figural art including Graeco-Roman images.¹⁶ Synagogues, from the second century on, reflected both Roman architectural and Graeco-Roman iconographic influence.¹⁷ If we are able to discern a lively ethnic cultural memory exhibited in the extant Jewish literary and material evidence from the period, especially at times of socio-political stress, then it does not reflect Jewish cultural exceptionalism so much as Smith’s argument for increased tenacity of belief in ethnic ‘symbolic complexes’ under adversity.¹⁸ Evidence from Judaea is therefore used cautiously to provide analogy with possible comparable responses to the same stimuli in adjoining regions. In other words, the social unrest in Judea under Roman hegemony may reflect a less well attested but similar unrest among the indigenous populations of the region.

The structure of Part Two is as follows: chapter five discusses the origins of human settlement in the Jarash Basin from the Neolithic through to the Achaemenid Empire; the emphasis being on the emergence of cultural and ethnic identity. Chapter six provides a summary of relevant evidence relating to

¹⁵ Berlin (2002).

¹⁶ Chancey (2005) 210-211. On the changing expressions of aniconism in first and second century Judaism see Ehrenkrook (2011).

¹⁷ Chancey (2005) 88-89, 108-111, 201-202; Stern (2000).

¹⁸ Smith (1986) 92-125.

Gerasa itself, while in chapter seven I focus on four elements of the Gerasene evidence — Hellenistic tombs, the Zeus Temple site, the Artemis Temple site, and the Roman city plan. Each of these elements provides opportunity to explore cultural identity, social relations within the civic community, and the hegemony/resistance complex within an imperial context. Finally, I provide a conclusion.

Figure 3: Map of the Roman Near East

Gerasa is highlighted in red. (After Eliav *et al.* 2008).

Chapter five

The origins of cultural and ethnic identity in the Jarash Basin

*'Those whose identities are rarely questioned and who have never known exile
or subjugation of land and culture, have little need to trace their 'roots'
in order to establish a unique and recognizable identity.'*
— Anthony D. Smith *The ethnic origin of nations* (1986).

*'...past peoples knowingly inhabited landscapes that were palimpsests
of previous occupations.'*
— Ruth M. Van Dyke and Susan E. Alcock
Archaeologies of memory (2003).

Introduction

In this chapter I review the archaeological evidence of northern Jordan from the Neolithic on in an effort to discern the primary elements of the value systems likely to have prevailed in the Jarash Basin at the time of the establishment of any Macedonian or Greek settlement at Gerasa. In doing so, I hope to provide some indication of the emergence and development of cultural, and possibly ethnic, identity in the Basin by adopting a *longue durée* stance shown by successive archaeological surveys undertaken in the Jarash Basin.¹ I need to emphasise that this is not intended as a detailed history of the region. The approach adopted here stands in contrast to other studies of the township of Gerasa, most of which focus on architectural analysis of the public monuments of the Roman city, the development of a Roman period urban plan, and the city's place within the social and political history of the region in the Graeco-Roman period.² For example, in the most recently published of such studies, Rubina Raja explores urban development as an

¹ For a useful listing and discussion of the relevant surveys, see Kennedy (2004).

² Both Kehrberg (2011) and Pierobon (1984a) have drawn attention to the focus on public monumentality and the absence of excavation of the inter-monumental spaces. Pierobon (1984a: 29-30) also comments on the lack of historiographical connection of the Graeco-Roman urban archaeology with the evidence of pre-Hellenistic habitation in the Jarash Basin.

expression of regional identity.³ It is an important comparative analysis of regional identity in four very different eastern provincial cities and concludes that a critical element in Gerasa's identity was its promotion as a religious centre. Certainly, the two temples to Zeus and Artemis dominate and define the urban development of the city during the Roman period. But why conclude from that observation that the Roman city sought to define itself as a religious centre? And if such a policy was ever articulated, is it an expression of long term indigenous cultural memory, or is it a much later phenomenon? What, in fact, were the cultural origins of such an urban policy? Was the site of the city a religious centre during the Iron Age or earlier? Are the tombs clustered around the elevated sites upon which both temples are built suggestive of veneration of ancestors in earlier times? Such questions are not addressed in the study which is focused solely on the expression of regional identity in the defined time period without reference to its possible origins.

In the first sections of the chapter therefore, I review the evidence of settlement in the Basin in broad time sequences with the usual caveat that the chronological divisions used are modern scholarly creations, encompassing millennia, and that transitions were gradual and imperceptible to successive generations of the local peoples. On the other hand, the local folk might experience in a single life time social, cultural and political change precipitated by human incursion, whether peaceful or violent. The arrival (or departure) of Aramaeans, Israelites, Ammonites, Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians, asserting hegemony, would be examples of such single lifetime experiences. In the last section of the chapter I discuss the implications of the evidence relating to likely belief systems and whether we have enough evidence to posit the existence of an ethnic community — what Smith calls an *ethnie*.⁴ It is only with such a profile of pre-Graeco-Roman values and belief systems, however rudimentary, that we may be able to discuss in any meaningful way the nature of the cultural identities and interactions in the Roman period city of Gerasa. Because early evidence specific to the Jarash Basin is meagre recourse will be made to relevant evidence from the wider Transjordan and even Cisjordan.

³ Raja (2012).

⁴ Smith (1986) 21-31.

forests and fortifiable hills made the Jarash Basin attractive for human habitation and Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age artefacts confirm this assumption.⁶ Velasco suggests that initial exploitation of the wider region during the late Neolithic and Early Bronze Ages (up to the end of the fourth millennium BCE) was by nomadic or semi-nomadic groups who penetrated

Fig.5: Dolmen, Jabal el- Muṭawwaq.

Such late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age dolmen are interpreted as monumental tombs of a venerated ancestor. (Author's photo.)

from the steppe to the better irrigated areas to the west in pursuit of better pasture. He notes that there are plenty of vestiges of their presence, 'particularly of the funeral kind', such as the many dolmen fields, with thousands of megalithic monuments.⁷ Spanish excavation of Jabal al-Muṭawwaq, overlooking the

Zarqa river and only a few kilometres from Jarash, has demonstrated the existence of ephemeral occupation sites, a more permanent village, religious structures, including dolmen, and agricultural terracing. Curiously, settlement is far from the river and wells. The village was enclosed, seems to have contained zones of different function and to have been more than 'just a simple gathering of farmers or cattlemen'. Habitation of the settlement was confined to the EBIA (3500-2900 BCE) after which the settlement was abandoned. There seems to be no suggestion of urban design and the houses

is first attested stamped on so-called Jarash lamps from the Umayyad period; 'Jarash Basin' refers to the fertile basin in which *ḡršu*/Gerasa/Jarash nestles, surrounded by rolling hills well-watered by springs and the Wadi Jarash stream.

⁶ In his research proposal for a systematic survey of the Jarash Basin, David Kennedy (2004: 205-6) notes that earlier less systematic surveys had identified several hundred sites from all periods and anticipates that they reflect only a small fraction of what is there. For example, a review of aerial photographs from 1953 identified 325 sites, including dolmens, tumuli, Roman roads, Roman period farms, deserted villages, over-built villages, rock-cut tombs. Two Middle Bronze sites, probably hamlets, existed within the walls of Roman Gerasa on Museum Hill to the west of the Wadi Jarash and to the north east of the wadi where the modern hospital is now located. Braemer (1992) 196-7.

⁷ Velasco (2001) 173.

(one room with small courtyard) are packed together with a possible alley occurring at only one point. Velasco tentatively concludes that the houses were light structures and likely of nomadic seasonal use. On the other hand, some of the pottery found was similar to coarseware found at other sites within a 50km radius of Jarash such as Jāwa (to the south) and Umm Hammād (to the west, in the Jordan Valley). He concludes that the site probably had been seasonally used by semi-nomads for olive production, goat and sheep-raising on the man-made terraces and with asses being used to carry water. No direct evidence of social differentiation existed in the village structure. Some spaces seem to have had a religious function and he concludes that 'thrust stones' or standing stones, *massebot*, indicate the use of the area as a sacred 'high place'. As a consequence of finding a later period object buried near an excavated 'thrust stone' he tentatively concluded that place continued to be used as a cultic site after its abandonment as a place of habitation.

Such complex activity as implied by the terracing, erection of *massebot*, and cultic activity point to some form of role differentiation, social and religious leadership and the organisation of labour, whether voluntary or coercive. The existence of dolmen suggests some form of veneration of the dead, or at least veneration of significant forebears, and probably some sort of belief in an afterlife. If the *massebot* are deities then we may infer polytheism and aniconic worship of the spirit of the deity embodied in the stone. Finally, the continued use of the site for ritual purposes after abandonment of the settlement suggests the importance of worship on high places. In short, at this early stage of settlement, it is possible to discern the emergence of some of the core beliefs and cultural values that would characterise later indigenous culture of the region.

Velasco's interpretation of the evidence from Jabal al-Muṭawwaq is consistent with Strange's belief that the Transjordan was essentially a village culture during both the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age I periods.⁸ EBI was notable for a large number of open villages which shrank in size and number at the end of the period. In contrast, Strange asserts there were fewer villages during EBII, many being fortified, and, in common with the rest of the southern

⁸ Strange (2004).

Levant, they were probably associated with a system of city-states which may have diffused from either Mesopotamia or Egypt. After a period of decline and collapse in the Near East, urban society in the southern Levant recovered in the Middle Bronze with the influence in northern Jordan coming from Mesopotamia via Syria, while Egypt is thought to have achieved dominance in the central Transjordan.⁹ At this stage, the archaeology of the Jarash Basin has not provided any insights into cultural influences at work there during the Middle Bronze. After reviewing earlier surface surveys, Braemer concluded that the 'Le result essential, en fait, est la certitude que la zone nord la Jordanie était occupée, de manière relativement dense au Bronze Récent.'¹⁰ He confirms this pattern for the Jarash Basin specifically and notes several unfortified sites, probably farms or hamlets, from this period, including two in Jarash itself, one being on Museum Hill on the western side of the Wadi Jarash,¹¹ and the other being on the north east side of the Wadi, both within the city walls of Roman Gerasa.¹² He further concludes from the settlement patterns that either the population growth in the Ajlun highlands was greater than in the valleys and plains of Northern Jordan, or the population in the highlands was dispersed among smaller settlements, while the settlements became more concentrated in the lower regions especially in the Jordan Valley.

Strange considers that during the Late Bronze the Transjordan was part of the Levantine-eastern Mediterranean *koine* and consequently, was open to influence from many quarters. By this time wealth was being created in the Levant through international trade with three major trade routes being developed. First, in the west there was the maritime trade along the eastern Mediterranean littoral, linking the palatial economies of Egypt, Asia Minor and the Aegean, with the city states of the Phoenician coast being important entrepôts. On the desert frontier there was a string of settlements and towns, of which Damascus was the most important, servicing the eastern land-based trade with Babylonia.¹³ Finally, there was the Red Sea trade which seems to

⁹ Strange (2004).

¹⁰ Braemer (1992) 191.

¹¹ Braemer (1985).

¹² Glueck (1939): 22-5.

¹³ Jones (1971) [1937]. 227-33.

have developed in the Middle to Late Bronze and was initially dominated by pharaonic Egypt. It was during the Late Bronze that a number of new trading nations emerged, including the 'incense kingdoms' of Sabaea, Qataban, Hadhramaut and Ma'in in Arabia, together with the Ethiopian state of Axum. They traded up the western coast of Arabia utilising the recently domesticated dromedary.¹⁴ It was this last trade route that seems to have stimulated the emergence of a string of towns and settlements from the Red Sea port of Eilat northward to Damascus, initially using the ass which had been domesticated in the Early Bronze.¹⁵ It was also during this period that a shift from nomadism and semi-nomadism to sedentary farming commenced in the Jarash Basin.¹⁶

Fig.6: Bronze Age trade routes.

During the Late Bronze Age the domestication of the dromedary made possible trade up the western coast of Arabia. This in turn seems to have stimulated a strong of settlements and towns from Eilat to Damascus.

(After [www.historvandcivilization.com/The Ancient Near East](http://www.historvandcivilization.com/The_Ancient_Near_East))

¹⁴ Boivin, Blench and Fuller (2009).

¹⁵ Joffe (2002).

¹⁶ Braemer (1992).

It is possible that social differentiation was occurring in the Jarash Basin with the emergence of non-productive politico-religious classes (tribal, village and clan leaders, shaman, seers, magicians, necromancers, cult personnel, and such like). However, a detailed settlement history of Transjordan during the Late Bronze is less well established than for Cisjordan for various reasons.¹⁷ After reviewing excavation and survey reports for northern Jordan during the Late Bronze, Kafafi concludes that 'cities' were scattered across both the Jordan Valley and the mountain region while nomads (*'PR.W (Egyptian), Ap/biru (Akkadian)* and *Š³sw (Egyptian)/Shasu/Sutu (Akkadian)*) settled the *al-Bādiya* (desert steppe).¹⁸ Social or ethnic identity is difficult to clarify during this period and Egyptian records, for example, use the generic term 'Canaanite' to identify the peoples of the central and southern Levant. Strange links the collapse of Bronze Age society in the Transjordan with the withdrawal of the Egyptians resulting in the reversion of society to a large number of open villages.¹⁹ Interestingly, Braemer, maintains that there was considerable continuity in settlements in northern Jordan (both in the Ajlun highlands and the valleys and plains of the region surveyed) from the Late Bronze into the Iron Age. Furthermore, settlement continuity was greater in the highlands.²⁰ Such a result is consistent with the presumption that the region was rural and socially and culturally distant from the Levantine city states and little affected therefore by their collapse. If that presumption is correct it also implies continuity of cultural values and beliefs.

The Iron Age – political organisation

Joffe argues that the Bronze/Iron Age transition was critical for the emergence of a new political dynamic based upon kinship and thence ethnicity.²¹ Semi-nomads from the Syrian steppe established themselves in rural locations at this time and Joffe suggests stronger and more elaborate tribal organisation may have developed in the semi-arid zones at the end of the Bronze Age with the removal of even minimal political constraints. Settlements seem to have

¹⁷ A summary of the various explanations for the drivers of the Late Bronze/ Iron Age transition in the Transjordan is provided by LaBianca and Younker (1995).

¹⁸ Kafafi (2007).

¹⁹ Strange (2004).

²⁰ Braemer (1992).

²¹ Joffe (2002).

been small hamlets of several extended families. New polities, secondary states such as Ammon, Moab, Edom, Judah and Israel, then emerged based on ethnic identity and new internal dynamics. Tribal and familial kinship became a new force in political organisation and spawned real and fictive genealogies which became a part of the political ideology of the emergent polities.²² By the ninth century, long distance trade along the desert fringe was re-establishing itself together with the expansion of the Damascus-based

Fig.7: Levantine Iron Age kingdoms.

Jarash is highlighted with a red star. The region, Gilead, was territory contested by Israel, Aram-Damascus and Ammon.

(Source: www.aasujournalofhistory.wordpress.com)

Aramaeans down through the Transjordan, developments which were probably linked, as the Aramaeans searched out new sources of wealth.²³

Unlike their more western and northern counterparts, the emergent states of the Transjordan were notable for their lack of evidence of elite conspicuous consumption which may reflect the strategies needed to rule a different balance of agriculturalists, pastoralists, traders and nomads, tribally and kinship-based, in a more marginal and

vulnerable environment.²⁴ Of particular significance in Joffe's proposal for the emergence during the tenth and ninth centuries of the 'ethnicizing' states of Ammon, Edom, Judah, Israel and later, Moab, is the manner in which language, ideology, relationship of deity and king, common ancestry and identification within stable territorial boundaries integrated both elite and

²² The importance of such genealogies in shaping the ethnicity of the new kingdoms is very evident in the Jewish Testament, See, for example, *Gen* 4.17-26; 10.1-32; 11.10-28, etc.

²³ On the origins of the Aramaeans see, Sader (2000); Sader (2010); Younger (2007). Humbert (1992: 200, n.7) dates the biblical patriarch, Jacob, to the period when the Aramaeans penetrated the Gilead in the 9th and 8th centuries BCE.

²⁴ LaBianca and Younger (1995).

commoner in a shared identity. Such a shared identity was not driven solely by the 'high' culture of the palace but also by the 'low' culture of the village, household and local shrine. The new ethnic identity thus linked both rural village life and its symbols with the new urban centres and their ideologies. Again the Jewish Testament, highly tendentious though each book may be, provides a textual commentary of this new social dynamic in operation.²⁵

We know also from the Jewish Testament that Aram-Damascus, with its southward expansionist intentions, was regarded as a primary regional enemy of the Israelite kingdoms (*Amos* 1.3-5; *II Kgs* 8) and that they wrested Gilead (of which the Jarash Basin was part) from Israelite control.²⁶ Throughout the Iron Age, Gilead is clearly recognised as a named territorial entity referred to frequently in the Jewish Testament,²⁷ and independently in inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III delineating the territory he annexed to the Assyrian Empire when he subjugated Aram-Damascus.²⁸ Lemaire thinks that the term refers to all Israelite possessions across the Jordan river.²⁹ There are biblical references to 'Gileadites' (for example *Judg.* 15, *II Sam.* 17.27, *I Kgs* 2.7, *II Kgs* 15.25), suggesting that not only the land, but the inhabitants also were recognised in the Iron Age as a discrete group. Even in the Late Hellenistic period the 'Gileadites' were a discrete group in Jewish historiography as reflected in Josephus (for example, *Bell.Jud.* 1.4.3 and *Ant.Jud.* 13.13.4). Furthermore, in Israelite ideology Gilead was recognised as the Transjordanian territory of the northern tribe of Manasseh (e.g. *Num.* 32.39-40;

²⁵ For a discussion of the complexities of tribal and national identities in northern Transjordan during the Iron Age, and the value or otherwise of the Jewish Testament for the understanding of these relationships see Weippert (1997).

²⁶ Will (1985: 237) describes the Gilead as 'une zone de contestation entre les deux puissances régionales le plus important du temps'; Herr (1997: 134) suggests that the main reason for hostility between Aram and Israel was the Aramaean need to establish a secure corridor to Mediterranean ports for trade purposes. For a discussion of the expansion of the Aram-Damascus regional empire see Galil (2007). Galil highlights the many parallels and similarities between both the personal biographies of David and Hazael and the boundaries of their respective regional empires. He concludes that the 8th century epigraphic, textual and archaeological evidence of the historicity of Hazael's empire provides evidence of the historical possibility of David's earlier regional empire. An alternative interpretation of the material he assembles would be that the historically verified empire of Hazael may have been the model for the later biblical construction of a mythical golden age of Israelite dominance of the region, which is not independently attested by epigraphy or archaeology.

²⁷ See Lemaire (1981) 42-7.

²⁸ Na'aman (1995) 105-6.

²⁹ Lemaire (1981).

Deut. 3.15).³⁰ It was a challenged claim, for Gilead is a contested territory between Damascus and Israel,³¹ and to a lesser extent, Ammon.³² Ammonite control rarely extended beyond the Zarqa river, several kilometres south of the Jarash Basin, while the collapse of the United Monarchy at the end of Iron Age I enabled Aram-Damascus to consolidate and expand its territorial hegemony into Gilead (II *Kgs* 10.32-33).³³ However the hiatus in big power hegemony of the region caused by the withdrawal of Egypt, which enabled such regional jostling, was soon filled with the invasion and conquest by the Assyrian, Tiglath-Pileser, and his successors in the second half of the eighth century. Strange argues that the Assyrians were concerned to secure their trade interests and access to important raw materials and agricultural products.³⁴ They established vassal states on the periphery of their empire with provinces under direct rule within that ring. Bennett suggests that Tell er-Rumeith, 20-30km north of Jarash was Ramoth-Gilead, the capital of the Assyrian province of Gal'azu (Gilead),³⁵ and that its conquest was probably violent as she found destruction levels at Tell er-Rumeith which she attributed to Tiglath-Pileser III.³⁶ The states of Ammon, Moab and Edom had earlier made treaties with Assyria and were not subjected to the deportation policy that was imposed upon Aram-Damascus and Israel together with Gilead. Furthermore it seems that, as vassal states, these Transjordanian kingdoms were not subjected to the assimilation policies pursued in relation to the subjugated peoples of the Assyrian provinces, such as the Aramaeans, Israelites and the local population of Gilead.³⁷ Bennett concludes that Assyrian cultural influence in the Transjordan was minimal.³⁸ This may be accurate with reference to Ammon, Moab, and Edom, but not the provinces such as Gal'azu (Gilead).

³⁰ Lemaire (1981).

³¹ For a detailed analysis of the conflict over Gilead (and other territory) between Aram-Damascus and Israel see Tadmor (1962).

³² Thus from the 8th century biblical prophet, Amos: 'Damascus ... threshed Gilead with threshing sledges of iron' (1.3); '... the Ammonites ... have ripped up women with child in Gilead, that they might enlarge their border.' (1.13)

³³ Macdonald (1999); Lipiński (2000) 347-408; Ottoson (2001).

³⁴ Strange (2004) 430.

³⁵ *Contra* see Glueck (1943). On the question of whether there was an Assyrian province called Gilead, see Tadmor (1962) 121; Na'aman (1995) 110, n.12.

³⁶ Bennett (1982). For a discussion of more recent evidence relating to Assyrian efforts in the region see Parpola (2004); Ottoson (2001). 331-42; Lipiński (2000) 347-408.

³⁷ Salje (2009).

³⁸ Bennett (1982) 187.

The eminent Finnish Assyriologist, Simo Parpola argues instead that the Assyrians pursued a conscious and active policy of assimilation within the imperial provinces.³⁹ This was achieved through mass deportations; the adoption of Aramaic and its script as an official language throughout the empire; the use of Assyrian institutions, conscription, weights and measures, ideology, mythology and cult; the progressive homogenisation of the population of the empire through military campaigning, inter-marriage, commercial activities; and the progressive internationalisation of the Assyrian ruling elite. By the end of the seventh century the province of Gal'azu (including the Jarash Basin) had been subject to this programme for more than a century, and, according to Parpola, the local population would have thought of themselves as holding an Assyrian national (though not ethnic) identity, comparable to the Americanisation of migrants to the United States who after three or four generations are completely assimilated.

Late in the Iron Age, the Assyrians were supplanted briefly by the Babylonians, and then shortly after, by the Persians when Cyrus conquered Babylonia in 539 BCE. The Transjordan became part of the Fifth Satrapy governed from Damascus (which stretched from the Amanus Mountains in the north to the Sinai in the south and included Cyprus), with Gilead being under direct rule. The various provinces established within the satrapy at this time range from the certain to the conjectural and while Lemaire finds no direct evidence for a province of Gilead under the Persians he considers it to be likely.⁴⁰ Strange sees evidence in the archaeology of northern and central Jordan of firm and detailed government administration.⁴¹ This involved establishment of good communication routes together with garrisoned towns with officials overseeing agricultural production and efficient tax collection.⁴² From the fifth century onwards the economy was monetarised and local mints established. However, it was probably centuries before bartering as the system of exchange was supplanted in rural contexts such as the Jarash Basin.⁴³ Generally speaking, Persian rule ensured relative political stability in

³⁹ Parpola (2004).

⁴⁰ Lemaire (1995) 71-2.

⁴¹ Strange (2004) 431.

⁴² Betlyon (2005) 9.

⁴³ Walbank (1981) 161; Betlyon (2005) 48-50.

the region with steady economic and population growth. Betlyon does not see the Persians seeking cultural homogeneity, or imposing religion or language on the region.⁴⁴ On the other hand, he does see it as a period of major cultural change: 'People were grappling with major existential issues, as the Jewish religious literature attests. They were also living through a major transformation in the life and culture of the eastern Mediterranean world.'⁴⁵ Furthermore all the kingdoms in the region that escaped Assyrian annexation had disappeared by the fifth-fourth centuries.⁴⁶

Fig.8: Iron Age sites in the Jarash Basin.

Jarash is highlighted with a red star. The map is significant in showing the density of human habitation in the Jarash Basin during the Iron Age. (After Braemer (1992)).

This then was the geo-political context in which Iron Age settlement in the Jarash Basin developed. Braemer notes that in Northern Jordan the pattern of growth in settlement numbers during Iron I (1200-1000 BCE) can only reasonably be explained by an augmentation of the population. He is uncertain whether this reflects normal population increase or whether it reflects social change (presumably Israelite settlement during the United Monarchy and earlier).⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Betlyon (2005) 9.

⁴⁵ Betlyon (2005) 52.

⁴⁶ Lemaire (1995) 31; Na'aman (2002) 202.

⁴⁷ Herr (1997) 123. On the other hand Humbert (1992: 202) attributes it to the settlement by Aramaeans.

He places his more detailed research in the Jarash Basin in this context. Settlement at Jarash was continuous through the Late Bronze/Iron I transition. Significantly, a large number of sites in the Jarash Basin, newly established during Iron I, were fortified, many being on the summits of hills, several with watch towers, and with other evidence of fortification. These sites are at a distance from water sources and are therefore reliant upon cisterns, while evidence of terracing suggests agriculture as the dominant activity. Surface ceramics suggest that the sites were not inhabited at the same time, although Braemer concludes that the majority were occupied during Iron IB and C. He reports that Museum Hill in Roman Gerasa was continuously inhabited from the Late Bronze into Iron I, when the settlement was extended significantly. Significant changes are evident in Iron II (1000-539 BCE), with only limited ceramic material having been found in the region at Duqmussa and, in small quantities, on Museum Hill in Jarash itself. Braemer thinks the finds at the latter site suggest a reduction in settlement size. Other sites seem to be abandoned. In sum, the evidence suggests profound changes in settlement patterns in Iron II: abandonment of many sites, reduction in the size of the site at Jarash itself, and the appearance of a new site to the west.⁴⁸

Braemer does not attempt to explain the historical dynamics which resulted in the changes he identifies in the material record. It seems reasonable however, to see it as reflective of the political and colonising events that later research has identified and which we summarised in the earlier part of the chapter. The emergence of watch towers and fortifications probably reflect the political turbulence of the Iron Age and the expansionist policies of first the neighbouring secondary nation-states and then the Assyrians, Neo-Babylonians and Persians in Iron II. We may assume that the people of the Basin, in common with the rest of Gilead, were influenced by the 'ethnicising' trends of the period, although it is impossible to determine whether the agents generating the changes in settlement pattern can be identified as Israelite, Ammonite, Aramaean or Assyrian.⁴⁹ It seems likely that nomadic cultural

⁴⁸ Braemer (1992).

⁴⁹ Herr (1997: 135) suggests that either excavation of insufficient sites in Gilead (such as Irbid, Gerasa, Rumeith, and Husn), their inadequate excavation, or low density settlement as a consequence of continuing warfare has resulted in a situation where it is difficult to determine political control and cultural influence.

values from the Bronze Age were fused with common Canaanite values during Iron I sedentarisation. We may further assume that throughout the Iron Age affiliation through genealogy to tribe and ethnic group strengthened and that the local population of the Jarash Basin was influenced by the development of supra-tribal notions of kingship. During Iron II the primary cultural influence seems likely to have been Assyrian.⁵⁰

Iron Age – social organisation

Herr has noted that the Iron I period east of the Jordan is something of a dark age and cautions against assumptions based on settlement patterns and ceramic development west of the river.⁵¹ He also notes that settlements in the Jordan Valley seem to reflect a more prosperous lifestyle, more oriented to the west, than those in the highlands (including the Jarash Basin). Joffe, LaBianca and Younker argue that tribalism and kinship were the fundamental features of the social organisation of the Iron Age kingdoms of the southern Levant following the breakdown of the Bronze Age city-states. Tribalism became dominant among the nomads as a form of social organisation while being paralleled by kinship systems in the rural villages of the Mediterranean zone. They were forms of social organisation that was capable of accommodating both sedentary and nomadic lifestyles while operating at the supra-tribal level of kingship.⁵² LaBianca and Younker suggest that the emergence of kingdoms in the Transjordan was a response to Israelite aggression with tribalism providing an effective local level socio-cultural mechanism enabling small groups of kin to cope with the hazards of supra-tribal politics in marginal environmental conditions.⁵³ In other words, tribalism was both a socio-political and an environmental adaptation. Strange, on the other hand, sees the concept of kingship in the Iron Age southern Levant being a result of diffusion from Egypt up to the Bronze Age/Iron Age transition and cites the Bālū'a relief as evidence that Moab may already have adopted

⁵⁰ Parpola (2004). Na'Aman (1995: 1-7) argues for a possible dominant Aramaean influence.

⁵¹ Herr (2009). Herr provides a useful summary of the archaeological evidence relating to the Bronze/Iron Age transition and Iron I east of the Jordan Valley.

⁵² See also, LaBianca (1999); LaBianca and Younker (1995).

⁵³ LaBianca and Younker (1995).

the concept at the end of the Bronze Age.⁵⁴ The approach of LaBianca and Younker is interesting, because it grounds its explanation for the emergence of kingship and tribalism in the demands of securing food and water in a marginal environment whereas Strange applies the traditional explanation of cultural diffusion.

It seems probable therefore that the Iron Age inhabitants of the Jarash Basin were socially organised in fortified villages and hamlets reflective of a more turbulent political situation.⁵⁵ The dominant activity would have been the quest for food and there is likely to have been a mixture of sedentary cropping and semi-nomadic shepherding.⁵⁶ Given the relative fertility of the Basin, sedentary agriculture is likely to have been more dominant leading to more permanent forms of settlement. In common with the rest of the Jordan highlands, lifestyle would have been less prosperous than that in the Jordan Valley. The most prominent form of social organisation would have been kin-based tribal affiliation expressed by the individual through genealogy and descent from venerated ancestors, fictive or actual. Such tribal genealogy may also have invoked allegiance to an ancestral homeland. Any supra-tribal affiliation probably took the form of kingship, although it is impossible to determine on present data with which of the local kingdoms, the inhabitants of the Basin may have identified (as against being controlled by).

Iron Age – Religion

There is little Bronze or Iron Age textual, epigraphic or archaeological evidence from the Jarash Basin that enables us to construct the cultic practices or religious beliefs of the local populations. Again, therefore, we may only formulate broad hypotheses based on what is known from adjoining regions. Of the three adjoining Iron Age kingdoms which exercised political

⁵⁴ Strange (2004) 429-30. The relief portrays a *Shasu* king being invested by a god while a goddess stands behind him. The figures are dressed in Egyptian clothes of the New Kingdom period and the whole scene reflects Egyptian iconography although the artist seems not to have been Egyptian since the hieroglyphics are completely incomprehensible.

⁵⁵ This hypothesis is confirmed for the Jarash Basin by Braemer's 1992 analysis of survey results.

⁵⁶ For an ethno-archaeological study of modern village life on the edge of the Steppe, which draws conclusions relevant to the study of social life, village organisation, and domestic function at the nomadism/sedentarism margin see Aurenche and Desfarges (1983).

hegemony and probably influenced cultural development in the Basin, considerable work has been done in clarifying the religion of the Iron Age Israelites, while we know something of the religion of the Aramaeans and the Ammonites.⁵⁷ All three seem to reflect Baal worship in his manifestations as Yahweh, Hadad and Milkom, especially in the later period of Iron II.⁵⁸ The Bronze Age Canaanite cosmology and religion that dominated the region from Ugarit in the north to Gaza in the south was polytheistic and focused on the fertility of crops and the provision of rain in a region of low and sometimes uncertain rainfall.⁵⁹ Similarly, Iron Age Aramaean religion continued to focus on fertility in giving primacy to Hadad, 'The Thunderer', for thunder implied rain.

With the emergence of these 'ethnicising' regional kingdoms in the Iron Age we see the development of 'state' religion as part of the emergent ethnic identity. At the same time, what has been called 'folk' religion seems to continue to be practised in parallel with the state cult. The state cult was centred on a pre-eminent 'national' cult temple and a 'national' god and reflects a pact or covenant between the national deity and the king and also the kingdom. Folk cults were centred on local shrines and domestic practice and reflect a pact between deity and tribes and families. The probable Iron Age shrine under the temple of Zeus in Gerasa is probably of this type (pages 212-34 below). These two *foci* of cultic activity, however, should not be dichotomised. Burnett, for example, has concluded that the high incidence of the theophoric element 'l in personal names was indicative of the importance of the deity *El* in Ammonite, Moabite, Edomite, and Hebrew family religion, and that for the Ammonites, at least, reflected a correspondence between the most popular family deity and the national deity. He suggests that the elevation of the deity to national god, pre-eminent over other gods, reflects his popularity as indicated in theophoric personal names.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ For a useful, if dated, overview of the main characteristics of the pre-Hellenistic religious deities and forms in Mesopotamia and Syria see Collidge (1986). He emphasises the durability of 'Semitic' religion during the Graeco-Roman period.

⁵⁸ Herr (1997) 151.

⁵⁹ On the relationship between precipitation and settlement patterns see Humbert (1992) 200-1.

⁶⁰ Burnett (2009).

The customary caution is needed when considering Israelite religion because of the considerable dissonance between the biblical textual evidence and archaeology. Almost all the surviving texts to be found in the Jewish Testament were written much later during the Achaemenid and Hellenistic periods, although purporting to reflect Iron Age contexts. Furthermore, the texts are both religiously and politically tendentious. These texts present Israelite religious belief as closely identified with the faithfulness and justice of the king, strongly aniconic, monotheistic and separatist. Nevertheless, one can find buried within these later texts, references showing folk belief in polytheism (I *Kgs* 11.5-8; II *Kgs* 23.13), the use of images of deities, traditional cult practices (II *Kgs* 23.12) and reliance on various religious practitioners such as necromancers (*Deut.* 18.11, *Isa.* 8.19), faith healers (I *Kgs* 13.4; I *Sam.* 1.9-

Fig.9: 9th century BCE Canaanite figurine from Israel.

Almost certainly a representation of Astarte or Asherah. (Source: Oriental Institute).

20), soothsayers (I *Sam.* 28.7.19) and so forth. Additionally, archaeology provides material evidence of considerable commonality of belief and cultic practice with the neighbouring regions as expressed in the polytheistic use of clay figurines and small local cult centres.⁶¹

The practice of the emergent regional 'ethnicising' states to utilise religion in the development of a national identity during the Iron Age is also very evident in the Jewish Testament where the critical underlying concept is of an historic covenant between Yahweh

and the Israelites. Such a belief in a pact between deity and nation was not specific to the Israelites, however. Thus in the Mesha Stele, for example, Chemosh is identified as the chief god of the Moabite state with the king as his

⁶¹ For example, Daviau (2001). Considerable caution is needed in the interpretation of the figurines as to whether they represent cult devotees, deities or both.

son ('I am Mesha, son of Chemosh-Gad, king of Moab, the Dibonite'). Similarly, Lipiński quotes an inscription by Hazael, King of Aram-Damascus, indicating his relationship with Hadad: 'Hadad made me king and Hadad went in front of me'.⁶²

It is likely that some form of aniconic baetyl worship would have been practised by the indigenous inhabitants of the Jarash Basin, dating back to the Neolithic as evidenced by the *massebot* of Jabal el-Muṭawwaq. Not only was it a primary characteristic of Aramaean religion, but seems to have been a feature across Mesopotamia and the Fertile Crescent. Lipiński notes that several cities inhabited by the Aramaeans of the first millennium BCE bear names referring to standing stones, baetyls; similarly the term *qām*, used to designate a standing stone or baetyl, occurs as a theophoric element in Aramaic and Amorite personal names.⁶³ Baetyl worship, however, certainly did not originate with the Aramaeans.⁶⁴ Avner distinguishes two usages in the Negev: one representing deities whose power and spirit is contained in the stones, the other representing ancestors.⁶⁵ Their use as aniconic representations of deities is attested in the literature of the classical and Islamic world with Elagabalus' black stone and the Black Stone of the *Ka'aba*, Mecca, being the most famous examples. Avner concludes that baetyl worship originated in the desert; only became more common in the fertile areas during the second millennium BCE; reflects a very complex pantheon; expresses an abstract aniconic perception of the gods; and, that the ancient aniconic tradition continued in Judaism, the religion of the Nabataeans and Islam. A significant point relevant to Avner's analysis is that the Aramaeans were originally a nomadic desert people from Mesopotamia,⁶⁶ and one presumes their worship of baetyls reflects this common nomadic background. The Early Bronze Age dolmen field in the Jarash Basin, Jabal el-Muṭawwaq, contains numerous standing stones (pages 123-4). It seems likely therefore that aniconic baetyl worship was an integral part of the religious practice of the

⁶² Lipiński (2000) 378.

⁶³ Lipiński (2000)

⁶⁴ Avner (1999-2000: 97) traces them back to the Natufian culture of the 11th millennium BCE noting their use until the early Islamic period. He notes that unlike stelae they are neither decorated nor inscribed.

⁶⁵ Avner (1999-2000).

⁶⁶ Lipiński (2000) 491.

inhabitants of the Jarash Basin from at least the early Bronze Age and continued under Aramaean influence into the Iron Age. In contrast, to the aniconic tradition of standing stones and baetyls through the region, the wide distribution of clay figurines, both anthropomorphic and in animal form, in tombs and domestic contexts, is suggestive of polytheism. How these two conflicting views of the validity of religious imagery were reconciled is not our purpose here, although it is an intriguing question. Avner believes that standing stones can be associated with ancestor veneration as well as representation of gods and this may well prove to be true of the Bronze and Iron Age inhabitants of the Jarash Basin. Certainly, at Jabal Muṭawwaq both standing stones and dolmen are plentiful with some of the clusters of standing stones suggestive of family groupings.

Depending on the degree of Aramaean cultural influence in the Jarash Basin, Hadad, the storm god may have been worshipped there. Certainly, the excavation of a Graeco-Roman period statue of Atargatis in Gerasa, and now displayed outside the Jarash Museum raises that possibility. Although not

Fig. 10. Sculpture of the Syrian goddess, Atargatis, Jarash.

The figure has been disfigured, probably by Christian or Islamic iconoclasts, but the goddess, flanked by two lions, is clearly recognisable. (Author's photo.)

originally a main god of the Aramaeans during the nomadic phase of their history, Hadad headed the Aramaean pantheon in Syria and south eastern Anatolia. He seems to have been partnered with Atargatis, and was a storm god associated with storms, rain and fertility. Lipiński attributes his high standing in this part of the world to the underlying Semitic substratum. He is sometimes called by the Canaanite name, *Rammān*, 'the Thunderer' which reflects the sedentary agriculturalist's association of thunder, rain and

fertility. Hence the curse 'May the Thunderer not utter his voice'. No mythology or cult practices are known relating to him.⁶⁷ He is often represented in Syro-Hittite art of the 10th-8th centuries BCE standing on the back of a bull. The etymology of *'aram* is apparently 'wild bulls'.⁶⁸

In summary, although we have scant evidence of the religious beliefs and cult practices of the Iron Age inhabitants of the Jarash Basin, we may assume that they reflected those of the Bronze Age Canaanite fertility religions overlaid by later Aramaean beliefs and practices. On this basis their beliefs and practices are likely to have been polytheistic, focused on seasonal cycles, rain, fertility and crop production, with the use of clay figurines and standing stones reflecting a tension between idolatry and aniconism. Folk religion is likely to have been expressed within households, in the conferment of theophoric names on children, and in the gathering of communities at local and regional shrines for communal worship. Depending on the national affiliation of the local population, allegiance to a dominant national god is likely also.

Iron Age — language

While we do not know what language, or languages, was/were spoken in the Jarash Basin at the beginning of the Iron Age, we can be certain that it was a West Semitic dialect, or dialects, with Hebrew and Ammonite as the primary options.⁶⁹ We also know that by the end of Persian period, Aramaic was universally spoken throughout the region. It is more problematic when and how this transition occurred. It is possible that the transition began as early as Iron Age I with the emergence of Aram-Damascus as a regional power, but we simply do not know how Aram-Damascus, Ammon or Israel exercised control over the region and to what extent they colonised and intermarried. Later, the Assyrians seem to have used Aramaic as a second official imperial language and this also must have had some impact on the diffusion of the language, particularly for a region such as Gilead that was under direct provincial rule.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Lipiński (2000) 599-640.

⁶⁸ Lipiński (2000) 52.

⁶⁹ The Semitic languages are usually divided into eastern and western with the majority of them being West Semitic. The West Semitic branch is sometimes further subdivided into Ethiopic, South Arabic, Arabic and North West (including Aramaic, Hebrew, Ugaritic, Ammonite, etc).

⁷⁰ Parpola (2004) 9, 15.

Finally, as noted earlier, while Betlyon does not believe the Persians imposed language on the region, Strange asserts that the Persians made Aramaic the language of administration and eventually the language spoken by all. The model assumed here follows Schwartz in assuming a continuing diffusion of the language through the Iron Age including possible promotion of use for imperial purposes culminating in its universal usage by the end of the Persian period.⁷¹

The population of the Iron Age Jarash Basin probably came from a variety of sources – Ammon, Israel, Aram-Damascus, possibly Moab. All spoke dialects of West Semitic and were well capable of understanding each other: ‘We should imagine the entire region from the Amanus to Pelusium and from the desert to the sea as a linguistic continuum in which each group could understand its neighbours’ languages — languages which were hardly more diverse than the dialects of Greek ... you loathed your neighbours — but spoke their language.’⁷²

Schwartz provides an analysis of the linguistic conditions prevailing in the Levant in his first period (up to 300 BCE) that is important. The Near Eastern texts surviving from the Bronze Age rarely noted that different nations spoke different languages, whereas, in the literature of the Iron Age, linguistic differences, along with physical appearance and behaviour, are commonly noted as a means of national differentiation. However, in contrast to modern times, recognition of linguistic diversity is not reflected in adoption of language as a means of self-conscious group identity. Thus, the Hebrew language is never referred to in the Pentateuch (which in its present form dates to c.400 BCE), while in the entire Jewish Testament, Hebrew as a marker of Israelite identity only occurs once in *Neh.* 13.23-30 (probably written in the fourth century BCE). Schwartz concludes therefore that, although the Israelites of the Iron Age shared a language, it did not contribute to their sense of group identity, because they shared it, in dialectical form, with the wider community of West Semitic speakers.⁷³ The relevance of his argument lies in his rejection of the assumption ‘...rarely acknowledged or admitted, that the Jews were

⁷¹ Schwartz (1995) 12-21.

⁷² Schwartz (1995) 9.

⁷³ Schwartz (1995) 6-10.

incomparable.⁷⁴ On that basis, he suggests, therefore, that the Jewish literary corpus provides an important tool for analysing the social processes in the wider region.

If we accept Schwartz's argument, the Iron Age inhabitants of the Jerash Basin spoke some version, or versions, of West Semitic, depending upon their tribal origins and settlement patterns during the Iron Age; had little difficulty in communicating with each other irrespective of whether they spoke Ammonite, Hebrew, Moabite or Aramaic; and did not regard linguistic variance as a significant marker of social or group differentiation. Under the influence of Assyrian and Achaemenid administration, by the end of the fourth century, Aramaic had progressively become the common language throughout the wider region, including the Jarash Basin. This has important implications for us in teasing out the likely nature of group identity in the Jarash Basin prior to its Macedonian/Greek colonisation during the Hellenistic period when a new and totally different language spoken by the new settlers was introduced into the region. We will explore these implications in the following section.

*Exploring the evidence of group identity*⁷⁵

In the preceding sections of this chapter I have summarised the evidence relating to the formation of cultural values in the northern Transjordan from the Neolithic through to the emergence of the Hellenistic kingdoms in the late fourth century BCE. As far as possible I have tried to be specific to the Jarash Basin. I argue that by the Late Iron Age, settlements in the Basin shared a common cultural complex based upon kinship, tribal affiliation, religious belief and cultic practice, a probable belief in a pact between a chief deity and an ethnic group, a probable belief in an ancestral home land together with a shared language, Aramaic. Tribal and kinship affiliation were expressed through genealogy, veneration of ancestors and, probably, funerary banqueting; encompassed both nomadic and sedentary lifestyles; and was capable of successful adaptation to supra-tribal political organisation such as

⁷⁴ Schwartz (1995) 6.

⁷⁵ Humbert's (1992: 199) caution must qualify the following discussion: 'Tenter la synthèse de l'organisation de l'espace en Jordanie à l'Âge de Fer, est prématuré. On ne prétendra qu'amorcer en perspective. Malgré le nombre des sites, peu ont été fouillés, encore moins sont publiés. Ne sont disponibles que quelques éléments épars de stratigraphie et des lambeaux de séquences céramiques.'

Iron Age regional kingship or imperial polities such as the Neo-Assyrian, Babylonian or Achaemenid. Religious belief was polytheistic; reflected the notion that the gods intervened actively in the experienced world and needed therefore to be placated or invited to act through sacrifice and supplication; aniconic, expressed through veneration of standing stones and baetyls, while also iconic, expressed in the use of clay figurines and other divine images; centred on the seasons and fertility; and reflected a belief in an afterlife requiring care for the comforts of dead ancestors as expressed in funerary sacrifice and deposits. Cult was both public and private and was based upon sacrifice as a form of bartered contract between deity and devotee. State cult was based upon a central temple such as at Damascus (Hadad), Ammon (Moloch), Dhibon (Chemosh) and Jerusalem (Yahweh) and probably did not impact in any significant way on life in an outlying district such as the Jarash Basin.

Only the Yahweh state cult survived in the region because Judah was not assimilated into the Assyrian provincial system and the later Babylonian deportation was short-lived with the Jewish leadership being permitted to return under Persian policies and institute the Ezra-Nehemiah reforms of the fifth century. It is impossible to know, in the absence of textual or epigraphic evidence, to what extent a 'national' deity was the subject of private devotion as expressed in theophoric personal names in the region. We can be confident that there would have been smaller shrines and sacred landscapes, usually located on hills ('high places') such as the Iron Age sacred site that existed under the Zeus temple in Gerasa (see pages 212-6). It is probable that there was a variety of religious personnel associated with these shrines. It is likely also that the local people had some sort of belief in a territorial homeland. Whether this land was associated with tribal affiliation (such as, for example the biblical association with the Israelite tribe of Manasseh), an eponymous ancestor (Manasseh), any sense of nationhood (Assyrian, Aramaean?), a land whence they came (such as Assyrian settlers might have), or a land given by their primary deity is uncertain in the absence of specific textual evidence. It needs to be emphasised that these beliefs and social practices were not literary or intellectual abstractions. Instead, beliefs were encoded in cultural

memory through landscape (places of epiphany and the numinous), cultic ritual, the routines of individual daily life, beliefs and rituals relating to the passage of the seasons, the routines of food production and kinship and tribal genealogies. This summary is important in contributing to our awareness of any cultural or ethnic identity that existed in the Jarash Basin and may have continued through into the classical period.

There is a further point. Herr has emphasised that Iron Age sites on the Transjordanian highland plateau are not comparable to those west of the Jordan River.⁷⁶ In particular there are fewer of them and they tend to be fortified hamlets and farms rather than villages and towns. Although Iron Age tombs are known around Jarash, for example, no prestigious ones have been recorded to date. The lack of larger settlements with any public monumental structures together with the lack of high status burials suggest that although there almost certainly would have been some degree of role differentiation, including gender differentiation, there was unlikely to have been a high degree of social status differentiation. This image of relative egalitarianism in the indigenous rural population of the Basin does not take into account foreign imperial agents of the Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian rulers.⁷⁷ Such a provisional inference of a low degree of social differentiation must be qualified, however, by noting that it is an argument from silence in the archaeological record of the Jarash Basin and could be invalidated at any time by the discovery of high status Iron Age tombs or a larger settlement with high status dwellings or substantial public building such as a temple or shrine. With reference to Roman Gerasa itself, it should be noted that there is a general consensus that the elevated site of the temple of Zeus probably overlay a regionally significant Iron Age sacred site.⁷⁸ Similarly, excavation of five sondages on Museum Hill found pottery evidence of an Iron Age settlement in the proximity of the Zeus temple, although apparently much diminished in Iron

⁷⁶ Herr (2009).

⁷⁷ Strange (2004) argues that the Persians in particular established a complex imperial infrastructure involving administrators overseeing local agricultural production and garrison towns with the Transjordan being part of the Fifth Satrapy governed from Damascus and with Gilead under direct rule.

⁷⁸ Seigne (1997c), (2002), Ball (2000).

II.⁷⁹ Comprehensive excavation of Museum Hill is now impossible because of the Jarash Museum being located there. Similarly, the hills east of the Wadi Jarash are not capable of excavation today because of the rapid development of the modern city, although we know that Glueck found evidence of Bronze Age settlement there.⁸⁰

The Iron Age beliefs and practices of the Jarash Basin that have been delineated above should not be seen as merely an interesting social backdrop to the Hellenistic and Roman invasion and colonisation of the region. Rather they should be examined with the purpose of establishing the degree to which they reflected any sense of ethnic identity. For as discussed earlier the Iron Age was precisely the period in which the region had been subjected to explicit ethnicising processes. While it is easy to identify ancient Israel, Aram, Ammon, Moab and Edom as kingdoms reflecting fully developed ethnic identities we should also be alert to other incipient ethnicities emerging at a time when it is acknowledged ethnicity was the new form of group identity in the region.

But what do we mean by ethnicity or ethnic identity? They are terms which are used extensively in the literature of the region with rarely any attempt at definition. In examining the pre-Graeco-Roman life of the Jarash Basin, I have adopted Anthony Smith's dimensions of ethnicity which were used so effectively by Jonathan Hall in examining ethnicity in ancient Greece.⁸¹ Smith adopts a processual approach which places ethnicity within the processes of social interaction by recognising the ethnic group as a self-ascribed identity group, acknowledging the role of common descent and shared culture. He develops the concept of the *ethnie*,⁸² or ethnic community, bound by a subjective perception of shared symbolic values and history and driven by a *mythomoteur* centred on those values — 'the fused and elaborated myths [that] provide an overall framework of meaning for the ethnic community which "makes sense" of its experiences and defines its "essence"'. Smith defines an *ethnie* in terms of the following dimensions:

⁷⁹ Braemer (1985), (1992).

⁸⁰ Glueck (1939). In the same article Glueck reports on an Iron I fortified acropolis, Khirbet el-Kibdeh, about 4.5km north of Jarash.

⁸¹ Hall (1997), (2002).

⁸² For his choice of the term, see Smith (1986) 21-2.

- i) a collective name ‘... by which they distinguish themselves and summarize their “essence” to themselves’;
- ii) a common myth of descent — ‘the means of collective location in the world and the charter of the community which explains its origins, growth and destiny’;
- iii) a shared history, not an objective academic history, but rather a subjective history fulfilling ‘the poetic, didactic and integrative purposes’ of the community;
- iv) a distinctive shared culture expressed in shared language and religion, customs, institutions, laws, folklore, architecture, dress, food, music, and the arts;
- v) an association with a specific territory, ‘a land of dreams ... far more significant than any actual terrain’, in which they either reside or which is ‘a potent memory’;
- vi) a sense of solidarity ‘which in time of stress and danger can override class, factional or regional divisions within the community.’⁸³

Any *ethnie* will be able to be characterised in terms of these dimensions and may be distinguished from a class community (as, for example, Terrenato’s analysis using concepts of a bonded rural peasantry and other empire-wide social classes, (pages 63-4), or religious community. Furthermore, it is important to distinguish between an *ethnie* and state organisation. They may coincide sometimes but not necessarily. Smith specifically distinguishes the ethnic communities of the pre-modern Near East from the situation in pharoanic Egypt where ethnicity and the state did coincide. In contrast, with the exception of the brief period of the secondary ‘ethnic’ Iron Age kingdoms of the Levant, ethnicity did not coincide with the successive imperial polities.⁸⁴

In discussing historical ethnic formation, Smith emphasises the role of sedentarisation which generated a new sense of ‘localism’ with peasants forming rural hamlets, distinctive patterns of work and new ties of loyalty.

⁸³ Smith (1986) 22-31.

⁸⁴ Smith (1986) 43-5.

Secondly, out of this local pattern of economic production and exchange emerges 'folk rhythms' and little traditions, and last, a nostalgia for a lost past expressed through kinship and territory. Organised religion is of particular importance both as a code of communication of shared values and also as a focus for social organisation among pre-modern peoples. Often there was a co-incidence between the origin myths of an *ethnie* and its religious beliefs about creation and their place within the cosmos, while organised religion provided much of the personnel and communication channels for the dissemination of ethnic myths and symbols. Inter-state warfare has had an important role in crystallising and strengthening a sense of ethnicity in the dominant community of states. Smith notes that inter-state warfare can strengthen the ethnic solidarity of the participants through shared mobilisation, shared training, and shared personal danger. But more importantly, perhaps, for the purpose of this thesis, warfare can also strengthen the ethnic solidarity of a third party whose territory is disputed by the warring states and he instances both the Armenian and Jewish kingdoms.⁸⁵ It is worth noting in this context that the Jarash Basin, and indeed the whole of the Near East, shared the same geo-political context as the Israelite kingdoms through the Iron Age and into the Hellenistic period. Smith suggests that typically an ethnic community would be socially structured around —

- i) A large mass of peasants and artisans in small hamlets and towns and subject to various restrictions on their freedom;
- ii) A small urban stratum of competing elites in the main towns monopolising wealth and power;
- iii) A tiny stratum of religious personnel and scribes monopolising the community's belief systems and acting as its conduits and transmitters while mediating between the little traditions of the common folk and the central Great Tradition of the community;
- iv) A fund of myths, legends, values and symbols, often encoded, which express the community's perception of its origins and destiny;

⁸⁵ Smith (1986) 32-41

- v) Processes of communication of the communal values through temple ritual, sacred texts, artistic, architectural and dress symbols and conventions, legal codes, rudimentary schooling, military service and public works labour forces.⁸⁶

If we accept that Smith's study of the origins of ethnicity and the dynamics of ethnic formation is relevant to the study of the Jarash Basin, then also we need to consider his analysis of what happens when the community comes under threat. He defines *ethnicism* as 'a collective movement, whose activities and efforts are aimed at resisting perceived threats from outside and corrosion from within, at renewing a community's forms and traditions, and at re-integrating a community's members and strata which have become dangerously divided by conflicting pressures'. Ethnicist movements are typically found 'when a backward society is exposed to social and cultural change through the impact of a more developed society'.⁸⁷ Smith identifies three main objectives of such movements: territorial restoration, genealogical restoration (which tends to be the focus of royal houses and the nobility); cultural renewal (which goes beyond territorial renewal and is also more concerned with the whole community). What all such movements have in common is the restoration of a *status quo ante* – the Jewish prophets enjoin the Israelites to return to a semi-nomadic simplicity; Virgil and Horace lament the corrupting influence of the east on the old Roman virtues and virility. Threats may be military, economic, or cultural. The best instanced expression of ethnicism embodying all three objectives is the Jewish responses to Seleucid and Roman rule — the Maccabean revolt and the Roman period Zealots.⁸⁸ Again, it is worth noting that the Palestinian situation he describes is a reasonable approximation to the context of the Jarash Basin in the Graeco-Roman period and suggests we should examine the record carefully for evidence of any local participation in an ethnicist movement.

The point is the Graeco-Roman city of Gerasa was created in neither virgin territory nor a cultural vacuum. Archaeological surveys have demonstrated that the Jarash Basin was inhabited continuously from at least the Neolithic

⁸⁶ Smith (1986) 41-3.

⁸⁷ Smith (1986) 50.

⁸⁸ Smith (1986) 50-7.

onwards, although with fluctuations in population density and distribution. The local inhabitants, therefore, had several millennia of cultural memory. Furthermore, that memory would have been given tangible expression not only through individual, family, clan and tribal practices, but also in the landscape. Standing today in the 6000 year old Jabal el-Muṭawwaq dolmen field, for example, one has a sense of an alien and barely comprehensible landscape. On the other hand the field probably had very different significance for the Roman period peasant who had access to a long oral tradition relating to the field, ancestor veneration and the worship of standing stones and aniconism. That oral tradition may well have reflected an imprecise, even partially inaccurate, cultural memory, but precise accuracy is not the point. The later Graeco-Roman landscape would have contained many other triggers of cultural memory from both the Bronze and the Iron Ages – shrines, sacred ways for communal processions to temples and shrines, sites of earlier epiphanies and miracles, ancestral tombs, scenes of confrontation, relics of previous imperial intrusions into the life of the Basin. In other words, intrusive Hellenistic and Roman cultural values would have encountered a well-established indigenous rural culture imprinted not only in the social practices and belief systems of the local people, but also in the landscape of the Basin.⁸⁹ Of course, for the land-owning urban elite of Roman Gerasa, the land also represented additional values which may have, at times, come into conflict with the traditional values — status, wealth, boundaries, and labour exploitation. In reflecting on any such cultural conflict, it is important neither to dichotomise the differing sets of values as bounded entities, nor to import modern taxonomies and attitudes uncritically.⁹⁰ For example, we have no record indicating whether Macedonian/Greek settlement in the Basin reflected large scale migration or small scale settlement of garrison veterans. The archaeological indications suggest small scale settlement. If that proves to be the case then it is less likely that the growing town of Gerasa was an island of 'high' Hellenistic culture in a sea of local 'barbarism'. It is probable in fact, that a significant portion of the wealthy landowning elite of the Basin were local people, fully cognisant of traditional local sensitivities to the land, but who were

⁸⁹ For a review of the literature of landscape archaeology, see Thomas (2001).

⁹⁰ Thomas (2001).

individually and collectively negotiating their relationship with the value systems of the new imperial power. In short, we should not set up an unreal dichotomy by assuming that the Hellenistic period landowners of the Basin were alien intruders ignorant of, insensitive or hostile to traditional local value systems.

In developing a *longue durée* narrative of human habitation of the Jarash Basin I hope to have shown that a number of the elements identified by Smith as necessary to ethnic formation were present. The region as a whole had, during the Iron Age, established ethnicising states while sharing a common culture. Those ethnicising states — Israel, Aram-Damascus, Ammon, Moab, and Edom — linked ethnicity with emergent polities and separate great traditions; while local little traditions continued in places such as the Jarash Basin.⁹¹ I have also suggested that while those states reflect mature ethnic consciousness we should be alert to incipient ethnic communities which never reached maturity in the changing geo-political context of the Iron II period. I suggest that Gilead is an obvious example of such a possible incipient ethnic community.

Gilead had been an internationally known and named territorial entity from at least Iron II.⁹² There are frequent biblical references to it as part of Israel's Transjordanian territories. Independent attestation of this name is provided when it was established as an Assyrian province by Tiglath-Pileser III, retaining its name in the form Gal'azu.⁹³ The name of the region survived both the Babylonian and Persian empires and recurred in the Ptolemaic and Seleucid administrative district '*Galaaditis*'.⁹⁴ It also occurs in Latin as *Galaad*, and in the modern Arabic form, *Jal'ād*. Furthermore, we have biblical Iron Age II attestations to the people of the region being known as 'Gileadites' (*Judg.* 15, II *Kgs* 15.25), an identification that continued into the Roman period (for example, Joseph. *Bell.Jud.* 1.4.3 and *Ant.Jud.* 13.13.4). While not suggesting

⁹¹ On the use of the great and little traditions framework in the study of cultural interaction in Jordanian history see LaBianca (2007).

⁹² Several of the stories from the biblical patriarchal period, for example, make reference to Gilead (*Gen.* 13.25, 37.25; *Num.* 32.1; *Deut.* 3.10-16). It is an unanswerable question as to whether the later Iron Age redactors imposed an Iron Age toponym on Bronze Age anecdotes when recording those stories.

⁹³ Oded (1970); May (1943) 58.

⁹⁴ Tadmor (1962) 122; I *Macc.* 5.17, 20, 25, 27, etc; Joseph. *Ant.Jud.* 12.8.2, 3, etc.

that these indications are sufficient to conclude there was a separate Gileadite *ethnie*, it does appear that both the inhabitants themselves, and outsiders, ascribed to them a degree of group identity, shared kinship descent, shared culture and history, and a sense of territorial homeland — Smith's dimensions of ethnicity. The problem is that apart from the named territory we have no evidence other than the Jewish Testament. According to the biblical tradition, Gilead was the territory of the tribe of Manasseh (*Deut.* 3.13-16), but we do not know to what extent this and subsequent Israelite settlement in the region was an expression of political reality or political ambition by the Iron II Northern Kingdom. Given literary references to the people of the region as a named group, the kinship/tribal linking of the population, their identification of an eponymous ancestor, Manasseh, and Gilead's survival as a definable territorial entity through into the Islamic era, it is worth further examination as a possible incipient Iron Age II *ethnie*. According to Smith, in considering ethnic territory, location and autonomy are not as important as a sense of "homeland" – a territory which they and others recognise as theirs by historic right and from which they are felt to stem.⁹⁵ The biblical recognition of Gilead as the tribal 'homeland' of Manasseh does, on the face of it, seem to fit this model. (The tribal land spanned both sides of the Jordan and may reflect earlier nomadic tribal grazing land.)

Unquestionably, the Assyrian deportations from Israel and Gilead had a devastating impact on ethnic identities. The 'ethnicising' state of Israel disappeared from history, giving rise to the myth of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel (one being Manasseh). On the other hand we know from an Assyrian inscription that only 27,280 people were actually deported out of the total population:

The inhabitants of Samaria/Samerina, who agreed [and plotted] with a king [hostile to] me, not to do service and not to bring tribute [to Ashshur] and who did battle, I fought against them with the power of the great gods, my lords. I counted as spoil 27,280 people, together with their chariots, and gods, in which they trusted. I formed a unit with 200 of [their] chariots for my royal force. I settled the rest of them in the midst of Assyria. I repopulated Samaria/Samerina more than before. I brought

⁹⁵ Smith (1986) 93.

into it people from countries conquered by my hands. I appointed my eunuch as governor over them. And I counted them as Assyrians.

- *Nimrud Prism, COS 2.118D*

Fig. 11: *Nimrud Prism, COS 2.118D.*

This prism in cuneiform provides the Assyrian record of their deportation of 27,280 people from Samaria and Gilead.

(Source: [www.cojs.org/cojswiki/The Nimrud Prism, 720 BCE](http://www.cojs.org/cojswiki/The_Nimrud_Prism,_720_BCE))

Certainly, in Samaritan tradition, there were no lost tribes and they are the ethnic descendents of the remnant left behind by the Assyrians.

Whether that tradition is accurate or not, significant numbers of foreign peoples

were settled in the territories of the former kingdom of Israel as affirmed in the Assyrian inscription above. They are likely to have had a powerful impact upon any emergent ethnic identity in the region through marriage and other social interaction, especially if, as Parpola asserts, the objective of Assyrian resettlement policy was the 'Assyrianisation' of subject peoples.⁹⁶

Finally, with reference to Late Iron Age ethnicity, we should note that as the great powers of the Iron Age Near East used the region as a battlefield, Smith predicts that we should find a strengthening of ethnic sentiment and the emergence of popular movements aimed at resisting the external threat. We have textual evidence of just such a process in the Jewish Testament, the only significant collection of indigenous literature to have survived from the period. However, unlike the Kingdom of Judah, we should also note that Israel, and the Gilead, were subjected to the assimilating pressures of being an Assyrian province. A further factor that may have militated against any emergent ethnic identity in the Gilead is the levels of successive settlement in the region subsequent to Assyrian deportation and resettlement. We know the region was fought over by Aramaeans, Ammonites, Israelites, Assyrians, Persians,

⁹⁶ Parpola (2004) 146-7.

Ptolemies, Seleucids, Maccabeans and Hasmonaeans, but we have no information about settlement and changing demographics that could affect any sense of group identity.

In conclusion therefore, continued archaeological exploration of the Jarash Basin, together with the whole of the Gilead, may well provide confirmation of my hypothesis of an incipient Iron Age ethnic identity prior to the Assyrian conquest. Such a theory for now must be regarded as little more than conjectural, but it does give direction to further historical and archaeological research. We can be much more confident, however, in asserting an enduring rural cultural identity, elements of which can be traced back locally to the Bronze Age. In considering the cultural significance of the Graeco-Roman city of Gerasa therefore, it is essential to reflect upon its placement in the context of a resilient existing culture. Furthermore, we should examine its archaeology for evidence of the postcolonial concept of cultural hybridity and fusion rather than continuing to use the flawed concepts of Hellenisation and Romanisation. That exercise is undertaken in the next chapter.

1. The AD 2000 plan of Gerasa (IFAPO, JP Braun, F Carre, E Laroze, I Kehrberg, et al.).

Fig. 12 : Roman Gerasa

The principal features referred to in the following chapters are highlighted. (After March *et al.* (2010))

Chapter six

Hellenistic and Roman Gerasa: reviewing the evidence

Introduction

At some point after 323 BCE a Macedonian military unit entered the Jarash Basin as part of Alexander's subjugation of the Levant and commenced the process of taking over whatever Achaemenid imperial apparatus existed in the Basin at that time. The indigenous settlement, *Ġršu*, is likely to have been no more than a small settlement on a hill beside a river and surrounded by land dotted with farms and hamlets. Across a gully from the settlement there was probably a small sanctuary and cemetery on another hill marked by rocky outcrops and caves. It seems likely that *Ġršu* with its adjoining shrine was something of a regional centre for the Basin where the scattered population gathered for religious festivals and, perhaps, associated markets. The local people would have spoken Aramaic.

We know nothing of the transition from Achaemenid to Hellenistic rule: whether it was violent and disruptive or an orderly and well-managed transition. It is likely to have been the latter if it followed the pattern of southern Palestine, for Graf has suggested on the basis of recently published Idumaeen *ostraca*, that the transition was smooth and, further, that the well organised Persian administrative apparatus continued under the new Macedonian rulers.¹

Following the emergence of the Hellenistic kingdoms, it seems logical that there may have been a small military garrison stationed in the Jarash Basin from the late fourth century BCE, if only for policing and tribute gathering purposes, but no evidence of it has been found at this time. The archaeological evidence does indicate, however, that Macedonian settlement of the Basin was underway in the second century BCE.² The scale and the precise nature of this Hellenistic foundation are uncertain. It

¹ Graf (2003) 329-330.

² On the date: Kehrborg and Manley (2002b). Gatier (1993: 19-20) notes that names on the earliest inscriptions in Gerasa were typical Macedonian names.

seems likely that initially, at least it comprised only a military garrison and settled veterans, for one implication of the Roman defeat of the Seleucids at the Battle of Magnesia in 191 BCE, together with the humiliating and crippling terms of the subsequent Peace of Apamea, was that ‘... the foundation of cities means not colonisation but grants of autonomy to native towns’.³ If this hypothesis is accepted, it is likely that the majority of the population of the new Hellenistic foundation, now called Antioch-on-the-Chrysorhoas (formerly called Gerasa), were local people.⁴

The replacement of Achaemenid hegemony by Macedonian/Greek was a critical point in the continuing cultural adaptation within the region for from that time onward the Levant was exposed to Hellenistic culture, most notably in the cities. In *Žršu* itself, there is no known evidence of such exposure until the second and first centuries BCE. This new phase of cultural change in the region is usually discussed in terms of the concept of hellenisation. This is not surprising. The first European travellers and explorers to visit Jarash, men such as Ulrich Seetzen (1806), Johann L. Burckhardt (1812) and James Silk Buckingham (1816) came from a society that assumed the superiority of European civilisation and the technical, educational and moral backwardness, even degeneracy, of the local people.⁵ Later, the classically trained archaeologists of the Anglo-American expedition to the city in the 1930s, men such as C.H. Kraeling, C.S. Fisher, A.H. Detweiler, G. Horsfield, N. Glueck and C.C. McCown, were undoubtedly well acquainted with Roman opinions of the *Oriens* as a place of luxury and corruption; Syrians and Jews as born to slavery; and the *Asiatici Graeci*, together with the Syrians, as the most worthless of men.⁶

The excavation strategy of that 1930s expedition was basically to remove later archaeological strata as they cleared classical and Christian public

³ Jones (1971) 247.

⁴ For the various names of the settlement, see n.5, page 122. Adoption of the name, Antioch-on-the-Chrysorhoas, is first attested inscribed on a lead weight dated to 10-11 CE. Welles (1938) Inscription 251.

⁵ See, for example, Said (2003[1978]) on the construction of orientalism in western consciousness; Hingley (2000) examines the relationship with Roman imperialism in late 19th/early 20th century British imperial ideology.

⁶ See pages 8-9 for discussion of Roman literary references. For a full outline of European travellers and early archaeological efforts see Stinespring (1938).

architecture with little or no regard for the establishment of later stratigraphy or the careful tracking of cultural adaptation in the later periods.⁷ Such excavations were part of a much larger programme of continuing western exploration of the Near East, part political, part religious and part scientific. Quite apart from the political exploration, mapping and eventual domination of the region, the Near East had a twin attraction for western society as the birthplace of the Judeo-Christian tradition (generating biblical archaeology) and as the scene of the triumph of Graeco-Roman (European) culture over the east (privileging evidence of hellenisation). Both these assumptions are implicit in the strategy of the 1930s expedition in Gerasa with its focus on Byzantine churches and Roman monumentalism at the expense of later Byzantine and Islamic stratigraphy. This is not to criticise the intentions of these scholars since such were the prevailing attitudes and practices up until the end of the first half of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, while modern archaeology of the region has long since left behind the earlier explicitly Eurocentric and racist attitudes, it continues uncritically, in the main, to use the hellenisation/romanisation paradigm.⁸

Whatever the precise nature of the Seleucid settlement of Gerasa in the second century BCE, evidence of various surface surveys suggest that at the time there was a rural population living mainly in small hilltop hamlets with at least one such settlement being located on Museum Hill which, from Kraeling on, has generally been regarded as the centre of indigenous settlement and future urban development.⁹ However the artefactual evidence of the Jarash City Walls Project, one of the few examples of in-depth excavation in Gerasa, suggests that both Iron Age and Hellenistic settlement was more widely dispersed.¹⁰ This conclusion is being further confirmed by the evidence emerging from the Jarash Hinterland Survey

⁷ See, for example, Rostovtzeff's 'Preface' to Kraeling (1938a) ix-xi. Pierobon (1984a: 26-9) discusses how later excavation requires a revision of the early Islamic period as a period of urban decline.

⁸ But see Pierobon (1984a) for an early caution concerning its distorting impact upon the historiography of Gerasa.

⁹ For a list of surface surveys see Kennedy (2004) 198-201.

¹⁰ For detailed analysis of archaeological deposits from the city wall trenches see Kehrberg and Manley (forthcoming). Preliminary reports: Kehrberg and Manley (2001, 2002a, 2002b, 2003).

Fig. 13: An early photo of Gerasa

Museum Hill is highlighted. Note the Zeus Temple and South Theatre to the left of the photo and the Roman Oval Plaza over-laying part of the natural gully between the two hills (After Dalman (1925) cited in Kehrberg (2011)).

which is also demonstrating widely dispersed Iron Age and Hellenistic pottery suggestive of more widely spread settlement. Kehrberg is responsible for the analysis of the archaeological finds, in particular pottery, of the survey and has observed that only in-depth excavation can provide a more precise explanation the nature of Iron Age and Hellenistic settlement patterns.¹¹

Modern colonial and postcolonial studies have demonstrated it is flawed to assume that the colonial power was the dominant agent of change in the context of recent European colonisation. In practice, the new settlers were primarily concerned with political domination, land alienation, labour exploitation and simply getting rich, while the imperial apparatus and its agents were concerned with facilitating and moderating that process. If

¹¹ On the Jerash Hinterland Survey data: Kehrberg (forthcoming); Kehrberg (2013) *Personal communication*.

they had the wealth, leisure, appropriate education and interest, then some settlers also devoted time to local ethnology.¹² Cultural adaptation occurred as members of the local population negotiated and adapted to the language, laws, political forms, work methods, belief and education systems of their new political masters with all the attendant humiliations and injustices experienced. In reviewing the historical and archaeological evidence of Gerasa from an explicitly postcolonial perspective therefore I would posit that it is reasonable to assume, that whatever the strategic motivations of the Ptolemaic or Seleucid rulers may have been in encouraging settlement in the Jarash Basin, the actual Macedonian or Greek settlers were probably driven by motivations (the pursuit of opportunity and the dream of wealth) comparable to those of their more recent colonial counterparts. It is the same point that Holt made in describing Hellenistic society as providing ‘the opportunities of a classic frontier setting’ with opportunity to exploit ‘the native peoples’,¹³ while as Green has commented the spread of Hellenistic values in this context was ‘incidental rather than conscious or deliberate...’¹⁴

In understanding cultural change in the region at this time, the question then is not to what extent the local population was hellenised (note the passive voice when the question is so framed), but rather how they actively adapted to the new political situation and what new cultural forms and processes they created in the process? Again, how did that process of cultural resistance, adaptation and blending continue under the further challenge of their absorption into the Roman Empire? In this chapter I provide a summary overview of the relevant evidence — archaeological, epigraphic, numismatic and literary— while in the next I attempt a postcolonial interpretation.

Most of the available evidence relating to Gerasa is archaeological, but in summarising this evidence, I do not attempt to provide a comprehensive

¹² In New Zealand, for example, Stephenson Percy Smith, Edward Tregear, Elsdon Best, the Polynesian Society, founded in 1892.

¹³ Holt (1993) 54.

¹⁴ Green (1990) 313.

schedule of all archaeological work undertaken there, since some of it is not germane to my thesis. Inevitably, that raises the spectre of the postmodern critique of data selection as an essentially subjective process. My choices therefore may be disputed. Apart from that subjective process, I have minimised personal interpretation of the data in this chapter. An explicitly postcolonial analysis follows in the next chapter.

The transition from the Iron Age to the Hellenistic period

Fig. 14: Map of north-western Jordan

The map shows the distribution of sites of all periods in north-western Jordan recorded by Nelson Glueck (1934, 1935, 1939, 1951) (From Kennedy (2004)).

In the 1930s Nelson Glueck found surface evidence of Bronze Age and Iron Age I settlement, agricultural terracing and extensive fortification walls on hilltops located 180 metres north east of the Roman city walls of Gerasa.¹⁵ These hilltops have now been completely built over by development of the modern town. Glueck was have been an indefatigable explorer who located and recorded sites in a largely random and unsystematic way in the 1930s and 1951. The evidence that Glueck recorded is important in reminding us

¹⁵ Glueck (1939).

of the intensity of early settlement and land usage in the Basin. Although Glueck was one of the earliest to undertake surveying and recording of sites in the region he was not alone. In his proposal for the systematic survey of the Jarash Basin, Kennedy has provided a summary of all surveys undertaken to date and the fact that they identified and recorded several hundred sites.¹⁶

There is negligible direct evidence from the Basin that can be used to indicate cultural change deriving from Assyrian/Neo-Babylonian/Persian hegemony. It is likely that during this period the community in the Basin probably began to have some communication with the wider world as a consequence of political stability, peace, improved communication and trade. Certainly the adoption of Aramaic in the Basin during this period is evidence of external influence. We note that modern scholarship now holds that Achaemenid policy respected local cultural practices under the umbrella of a sort of *pax persica*, provided the subject peoples paid their taxes.¹⁷ There is little reason then, to expect significant cultural discontinuity in the Jarash Basin as a consequence of Persian rule. While the Achaemenids did not pursue an imperial policy of enforced assimilation, their rule and trade and communications networks did facilitate exposure of the western parts of their empire to cultural influences from further east. A glance at a map of the Achaemenid Empire suggests that towns of that period, such as *Ĝršu*, almost certainly looked eastwards towards Mesopotamia and Persia rather than towards the Mediterranean world for cultural influence. Such a westward-directed cultural influence is well exemplified in the widespread use of the stepped merlon on Syrian architecture even into the Roman period; tower altars in Syrian cult; and Persian influence on Judaism and later Christian beliefs including Zoroastrianism, the concept of resurrection, the apocalyptic genre and its

¹⁶ Kennedy (2004) 198-201.

¹⁷ See Betlyon (2005), Anderson (2002) 198, n.1; Sherwin-White (1987). Sherwin-White and Betlyon both emphasised that traditional scholarship of the Achaemenid/Seleucid transition has relied upon Greek sources resulting in a distorted perception of the Achaemenids and their rule.

underlying concepts, and textual parallels in Iranian and Judaic literature.¹⁸ It is plausible to assume such ideological influence was not specific to Judaism, but it is impossible to demonstrate in the absence of a surviving Aramaean literature, comparable to the Jewish Bible and associated literature.

Fig. 15: Model of suggested reconstruction of Hellenistic *naos*, lower terrace, Temple of Zeus, Gerasa.

The reconstruction is based on masonry fragments. The model is displayed in the crypto-portico of the temple. (Author's photo.)

There is one small piece of surviving evidence of Achaemenid cultural influence in the Jarash Basin from this period (550-330 BCE). Seigne's various articles concerning the hypothetical reconstruction on paper of the last Hellenistic Zeus temple *naos* portray it as being surmounted by stepped merlons, sixteen of which were found with other

elements of the structure buried in the foundation of the later temple.¹⁹ A temple entablature of stepped merlon crenellations is manifestly not Hellenic in origin, for the stepped merlon is a signature architectural decoration of the Achaemenids, as any visitor to Persepolis can confirm, and on the face of it, likely to be offensive to Greek sensibilities. The origins of the stepped merlon are traceable to third millennium BCE southern Mesopotamia,²⁰ and the extensive use throughout the Levant in the Hellenistic period of an artefact with such deep cultural roots is surely significant. In postcolonial terms, it provides a good example of the active agency of the subaltern culture in sustaining an indigenous symbol in a new context such as a Hellenistic temple.

¹⁸ See, for example: Barr (1985); Silverman (2012); DiTommaso (2007).

¹⁹ Eristov, Seigne *et al.* (2002).

²⁰ On the origin and ubiquity of the stepped merlon in the east see Bounni (1999).

The Hellenistic period

The Initial Macedonian/Greek settlement

No material evidence has been found yet in the Jarash Basin indicating habitation during the Early Hellenistic period.²¹ The presumption is that the tell, Museum Hill,²² was the largest settlement in the Basin of the period and that at some stage a LH Seleucid foundation adjoined it.²³ This would be consistent with Cohen's conclusion that most Seleucid foundations, were located near existing settlements and that they were often given new names.²⁴ He further suggests that the initial garrisoning of Gerasa would have been Ptolemaic from Alexandria, while the settlement was later re-founded under the Seleucids and re-named Antioch.²⁵ This conjecture is probably based upon the fact that the area was more or less continuously under Ptolemaic control until the Fifth Syrian War (202-195 BCE) when Antiochus III gained complete control of Coele-Syria at the Battle of Panias in 198 BCE. It is also consistent with the archaeological record which has found no evidence of settlement before the Late Hellenistic period.²⁶

Barghouti maintains that urban life in Jordan and Palestine during the Ptolemaic period was driven by the need to control the monopoly on international trade from the Persian Gulf and Arabian peninsula to the

²¹ Braemer (1985) 161; Kehrberg (2008).

²² The Anglo-American Expedition of the 1930s first called the hill, Camp Hill. After the construction of the local museum on the top of the hill it acquired its present name.

²³ Kraeling (1938b) 27-30; Ball (2000) 188; Kennedy (2007) 84. Seigne (1990: 10) (1992: n.16 333) considers that the site, being set on a small hill in the depth of the valley, was essentially indefensible. A site, in short, that is unlikely to have been chosen on topographical grounds by either the Macedonians or the Seleucids for a new foundation.

²⁴ Epigraphic evidence shows that the Semitic *Ġršu* was transliterated into the Greek Γερασά and that the Hellenistic foundation was formally named *Antioch on the Chrysorhoas formerly Gerasa* in both Greek and Latin as reflected in later inscriptions (Ἀντιοξέων πρὸς τῷ τῶν Χρυσορόα τῶν πρότερον Γερασσηνῶν (Welles (1938) inscription 58) *Antiochus ad Chrysorhoan quae et Gerasa* (Welles (1938) inscription 30).

²⁵ Cohen (1978) 17.

²⁶ There is limited numismatic and epigraphic evidence for an earlier date: coins minted at Gerasa asserted that the city was founded by Alexander the Great; a base for a statue of Peerdikkas dedicated to the city in the third century (Seyrig (1965)). For further discussion see page 168, n. 44 below.

commercial *entrepôts* of the Egyptian and Syrian coasts.²⁷ If this was the decisive factor then the branch route from the south-north Kings' Highway through Gerasa and the Ajlun Highlands into the Jordan Valley and thence to the Mediterranean coast explains the expansion and evident relative affluence of the Gerasene community in the Hellenistic and Roman period.²⁸ Further corroboration is provided by Cohen's point that Seleucid colonies were not established in wilderness areas, but rather to maintain a presence at strategically significant locations. While he concedes that most of our information derives from Asia Minor, he argues that the situation in Western Asia was comparable.²⁹ While some of the colonies were civilian, the most readily available colonists were soldiers, Greek and Macedonian, who were of proven loyalty and keen to receive a land grant. Often garrisoned soldiers and reservists were subsequently demobilised and settled with land grants in the garrison location. But whether they were placed in the colony while on active service or as retired veterans, such colonists were militarily trained and easily mobilised if required.³⁰ This analysis of Seleucid settlement policy is consistent with the archaeological evidence of the Jarash Basin as a settled locale and not a wilderness area. Veteran settlement is also consistent with Jones' point regarding the impact of the Battle of Magnesia and the Treaty of Apamea that was noted earlier. Furthermore, the east-west route from the desert steppe to the Jordan Valley through the Jarash Basin and the Ajlun Highlands has long provided a link between Palestine and the hinterland with the Ayyubid Ajlun castle attesting to the route's continuing strategic military significance. In short, locating first a Ptolemaic and then a Seleucid garrison and settlement in the Basin made sound military sense.

The letter of Antiochus III to his *strategos*, Xeuxis, concerning the settlement of 2000 Mesopotamian Jewish families, attendants, and their personal effects in Asia Minor in response to rebellions in Lydia and Phrygia

²⁷ Barghouti (1982) 213.

²⁸ Kennedy (2007: 90) provides a map of the Roman road network which nicely demonstrates the role of Gerasa as a significant node in that network.

²⁹ Cohen (1978) 5-10.

³⁰ Cohen (1978) 3-5.

provides an example of the process for the establishment of a Seleucid foundation.³¹ Cohen emphasises the stability of such foundations and their continued organic growth and vitality which he attributes to the social cohesion of the settlers, their retention of civic and religious customs, and the fact that they were not assimilated although there would have been marriage to local women who then became Greek.³² Other writers confirm the manner in which the colonists kept to themselves.³³ Interestingly, this may not have been the view shared by contemporary outsiders because, as noted earlier, some Romans seem to have regarded Asian Greeks as 'having gone native'.³⁴ A comparable analogy may be the way newly arrived pilgrims looked askance at the established members of the medieval Crusader kingdom, who were similarly viewed as having got too close to the local Islamic population.³⁵ If opulent display, constant military campaigning and the maintenance of large standing armies are among the most obvious characteristics of Hellenistic rule, be it Ptolemaic or Seleucid, then it is likely that the exaction of tribute and tax would have been the primary experience of this rule by the inhabitants of the Jarash Basin. The crippling terms of the Treaty of Apamea (188 BCE) imposed by the Romans on Antiochus III would have exacerbated this experience. Furthermore, the decline of Seleucid power in the region led to an increase in political instability and military feuding among local tyrants and petty rulers. Josephus describes how Gerasa suffered in this political instability being besieged by Alexander Jannaeus (Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* 1.4.8), while Ptolemaic tax collecting in the Levant is also described by him (Joseph. *Ant. Jud.* 12.4.1-5).

We know little of the early life of the initial Hellenistic settlement at Gerasa and can only assume that it conformed to the general outline of Seleucid foundations proposed by Cohen. With reference to the social life of any early Greek settlement it is worth noting both Erlich and Tcherikover

³¹ Joseph. *Ant. Jud.* 3.147-53.

³² Cohen (1978) 29-36.

³³ Green (1990) 312-335; Walbank (1981) 65, 159; *contra* Rostovtzeff (1941) vol. I 517-9, 522-3; Sherwin-White (1987) 1-31.

³⁴ Livy 36.17.5 '... hic Syri et Asiatici Graeci sunt, uilissima genera hominum et seruituti nata.' The remark may be wartime jingoism for it is a reference to Antiochus III's army of Syrians and Asian Greeks.

³⁵ Runciman (1965) [1952] vol.2 291-324.

suggest that Greek immigrants and soldiers, coming from the lower classes, were unlikely to be propagators of high Hellenic culture.³⁶ Further, Holt has described the Hellenistic world as

‘... essentially a frontier society. Not only along the hinterlands of that world, but even in the urban heartlands of Mesopotamia and Syria, Greek colonists could exploit (at the expense of native peoples) all the opportunities of a classic frontier setting: an abundance of new resources, a low ratio of men to land, increased mobility, a mingling of many occupational and social backgrounds, and something of a safety valve for ongoing expansion and exploration. Thus the Hellenistic frontier existed at almost all points, in Memphis as well as Meroë, in Babylon as well as in Bactria, in downtown Jerusalem no less than in the deserts of Jordan. This fast frontier experience was fundamental in shaping the history and culture of the Hellenistic world ...’³⁷

Graf was even more explicit:

‘Throughout the Hellenistic era, the towns and villages constituting the later Decapolis cities were mainly clusters of urban settlements and nucleated conglomerations devoid of any of the basic political institutions or civic organisations of the traditional classical Greek city. On the whole, they consisted mainly of fortified villages garrisoned by Greeks and Macedonians in order to secure the region and provide a communication system for administrative and military purposes in Palestine.’³⁸

Turning to Gerasa specifically, we have no evidence, literary or material, of any Ptolemaic or Seleucid garrison based there (although it is a reasonable inference). However, names preserved in later inscriptions are predominantly Greek and point to Greek settlement whether by military garrison or colonists.³⁹ Though again we should note that some inscriptions show intergenerational use of both Greek and Semitic names within the one family, indicative of the practice by local people of the adoption of Greek names as one component of their adaptation to their new colonial masters.

³⁶ Tcherikover (1961: 26-7) quoted in Erlich (2009) 4.

³⁷ Holt (1993) 54.

³⁸ Graf (1992) 34.

³⁹ Gatier (1993: 19-20 suggests that the early ones were typical Macedonian names.

Fig. 16: Topographical map of location of Ğršu at the time of Hellenistic settlement.

As posited by Seigne, Ğršu itself is the shaded area located on Museum Hill. Clusters of dots represent *necropoleis*. (From Seigne (1990).)

digging foundations for modern buildings.⁴⁰ Additionally, comparatively little below-surface archaeology has been undertaken to date and when it has been done it has revealed Hellenistic remains, as, for example, Seigne's excavation of the north end of the lower *temenos* of the Zeus temple complex; Kehrberg and Manley's Jarash City Wall Project; Braemer's sondages in the southern slopes of Museum Hill; Pierobon's sondages in the Artemis temple *temenos*.⁴²

In contrast to this lack of archaeological evidence relating to the date of initial Greek/Macedonian settlement, numismatic and epigraphic evidence

The paucity of evidence of Hellenistic settlement may be due to Roman and Byzantine urban re-development in Gerasa, especially from the second century CE on, or it may be an accident of exploration to date.⁴⁰ Substantial tracts of land within the city walls still remain unexcavated on both the eastern and western side of the city. On the eastern side, modern settlement since the 1870s has meant that little is likely to be done in the future, although some archaeology has emerged as a result of

⁴⁰ Pierobon (1984a: 26) notes the limited area excavated and the lack of in-depth digs. See also Kehrberg (2011).

⁴¹ Kehrberg (2013) *personal communication*.

⁴² A point emphasized by Kehrberg (2011). For full discussion of these various excavations see chapter seven.

claim that it occurred in the EH period.⁴³ While local coinage affirming Alexander as the founder of the city may be given low credibility, a third century CE statue base honouring Perdikkas ‘certainly requires some explanation’.⁴⁴ The other interesting point to note about the archaeological evidence (religious, funerary and other structures, as well as widely distributed sherds) is that it is suggestive of a prosperous and well-established Late Hellenistic community — which, perhaps, carries the implication that initial Greek settlement occurred rather earlier. Until recently much of this LH evidence was centred on two locations in the western half of the ancient city — the Temple of Zeus/Museum hill locality at the southern end of the city and in the northern sector, on the hill where the Temple of Artemis stands — and it is this evidence I now review.

The southern settlement location

This settlement location is at the southern end of the Roman city, adjoining the west side of the river, and comprises two facing hillocks, (see figure 15 above). It was established that Museum Hill, the northern of the two hills was the location of an indigenous settlement, a simple village of houses and agricultural building prior to its Hellenistic development, while the facing hill was the focus of cultic activity dating back to the Iron Age.⁴⁵ The cult site is one of our most important sources of direct information, archaeological and epigraphic, for the progressive development of the city until the second half of the first century CE.⁴⁶ Its archaeology is therefore of critical importance in understanding cultural change during this period and is discussed more fully in the next chapter.

⁴³ For discussion of this evidence see Kraeling (1938b: 28-32.) and Seyrig (1965).

⁴⁴ Kraeling (1938b) 29. The inscription reads: Ἀγαθῇ Τύχῃ/Αὐρ(ήλιος) Σεργήνος/Αιουίτου Τόν/Περδίκκαν Τῇ/[κ]υρίᾳ πατ[ρίδι]/[ἐ]φιλοτιμύσατο Welles (1938: 423) commented on the inscription that ‘It is hard to explain the erection in the city in the third century of “the Perdikkas” unless the person so commemorated bore a special relation to Gerasa and was too well known to require more exact definition.’

⁴⁵ Seigne. (1992) 333; Graf (1992) 18.

⁴⁶ Twenty years ago, Seigne (1992:333) considered it the only such source.

The deep gully between the hills was later in-filled and developed into the Roman period Oval Plaza. The depth of the gully between the two hills was established by the Anglo-American expedition which excavated to a depth

Fig. 17: Late Hellenistic gate, Gerasa

The gate, lower right corner, was located beneath the southern entrance to the Oval Plaza (From Fisher 1932).

of more than six metres below the pavement of the Oval Plaza.⁴⁷ Fisher reported the expedition's conclusion that the two hills represented the original settlement having found a LH gate beneath the pavement of the *cardo* at the entrance to the Oval Plaza (see Figure 19).⁴⁸

In 1985 Frank Braemer, of the original IFAPO team, confirmed that the Anglo-American expedition's conjecture that Museum Hill (formerly Camp Hill) had

been the site of both IA and LH settlement. He sank five exploratory trenches on the terraces of the southern slope of Museum Hill and reported that these sondages contained Iron II pottery and building structures and also LH stratification.⁴⁹ It was assumed that the original Iron Age settlement probably covered no more than a couple of hectares, but a joint Jordanian Dept of Antiquities-University of Jordan expedition excavating over three seasons (1975, 1976 and 1978) in the south-west quadrant of the Roman

⁴⁷ Fisher (1932) 7.

⁴⁸ Fisher (1932) 8.

⁴⁹ Braemer (1985). The City Wall Project found further evidence of Iron Age and LH stratification away from Museum Hill (Kehrberg and Manley (2001), (2002a), (2002b), (2003).

city, adjoining the Oval Plaza and *cardo* confirmed that the Hellenistic settlement covered a larger area.⁵⁰ Coins and pottery finds established Hellenistic occupation in this part of the city from the second century BCE.

The northern settlement location

Fig. 18: Roman & Byzantine developments in northern sector of Gerasa

Major developments at the northern end of the city are highlighted . (After Raja (2012).)

The most dominant feature of the surviving Roman city is the huge second century CE Artemis sanctuary to the north of the Zeus temple complex. The location seems to have had an enduring religious significance for apart from the Artemis temple, the gently rising hill on which it stands is characterised by earlier Hellenistic and Roman tombs, the earliest Byzantine cathedral complex on the east side of St. Theodore's Church, two earlier temples (one beneath the Cathedral, generally regarded as dedicated to the Nabataean deity, Dushares, and the other adjoining St

⁵⁰ Barghouti (1982).

Theodore's, simply known as Temple C), and the Fountain Court where the miracle of the Cana wedding was commemorated annually when the fountain reportedly flowed with wine, itself believed to be a Christianisation of a local Dionysian rite.⁵¹ Dushares came to be identified with Dionysos;⁵² which provides a Nabataean/Dionysian/Christian cultic continuity to the site. Furthermore, inscriptions indicate that there was an earlier temple to Artemis and also a temple to Hera and another to Isis in the vicinity.⁵³

In their 1930 progress report on the Joint Yale University-American Schools of Oriental Research Expedition excavations, Fisher and McCown noted two caves adjoining the *temenos* of the Artemis temple and St Theodore's Church which were thought to have been Hellenistic tombs and they also reported scattered Hellenistic pottery.⁵⁴ Similarly, a Hasmonaean and an Antiochus' coin found near the Artemis *temenos* point to probable Greek use of this area during the period of Seleucid rule.⁵⁵ Kraeling reflected the consensus of the Joint Expedition in proposing that prior to its later Roman development, this area was primarily used for funerary purposes and summarised the evidence:

'Beginning at the southern temenos wall of the Artemis complex funerary caves and shaft tombs have been found under the Clergy House (Gerasa, Plan XLV, rooms B 63-64 (Cave 4), B 51 (Caves 6-7), B 59 and B 53 (shaft tombs)), under the atrium of St. Theodore (Plan XXXIII, room 20, cave), and under the houses (Plan XLVI, House IV, room A 2 (shaft tomb)) and the streets (Plan XLVI, Caves 1 and 5) of the Area west of St. Theodore. In addition to a goodly number of funerary cups found throughout the vicinity, a stone tomb door came to light west of House VI (Plan XLVI, room A 15) and a sarcophagus in the street west of St. Theodore (Plate LVII, b). Cave 5 extends into the precincts of Temple C itself.'⁵⁶

⁵¹ Kraeling (1938b) 63.

⁵² Healey (2001) 100.

⁵³ Fisher and Kraeling (1938) 147. On the temple beneath the cathedral see Crowfoot (1931); Jäggi *et al.* (1997); Jäggi, Meier, and Kehrberg (1998).

⁵⁴ Fisher and McCown (1929-30) 8, 10-14, 30.

⁵⁵ Fisher and McCown (1929-30) 21, 41. Confirmed later by coin finds in trenches 2000 and 300, and the Hellenistic tomb of the City Walls project: Kehrberg and Manley (2001), (2002b), (2003).

⁵⁶ Kraeling (1941) 11; Fisher and Kraeling (1938) 146.

The so-called ‘Temple C’ discovered by the Joint American Expedition lies just to the west of the atrium of St Theodore’s basilica which adjoins the Artemis *temenos* and part of the Cathedral complex.⁵⁷ After reviewing all the evidence, both architectural and artefactual finds, Kraeling and Fisher date the construction of the temple to the middle of the second century BCE.⁵⁸ The excavators concluded that it was an *Heroön* connected to the necropolis stretching across this area and under the western city wall.⁵⁹ This interpretation was immediately disputed and an alternative interpretation was that it was the original Nabataean temple of Gerasa (with inscriptions indicating the existence of such a shrine).⁶⁰

Fig. 19: ‘Temple C’, Gerasa

The colonnaded court, altar, steps and base and capital of *anta* and *cella* are clearly visible in the photo. (After Fisher & McGown (1929-1930).

⁵⁷ Fisher and Kraeling (1938). For an excavation report and preliminary interpretation see Fisher and McCown (1929-1930) 19-22, [58], [60].

⁵⁸ Fisher and Kraeling (1938) 143-6. Kehrberg (2013: *personal communication*) advises that the French archaeologist and stone mason, J.C. Bessac, considered quarry marks in the locale to be datable to the second century BCE.

⁵⁹ Fisher and Kraeling (1938) 146-8.

⁶⁰ Vincent (1940). *Contra* Kraeling (1941). A useful summary of the evidence of a necropolis on the slopes of the Artemis Temple hill is provided by Kraeling (1938b: 11).

In the final report of the Joint Expedition, there is extensive discussion of a another temple structure under the fourth century church, the 'cathedral'.⁶¹ Further evidence of Hellenistic settlement in this area adjoining the Artemis Temple was found by the Jarash Cathedral Project which excavated the structure under the cathedral.⁶² The excavators concluded that based upon pottery finds this earlier temple can be dated to the first century or early second CE, that it was abandoned for religious purposes prior to 378 CE and the construction of the cathedral and that it contributed the Hellenistic architectural elements found in the cathedral fill.

Traditionally this area has been regarded as simply a Hellenistic necropolis outside the northern perimeter of the Hellenistic settlement to the south. The tombs and a *heroön* as summarised by Kraeling seventy years ago support this conclusion. But it is evident from subsequent excavation that the site had significance beyond the funerary: the *heroön* was converted into 'Temple C', while temples of uncertain date were dedicated to Artemis, Hera and Isis. Furthermore, scattered Hellenistic pottery has been found over wide areas well away from the southern settlement site, including evidence of kiln waste, by both the Jarash City Walls Project and also the Jarash Hinterland Survey. This wide distribution of the Hellenistic pottery led Kehrberg to suggest that Hellenistic settlement may well have been more widespread rather than simply focused to the south. As she has noted, only in-depth excavation of selected sites can provide a definitive answer.⁶³

Funerary evidence

Excavation of surviving Late Hellenistic/Early Roman tombs, both *hypogea* and a very limited number of above ground monumental structures, has demonstrated extensive *necropoleis* around the Roman period city. In the 1930s, Fisher noted that it was evident that many *hypogea* tombs in

⁶¹ Kraeling (1938a: 201-19). Jaggi *et al.* (1997; 314) give the cathedral a *terminus post quem* date of 378 CE based on coin finds.

⁶² Jaggi *et al.* (1998); Jäggi *et al.* (1997); Brenk *et al.* (1995).

⁶³ Kehrberg (2011).

particular have been lost to modern development.⁶⁴ To the south the necropolis stretched for approximately 800 metres along the Gerasa-Philadelphia (Amman) road from the southern gate of the city. A few tombs near, and within, the hippodrome and Hadrian's Arch have been excavated, fewer published, and the area has subsequently been subject to road construction and modern development.⁶⁵ Several *hypogea* on wasteland outside the city wall seems to be all that remains of the eastern necropolis, while much of the western necropolis is now lost under modern development including the road running the length of the ancient west wall. Finally, several tombs, including a recently excavated mausoleum, have been found several kilometres to the north of the city around the Birketein complex, the most notable being the second century CE tomb of the centurion, Germanus.

Parts of the *necropoleis* were destroyed in Roman times prior to civic development.⁶⁶ Thus when the southern extensions of the city (Hadrian's Arch, the southern gate, the hippodrome, upper terrace of the Zeus Temple) were developed in the mid-second century CE most of the earlier Hellenistic cemetery was destroyed. Similarly, Hellenistic tombs on the slopes of the Artemis temple site and beyond were disturbed by later construction including the second century city wall and the Christian churches built in the fourth to sixth centuries.

The size and quality of some of the tombs suggest the existence of a significant affluent population with probable cultural links with the wider Late Hellenistic international *koinē* as posited by Kehrborg.⁶⁷ After reviewing the pottery finds from earlier excavations of *hypogea* tombs close to Hadrian's Arch, the hippodrome and the upper Zeus temple, Kehrborg concluded that Gerasa was 'a vibrant town of some standing in the second century BC'.⁶⁸ Nothing remains however that could be taken as an indication of great

⁶⁴ Fisher (1938a).

⁶⁵ For a fuller description of this area and its excavation see: Kehrborg and Ostrasz (1992) esp. 167-9.

⁶⁶ For discussion of this process, see Kehrborg (2011).

⁶⁷ Kehrborg (2004b).

⁶⁸ Kehrborg (2004b) 194.

wealth comparable to the tombs of Petra and the mausolea of Palmyra.⁶⁹ Seigne concluded that most of the Gerasa *hypogea* were quickly constructed, lacked decoration or inscription with only one in the southern necropolis showing evidence of wall paint in its *loculi* and only two carrying lintel inscriptions. One of these inscriptions refers to the association of bakers and establishes that not all the *hypogea* were family tombs. Most of the underground tombs lack any surviving above ground structure and protective enclosures were rare. Only four above ground mausolea have to date been discovered, two of which have been completely erased by development.⁷⁰ Seigne's conclusions need to be qualified by two points. First, painted stucco similar in design to that from one of the Hellenistic Zeus temple *naoi*, was found in trenches 100 and 500 by the Jarash City Walls Project. Obviously, it was decoration from either a tomb or another expensive structure. Second, with the closure of earlier *necropoleis* to make provision for later development, any above ground mausolea were inevitably destroyed. In fact, that reconstructed on paper by Morin and Seigne is evidence of just that process.⁷¹ An intact tomb from the Late Hellenistic period and the Morin and Seigne reconstruction of an above ground mausoleum are particularly important and their cultural significance is fully discussed in the next chapter.

If monumental architecture is evidence of wealth accumulation, then the Hellenistic settlement, saw significant growth in wealth in Gerasa as evidenced by the Hellenistic gate beneath the Oval Plaza, the undisturbed family tomb and contents found in trench 100 of the Jarash City Walls Project, painted wall fragments belonging to a building or tomb found in trenches 100 and 500, Temple C and the Dushares temple under the cathedral, the tomb whose design Morin and Seigne reconstructed from surviving fragments and the progressive Hellenistic development of the lower *temenos* of the Zeus Temple. However some caution needs to be

⁶⁹ On tomb excavations, see Fisher (1939); Naghawi (1989); Moussa, Rasson and Seigne (1992); Abu Dalu(1995); Seigne, and Morin (1995); Seigne (2006). On links with the wider Hellenistic *koine* see Kehrberg (2004a); (2006).

⁷⁰ Seigne (2006) 141.

⁷¹ Seigne and Morin (1995).

exercised in drawing this conclusion. While this architecture reflects eastern Hellenistic styles, some structures were built at the beginning of the first century CE and the private wealth that they reflect may have been accumulated in the greater political stability following the Pompeian settlement of the region. Conspicuous *mausolea* and euergetism expressed in public architecture are however thoroughly Hellenistic concepts.

As far back as 1987, Millar had emphasised that hellenisation was not a uniform phenomenon in Syria.⁷² It is a theme that Tidmarsh picked up when reviewing the archaeological evidence of Hellenistic influence in Pella, another of the Decapolis cities of the Transjordan.⁷³ In contrast to the minimal (though growing) known evidence from Pella, Gadara to the north shows impressive archaeological evidence of Hellenistic influence. This impression is confirmed by the city's status as the birthplace of the third century BCE philosopher, Menippos, the first century BCE philosopher, Philodemos, and poet, Meleagros. In contrast, Pella, Abila, Philadelphia and Gerasa seem much less hellenised and, as a consequence, Tidmarsh agrees with Graf in affirming there was no pre-Augustan Decapolis —a term to be avoided therefore with its implication that these cities were politically organised in accordance with the institutions of the Greek *polis*.⁷⁴ Tidmarsh concludes that 'on current evidence, however, the impact of Macedon and the Greek world at large on the city seems to have been merely superficial.'⁷⁵ He notes that this pattern of variable adoption of Hellenic culture in the Transjordan is also reflected in Palestine where again there is considerable variation.

The Hellenistic period – epigraphic evidence

Apart from stamped Rhodian *amphorae*, I have been able to locate only one published inscription belonging to the Hellenistic period. It comes from the

⁷² Millar (1987a) 110-133.

⁷³ Tidmarsh (2004).

⁷⁴ Tidmarsh (2004) 465. He follows Tsetskhladze in defining Hellenisation as 'the spread of Hellenic culture in non-Greek "barbarian" society and the process by which "barbarians" accept, adopt and incorporate Hellenic culture.' Tidmarsh (2004) 459, n.1.

⁷⁵ Tidmarsh (2004) 466.

lower terrace of the Zeus Temple and has recently been subjected to careful analysis by Gatier and Seigne.⁷⁶ They note the extreme rarity of a Hellenistic period inscription from the Near East, especially from the interior, and hence the importance of this one. In summary, the architectural block carrying the inscription was discovered, re-used, in the foundations of the *naos* constructed in the mid-first century CE at the north end of the lower terrace. The *in situ* remains of the earlier Hellenistic building from which it comes are limited to a two metre section of a wall. However over twelve hundred blocks have been recovered from the foundations of the later first century structure; and these have enabled a reconstruction of the Hellenistic period temple (see fig. 15 above). Gatier and Seigne date this structure (and therefore the inscription) to the first century BCE. It is surmised from the block's dimensions that the inscription was on the lintel of a door in the temple.

The inscription reads:

[Ο]ἱ τῆς τοῦ Διὸς/[Τ]οῦ ἁμμανα ἐτ[αι]ρείας, ἐπάρχοντος
[Βε(?)]λλαίου τοῦ Σπασινου.

The companions/fellowship of Zeus-Hammana
[made/offered this] during the governorship of
Bellaïos son of Spasines.

It raises several interesting points. First, its brevity. It lacks a verb and it does not specify whether it memorialises a construction or an offering. The authors surmise that it refers to the construction of the Hellenistic temple itself. Second, based on other Near Eastern inscriptions, the authors also conclude that the *hetairai* are a religious rather than political or social group. Third, the epithet *Hammana* is unusual. After considering several possible explanations all with a Semitic connection, Gatier and Seigne express a preference for a possible link to the Semitic deity, Baal-Hammon, attested in Phoenicia, Carthage and Palmyra. The final significant point of the inscription relates to the identity of the governor, Bellaïos, son of Spasines.

⁷⁶ Gatier and Seigne (2006).

The authors, very tentatively, identify him as a son of the Characene, Hyspaosines, who had been a satrap under Antiochos Epiphanes IV between 150-129 BCE and then king of Characene.

The only other known Hellenistic inscriptions are those recorded by on Rhodian amphorae and other pottery fragments.⁷⁷ These fragments and their inscriptions provide additional confirmation of Kehrberg's point that Gerasa was involved in international trade.⁷⁸

In summary, the Zeus-Hammana inscription is the only substantial Hellenistic period inscription found so far at Gerasa. It is reasonably securely dated to the second or early first century BCE and provides evidence of the use of Greek in a formal commemorative context. Its significance lies in its demonstration of the existence of a fellowship of devotees of a Semitic deity, probably a Baal, being assimilated to Zeus during the Hellenistic period.

The Roman period

Roman period – the archaeological evidence

Whereas, for much of the Hellenistic period Gerasa seems to have been little more than a small unplanned garrison town which only in the last years of the era started constructing more ambitious monumental architecture, under Roman hegemony the town became a planned city of notable public monumental architecture. Furthermore the development of the city in the second century reflects the adoption of a formal city plan based upon the *cardo/decumani* street layout. It is the evidence for the development of the city that I review in this chapter section rather than focusing on detailed analysis of individual buildings. The primary focus is on the building programme during the first couple of centuries under Roman rule.

⁷⁷ Welles (1938) Inscriptions 241-7.

⁷⁸ Kehrberg (2004a), (2004b), (2006)); Stamped amphorae handles were also found in LH and early Roman stratified contexts in the city wall excavations (Kehrberg and Manley (2001), (2003)) and the cathedral excavations (Jaggi, Meier, Brenk and Kehrberg (1997).

There seems to be two hypotheses relating to the expansion of the town in the post-Pompeian/Early Roman period. (For the Roman city plan, see Figure 14 on page 154.) According to one theory, expansion at this time was constrained by the river Chrysorhoas to the east and *necropoleis* to the south and north-west. As a consequence, expansion seems to have been primarily in a northerly sprawl along the lane or path which later was to become the *cardo*. It should be emphasised that during this stage of civic development there was no suggestion of Hippodamian planning. Instead, tracks and lanes radiated out from the depression in front of the *tell* which was to later be developed as the Oval Plaza, a critical node in the city's roading system. One such path (leading northwards from the Hellenistic gate found below the Oval Plaza) would have been the road that was later monumentalised as the *cardo*.⁷⁹ The development of the Oval Plaza and the initial development of the *cardo* occurred late first/early second centuries.⁸⁰

The other theory is that development occurred in the Early Roman period on both sides of the river centred on existing local settlements. This theory, proposed by Kehrborg, is based upon the following points:

- i) the early second century construction of the city wall which circumvallates a substantial area of land on the east side of the river, implying at least some urban activity there;
- ii) two bridges cross the river — an unnecessary expense if there was not a significant and growing population on the east side;
- iii) one of the bridges aligns with the south *decumanus* and the gate in the city wall on the eastern side of the river;
- iv) the monumentalised processional way for the newly constructed Artemis Temple complex begins on the east side and crosses the second bridge;
- v) a large *therma* was constructed on the east side, probably in the second century, surely to service the population on that side of the river, and

⁷⁹ Seigne (1992) 336, esp. n.34.

⁸⁰ Seigne (1992) 336; Kennedy (2007) 41.

- vi) *in situ* personal observation of modern construction digging up LH-Early Roman and Roman structures.⁸¹

The initial Roman period development of the *cardo* established a monumentalised avenue between the northern entry to the city and its principal temple, that to Zeus Olympios.⁸² This original Roman development of the *cardo* can still be seen at the northern end where the street is narrower and the original Ionic columns remain in place. The second century re-development of the street widened it and placed Corinthian columns along the southern and central sectors. Such colonnaded streets, widespread in the Near East, are central to the interpretation of cultural differences between eastern and western urbanism.

The next major development phase follows Hadrian's visit to the city in 129/30. After the visit there was a surge in public construction beautifying the city and providing all the traditional public amenities of a Roman style city (ceremonial arch, new city gates, theatres, hippodrome, *nymphaeum*, *tetrapylon* and *tetrakionion*, city wall,⁸³ *macellum*, baths, *cardo* and *decumani*, new centrally placed temple dedicated to Artemis, now adopted as *Tyche* of the city, probable *bouleuterion/curia* and basilical forum and agora) in accordance with what was believed to be an explicit city plan, probably documented. As a consequence, it is conjectured there was professional assistance from architects and surveyors in the imperial entourage and a possible injection of imperial funds.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Kehrberg (2013) *personal communication*.

⁸² According to Ball (2000: 256-61) this was possibly a Nabataean influence with other examples cited including Petra, Byblos, Palmyra and Bosra. Seigne (1992) sees the monumentalisation of this street as the first step in formal urban planning in the growing city.

⁸³ The dating of the city wall was long disputed with Kraeling (1938b: 42ff) arguing for 75CE and Seigne (1992: 335) proposing the turn of the third/fourth centuries. Kehrberg and Manley (2003: 86) report that the Jarash City Walls Project, set up for the precise purpose of resolving the question of date of construction, by excavating on all four sides of the city, established that the wall was built during the first half of the second century.

⁸⁴ Kraeling (1938b) 49-51. Fragments of the dedicatory inscription of the North Gate may refer to Hadrian as founder of the city. It is a questionable restoration of a damaged inscription: ἡ [πόλ]ις τῷ ιδίῳ σ[ω]τηρὶ κ[αὶ] κ[α]τί[σ]τη ... Welles (1938) inscription 57.

During the second half of the second century, the city embarked upon the construction of a new temple complex, dedicated to Artemis situated on the north-west necropolis hill, the closure of the necropolis having occurred earlier to allow for the construction of the city wall and other buildings such as Temple C and the Dionysus temple.⁸⁵ The Artemis temple is notable in the development of Gerasa for having been placed at a distance from the traditional urban centre of the *tell* and the Zeus temple and for being on an axis at ninety degrees to the *cardo*. But if the dimensions of the new city plan are defined by the circumvallation of the city wall then it is evident that the Artemis complex is its centrepiece. A grand sacred way was created from the complex which crossed the *cardo* and then bridged the Chrysorhoas as part of the integration of the urban life on both sides of the river as part of the city plan. Moreover, the huge scale of the project makes the temple complex the dominant architectural landmark of the city and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that it was intended to supplant and dwarf the Zeus Temple.⁸⁶ From inscriptions and coins of the period it is also clear that Artemis was adopted as the *tyche* of the city, an initiative which lends itself to the speculation that the construction of the temple reflects some sort of power play in the city's second century politics.⁸⁷ But if the Artemis temple was intended to rival the Zeus temple (a modern speculation), then it seems that the devotees of the latter shrine were prepared to attempt to meet the challenge, because an entirely new grand complex, the upper temple, was built at approximately the same time on a higher level on the hill and with access from the lower *temenos* (see fig. 29).

Simultaneous with the construction of the Artemis temple, the north and south *decumani* were monumentalised with colonnades and a *tetrapylon* (north *decumanus*) and *tetrakionion* (south *decumanus*).⁸⁸ In other words

⁸⁵ On the excavation of the Artemis Temple see Fisher and McCown (1929-1930), Fisher (1932), Kraeling (1938a); Parapetti (1982), Parapetti (1989), Brizzi *et al.* (2001).

⁸⁶ Using images on coins struck by Gerasa, Seigne (1992: 338) argues that in the earlier years Artemis was a secondary deity of less significance to Zeus and that the initial development of the city and the *cardo* had been focused on the Zeus shrine.

⁸⁷ Parapetti (1990); Seigne (1992).

⁸⁸ For discussion of the design and construction of the streets of Gerasa see Seigne (2008). On milestones in the *chora* of Gerasa see Agusta-Boularot, Mujjali and Seigne (1998); Seigne and Agusta-Boularot. (2008).

by the middle of the second century there seems to have been a formal plan for the development of the city based upon Hippodamian principles. The bones of the plan, as it were, are the city wall, the *cardo* and the two *decumani*; the Artemis temple and other public buildings elaborated the plan in accordance with Roman principles of urbanism.

At an unknown date a bridge was also built to enable the south *decumanus* to cross the Chrysorhoas and, together with the northern bridge, to facilitate the urban integration of both sides of the river. Development of the east bank continued with the construction of the east *therma*. It is generally assumed that the east side of the river was residential although the inability to carry out systematic excavation in the modern city has prevented the testing of this hypothesis. Partial confirmation is provided by the fact that the nineteenth century Circassian refugees who settled on the site did so on the east side utilising an abundance of dressed masonry suitable for residential construction. Welles also records the presence of a mosaic that was found in 1907 in the home of the Circassian village *mudir*.⁸⁹ Now in the Pergamon Museum, Berlin, the mosaic is a third century copy of a first or second century original and incorporated a border of the four seasons and the nine Muses. Such imagery would be consistent with use in a room of a villa while the date provided would be consistent with the Roman period development of the residential use of the east bank of the river. Other anecdotal evidence also exists supporting the hypothesis.⁹⁰

The construction of the northern *decumanus*, north of the new Artemis temple led to major civic development in the northern sector of the city, including the north theatre and probable *forum* to the west of the *cardo*, while to the east, the west *therma* was constructed. The complex thought to be the *forum* of the second century Roman city plan has been partially cleared, but never fully excavated; hence its designation must be regarded as provisional. It is interpreted as a basilica, twenty-eight metres wide and

⁸⁹ Welles (1938) 458-9.

⁹⁰ Kehrberg (2013) *Personal communication*.

one hundred metres deep adjoined by a huge space that is believed to have been the *agora*. The basilica was burnt and plundered in antiquity.⁹¹

As can be seen from the suggested plan in figure 21 below, the putative basilica is directly opposite the paved forecourt of the north theatre and together they seem to have been conceived as a civic unit,

Fig. 20: Suggested design of the Antonine civic centre, Gerasa.

(From Agusta-Boularot and Seigne (2005).)

⁹¹ Agusta-Boularot, Seigne and Mujjali (2004) 551; Seigne and Agusta-Boularot (2005) 339.

forum/bouleterion, as evidenced by the higher Corinthian colonnades on the *decumanus* on the street frontage of both buildings. Central to this interpretation is the recently developed proposal that the north theatre served as the city *bouleterion*.

The north theatre has a monumental entrance with ceremonial stairs leading from the *decumanus* onto a forecourt and the street facade of the *scaenae frons*. Traditionally, the building has been seen as an *odeon*, being substantially smaller than the south theatre.⁹² Although it was known to the Anglo-American expedition of the 1930s they did not excavate there.⁹³ Separate teams of Australians, Americans and British archaeologists and architects did so during 1982-83 as part of the Jerash Archaeological Project.⁹⁴

When originally built, it comprised only a small *ima cavea* of four *cunei* of fourteen ranks of seating, a stage building whose outer wall, elaborated with a Corinthian portico, fronted the forecourt facing the *decumanus* and basilica. The building was then later modified by the addition of the *summa cavea*, *velum* and elaborated *scaenae frons*. An inscription dates these modifications to the reign of Alexander Severus (223-35 CE).⁹⁵ These later modifications certainly relate to the use of the building as a place of public spectacle and entertainment. More recently, Seigne and Agusta-Boularot have proposed that the building was constructed as the city's *bouleterion* (in the second century) and only served as an *odeon* later.⁹⁶ This interpretation follows careful analysis and publication of all the inscriptions found on and within the environs of the building. This work followed an invitation from the Jordanian authorities to assist with inscriptions found during Jordanian clearance and restoration of the forecourt which had

⁹² Retzleff and Mjely (2004) continued this interpretation in their article on the seating inscriptions. In doing so they did not subject the inscriptions to detailed analysis comparable to that of Agusta-Boularot and Seigne (2004) (2005), nor did they mention the putative forum on the other side of the *decumanus*, or treat the *odeon* and the buildings opposite as a civic ensemble.

⁹³ Stinespring (1938); Fisher (1938b) 17, 22-23.

⁹⁴ Clark, *et al.* (1986).

⁹⁵ Agusta-Boularot and Seigne (2005) 301.

⁹⁶ Agusta-Boularot and Seigne (2005) 303.

revealed inscribed blocks of masonry and a number of inscribed statue bases of provincial governors. A concentration of such statues at this locality is also suggestive of the civic significance of the structure.

Fig. 21: Inscribed seating in the *ima cavea* of the odeon, Gerasa.

The seating is reserved for the φυλή ἡρας, one of the civic tribes named after a Greek deity. (Author's photo.)

But it is inscriptions engraved on various surfaces within the *ima cavea* that indicate that the *odeon* served a civic purpose as well as any entertainment use. Significantly, these inscriptions form a homogenous ensemble with a script used that dates the *ima cavea* inscriptions to the original construction.⁹⁷

Twenty five inscriptions are engraved on the upper surface of the seating of the *ima cavea* of the theatre; the wall of the *praecinctio* separating the *ima cavea* from the *summa cavea* and on the upper surface of the parapet delimiting the *orchestra*. None are to be found in the *summa cavea*.⁹⁸ One inscription, engraved on the upper surface of the *orchestra* parapet of the easternmost *cuneus* has been restored to read: ΤΟΠ[.] ΒΟΥΛΗΣ ('ΤΟΠΟΣ ΒΟΥΛΗΣ' 'site of/reserved seating for the *boulē*'). The remaining inscriptions are to be found in the other *cunei* of the *ima cavea* and identify seating for twelve named civic tribes. They are characterised by the use of the abbreviation ΦΥΛ for φυλή (tribe).⁹⁹ The tribes identified all have taken the name of a major Greek divinity — Zeus, Apollo, Letos, Aphrodite, Artemis, Herakles, Athena, (Hadrianic) Helios, Poseidon, Demeter, Asklepios, Hera. Augusta-Boularot and Seigne contrast the inscriptions here with seating inscriptions in a number of other eastern theatres where the

⁹⁷ Augusta-Boularot and Seigne (2005).

⁹⁸ Augusta-Boularot, Seigne and Mujjali (2004) 523-557.

⁹⁹ See Sommer (2005) on the assumption that such phylai are civic and not tribal.

seating reservations reflected social groupings (associations, corporations, dignitaries, etc.), may be in different scripts and media, and organise seating for the purposes of spectacle with, for example, dignitaries sitting in the front of the central *cuneus*. At Gerasa the seating for the *boulē* is in the *cuneus* on the left side which clearly is not intended to provide best seating for the purpose of viewing a spectacle.¹⁰⁰ They resolve these difficulties by proposing that the building was originally designed as a *bouleterion* and only later did it become a place of entertainment with the addition of the *summa cavea*, with *velum*, and elaborated *scaena frons*.¹⁰¹

The Gerasa city wall is an integral element of the Roman period civic plan giving precise definition to the urban area thus distinguishing it from the

Fig.22. Eastern city wall, Gerasa.

The circumvallation would have offered poor defence against a serious siege and is better seen as a defining boundary of the second century civic plan. (Author's photo.)

surrounding *territorium* or *chora*. It was of limited defensive value being adequate against raiding, but inadequate against serious siege.¹⁰² The

¹⁰⁰ Agusta-Boularot and Seigne (2005) 302

¹⁰¹ Agusta-Boularot and Seigne (2005) 303.

¹⁰² But see Ammianus Marcellinus page 197 below.

Jarash City Wall Project resulted in several season's excavation around the wall headed by Kehrborg for the purpose of establishing the date of its construction by putting exploratory trenches down to the foundations of the wall on the north, west, south, and east perimeters of the city, establishing the stratigraphy and a *terminus ante quem* date.¹⁰³ The east wall trench 400 revealed that the wall segment there was constructed in the late second century CE; Trench/wall 500 under the wall north of the south-west decumanus gate established a *terminus ante quem* for construction of the first part of the second century, a date that was confirmed also by Trench/wall 100, 300 and 2000. Artefactual evidence from the lowest levels of Trench/wall 500 indicated some sort of edifice prior to the wall construction which the excavators surmised was funerary because of similarities with finds in nearby Trench/wall 100 which had revealed an undisturbed Hellenistic tomb and those at the lower Zeus Temple complex. The 2002 season's excavation Trench/wall 500 in the western sector of the city wall was important also for the discovery of a clay pipe running in an east-west direction along the course of the foundation wall and towards the south *decumanus* which the excavators concluded was an integral part of the construction and designed to ensure the supply of water to buildings on the west side of the *cardo*. They concluded from these findings that the city wall was an integral element in the second century city plan.

The implementation of the costly civic building programme within the walls, from epigraphic evidence, seems to have been funded by elite benefaction. It also must have required a considerable workforce of both skilled and unskilled labour over several generations. Given the large scale building programme being simultaneously undertaken in all the cities, existing and new, throughout the region from Petra, through Herod's massive programme in his territories and the cities of the Decapolis and the Tetrapolis, it seem more likely that there was a large pool of itinerant workers who moved from site to site as required to join local work teams.

¹⁰³ Kehrborg and Manley (2001), (2002a), (2002b), (2003); Kehrborg (2011).

Such mobility of architects, artistic designers and craftsmen would facilitate the development of a distinctive regional style and be an element in the continuity of cultural preferences and practices. Both Seigne and Braemer have noted the distinctively idiosyncratic use of Hellenistic motives in the decoration of the lower Zeus temple.¹⁰⁴ And while Ball has pointed out that local stonemasons evidently had the necessary skills to undertake the construction of such large projects,¹⁰⁵ several authors have questioned their familiarity and expertise in working in the Hellenistic idiom when copying themes and images from Greek mythology. Thus, in 1984 a limestone head was found on the Artemis Temple *temenos* being re-used as part of the lining of a Omayyad period drain probably installed as part of re-use of the terrace as a pottery.¹⁰⁶ The head is carved in the local soft malki limestone widely used in Gerasa. Based on hairstyle, laurel crown, massive neck, intense and rapt expression, Bitti concluded, in consultation with other art specialists, that it was an image of Apollo and should be placed in the Hellenistic artistic tradition. Bitti tentatively dates the head, on stylistic grounds, to the second century and sees it as part of a regional Hellenistic revival that began in the Flavian period (69-96 CE). Most importantly, she concludes that while the sculpture belongs in the Hellenistic tradition 'yet this heritage is clearly not understood in its essence ...'¹⁰⁷ She contrasted the quality of the workmanship in rendering classical motifs and styles with marble statuary found in the east baths which she concluded was the work of foreign artists steeped in the classical tradition while decorative relief work was entrusted to local craftsmen working in the local stone. It is, of course, now known that marble (which does not occur naturally in the Near East) was imported from workshops in west Asia Minor and Greece and that statuary in particular was likely 'roughed out' prior to despatch with final finishing work being done in workshops in a few major centres such as Antioch.¹⁰⁸ Retzleff and Mjely reached similar conclusions when they later

¹⁰⁴ Seigne and Morin (1995) 187-9; Will (1985) 139-45.

¹⁰⁵ Ball (2000) 376-8.

¹⁰⁶ Bitti (1986).

¹⁰⁷ Bitti (1986) 208.

¹⁰⁸ Friedland (2003a).

examined figural relief sculptures from the north theatre.¹⁰⁹ The four reliefs discussed are united by their musical iconography, being a male (Apollo) sitting on a rock playing a *kithara*, a male figure in motion and apparently playing an *aulos*, an ecstatic female *maenid* with *thyrsis* and *tympanum*, and a female playing an *aulos*. After careful comparative stylistic analysis, the authors conclude that the sculptures reflect local masons working in the local malki limestone in the Hellenistic style but that 'there is a sense that the sculptural heritage from which these figures derived was not deeply understood. The reliefs contain "flaws" which suggest that the motifs were passed down through a succession of copies'.¹¹⁰ These examples of local artistic work in stone stands in contrast to the workmanship of free standing statuary in marble, imported from Asia Minor.¹¹¹

In summary then, the archaeological evidence from the Roman period points to major investment in civic public monumentality in the second half of the second century. The closure of the south west necropolis, the kilns on the upper slopes of the Zeus Temple hill, and probably the quarries in the central area around Temple C in the first third of the second century is a necessary precursor for this development.¹¹² The construction of the major public works, so visible today, seems to have been in accordance with a comprehensive civic plan incorporating a greatly enlarged surface area, bounded by a circuit wall, laid out in accordance with Hippodamian principles, and embellished with all the public monumentalism expected of a Roman city.

Roman period – the epigraphic evidence

Gerasa has produced what appears to be an abundance of epigraphy with approximately four hundred inscriptions having been published, although a number of these have now been lost or are only preserved as squeezes.¹¹³ When this number is spread over the life of the city it is not so impressive

¹⁰⁹ Retzleff and Mjely (2003).

¹¹⁰ Retzleff and Mjely (2003) 81.

¹¹¹ Friedland (2003a), (2003b), (2007), (2008), (2012); Friedland and Tykot (2010).

¹¹² Kehrberg (2011) 3-5.

¹¹³ Welles (1938) 355.

however. The largest single edited collection is that in Kraeling.¹¹⁴ Later ones do not add materially to our picture of life in Gerasa although several are full of interest such as that reported by Agusta-Boularot *et al.* which draws attention to a statue base of Maximianus Heraclius which escaped *damnatio memoriae* defacement in 310 CE.¹¹⁵ See figure 23 below for the chronological and language distribution of these inscriptions.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Number of inscriptions*</i>	<i>Language Greek/Latin/Semitic</i>
0-100 CE	32	30/2/1**
101-200 CE	143	111/32/0
201-300 CE	57	51/6/0
301-400 CE	6	4/2/0
401-500 CE	13	12/0/1
501-600 CE	57	56/0/1
601-700 CE	3	2/0/1

* 36 inscriptions are undated, 30 being Greek and 6 Latin

** one inscription is bi-lingual

Fig. 23: Summary table of inscriptions in Welles (1938)

The table shows chronological and language distribution.

The chronological distribution of these recorded inscriptions reflects MacMullen's 'epigraphic habit' with the largest single grouping occurring in the second century.¹¹⁶ The second high point, in the sixth century, reflects the Christianisation of the population and the inscriptions are overwhelmingly located in churches, of which nineteen have now been identified.¹¹⁷ The language distribution is also interesting. Although the majority of the population of the city must be assumed to be local people speaking a Semitic language only four inscriptions in Semitic languages are recorded — Nabataean (first century), Hebrew (fifth century), Syriac (sixth century), and Kufic Arabic (seventh/eighth century). Overwhelmingly, the

¹¹⁴ Welles (1938): 354-294. Additional published inscriptions include, for example, Gattier, (1985), (1996), (2002); Borkowski (1989); Seigne and Agusta-Boularot (1998); Agusta-Boularot, Mujjali and Seigne (1998), (2004), (2008).

¹¹⁵ Agusta-Boularot, Seigne and Mujjali (2008).

¹¹⁶ MacMullen (1982).

¹¹⁷ Kennedy (2007) 101.

inscriptions are in Greek reflecting the earlier influence of Hellenism and the later influence of Chalcedonian Christianity among the social elites. The Latin inscriptions, predominantly in the imperial highpoint of the second century, include milestones (21), epitaphs of soldiers and other imperial agents (19), while the remainder are dedications on altars and statue bases. Inscriptions also occur on Jarash lamps from the Omayyad period (noting the date and maker) in Arabic and Jarash bowls from the Byzantine periods (identifying the mythological characters painted on the bowls), in Greek.¹¹⁸

The content of the inscriptions from the first three centuries of the Common Era evidence include —

- i) The Hellenistic foundation name of the city and the Greek version of the Semitic name being in common usage, ἡ πόλις Ἀντιοχείων τῶν πρὸς τῷ Χρυσορόῳ τῶν πρότερον Γερασηνῶν (Inscr. 143, 144, 145, 147, 154, 192, 251) and *Antiochiae ad Chrysorhoan quae et Gerasa hiera et asylos et autonomos* (Inscr. 30);
- ii) References to Gerasa as a colony (Inscrs. 179, 191);
- iii) The practice of euergetism from at least the beginning of the Common Era (Inscr.1 and numerous others);
- iv) The use in the city administration of a number of the titles associated with a Hellenistic *polis* (γυμνασιάρχος (Inscr.3); βουλευτής (Inscr.62); βουλευτὴς τῶν πρώτων; (Inscr. 26), ἄρχων (Inscr. 74); ἄρχων πρόεδρος (Inscr. 45); ἄρχων δεκαπρώτος (Inscr. 45); γραμματεὺς (Inscr.45; ἀγοράνόμος (Inscr. 53, 134); ἱερασάμενος [ἀ]γνός (Inscr.62); στρατηγός (Inscr. 62, 161, 190, 191); πρόεδρος (Inscr. 73, 190); διοικητής (Inscr.74); ἐπιμελητής (Inscrs. 114, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 154-159, 168, 172, 186); ἀγωνοθέτης (Inscr. 192);¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Kehrborg (2009) 502, 509-11.

¹¹⁹ But see Sommer (2005) on the risks of interpreting such epigraphy as evidence of hellenisation through the adoption of *polis* institutions and the abandonment of tribal identity.

- v) The use of Semitic names within some families of the civic elite (inscrs. 2, 10, 15, 16, 17, 25, 54, 71, 74, 154, 156, 187, 317, 314);
- vi) The presence of a statue base making reference to the Nabataean king, Aretas. Without further details it is impossible to date — if Aretas I then the statue was mid-second century BCE, which in turn implies a more developed Gerasa than is normally assumed; Welles dates it to Aretas II (Inscr. 1);
- vii) The worship of Hellenistic deities in the city — Zeus Olympios (Inscr. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 13, 14,); Zeus Helios, Serapis, Isis (Inscr. 15, 16); ‘the heavenly goddess’ (Aphrodite Ourania?) (Inscr. 24, 25?, 26); Artemis, who is honoured as *Tyche* with the exception of inscription 28 (Inscr. 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 43, 50); Apollo (Inscr. 38); Zeus Poseidōn (inscr. 39); Nemesis (Inscr. 40, 41);
- viii) The worship of Semitic gods in the city (Inscr. 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 42);
- ix) The existence of the imperial cult in Gerasa by 22/23 CE (Inscr. 2);
- x) The right of a fugitive (ἰκέτης) to seek asylum in the Zeus temple (Inscr. 5 and 6) and the city being categorised as *hiera et asylos et autonomos* (Inscr. 30);
- xi) The presence of legionaries and auxiliaries (Inscr. 23, 30, 31, 171, 173, 178, 199, 200, 201, 211, 212, 218);
- xii) A number of statue bases for imperial statues (Inscr. 141-62), provincial governors (Inscr. 163-170), procurators and other imperial agents (Inscr. 171-180), prominent citizens (Inscr. 181-191);
- xiii) The holding of agonistic contests (Inscr. 192, 193, 194).

In summary, the epigraphic evidence is what one would expect from a city that was a regional centre in *Provincia Arabia* and reflects an imperial

presence, integration into the Hellenistic cultural world, links with Semitic cultures such as the Nabataean and Jewish, and onomastic evidence suggesting that some of the city's elite continued to honour their Semitic roots.

The literary evidence

Literary references to Gerasa are limited, although the biblical references and those from Josephus are interesting in showing Gerasa in the context of Near Eastern social and political life. This schedule of principal literary references to Gerasa until the fifth century of the Common Era is based upon Cohen (2006: 251). It is not complete.

1st century CE

i) *Inscription 1990, ILS.*

... from the common soldiers: Marcus, son of Duma, of Gerasa in Syria ...
 ...Gregali: M. Dumae f., Suro geraseno ...

An inscription attributed to Domitian listing rights of veterans of Vespasian found in the Capitol, Rome, and indicating the enlistment of Gerasenes in the imperial army.

ii) *Gospel according to St. Mark 5.1*

Then they came to the other side of the sea, to the territory of the Gerasenes.

(καὶ ἦλθον εἰς τὸ πέραντῆς θαλάσσης τῶν εἰς τὴν χώραν Γερασηνῶν.)

Some authorities read Gadarenes or Gergasenes. Gerasa is improbable as it is more than fifty kms distant from the Sea of Galilee. Gadara looks down upon the Sea of Galilee and is an option. According to Swete, Origen and Jerome, both of whom knew the geography of Palestine, affirm the existence of a Gergesa on the east coast of the Sea of Galilee.¹²⁰

¹²⁰ Swete (1913) 91.

iii) *Gospel according to St Luke 8.26*

Then they put ashore in the country of the Gerasenes which is on the opposite shore to Galilee.

(καὶ κατέπλευσαν εἰς τὴν χώραν τῶν Γερασηνῶν ἣτις ἐστὶν ἀντιπερα τῆς Γαλιλαίας.)

See note ii) above on the reliability of the geography.

iv) *Joseph. Bell.Jud. 2.18.1*

At precisely the same time [as the Jewish slaughter of a Roman contingent in Jerusalem] the people of Caesarea, as if by some divine purpose, massacred the Jews living in their midst so that within the space of one hour over twenty thousand had their throats cut while fugitives were seized on the orders of Florus and led down to the docks in fetters. Thus Caesarea was emptied of all Jews. What happened at Caesarea so enraged the whole nation that Jewish raiding parties went out and laid waste Syrian villages and the neighbouring cities of Philadelphia, Hesbon, Pella and Gerasa.

(τῆς δ' αὐτῆς ἡμέρας καὶ ὥρας ἐκ δαιμονίου προνοίας ἀνῆρουν καισαρεῖς τοὺς παρ' ἑαυτοῖς Ἰουδαίους, ὥς ὑπὸ μίαν ὥραν ἀποσφαγῆναι μὲν ὑπὲρ δισμυρίου, κενωθῆναι δὲ πᾶσαν Ἰουδαίων τὴν Καισάρειαν καὶ γὰρ τοὺς διαφεύγοντας ὁ Φλῶρος συλλαβὼν κατῆγεν δεσμώτας εἰς τὰ νεώρια. πρὸς δὲ τὴν ἐκ τῆς Καισαρεῖς πληγὴν ὅλον τὸ ἔθνος ἐξαγριοῦται, καὶ διαμερισθέντες τὰς τε κώμας τῶν Σύριων καὶ τὰς προσεχούσας ἐπόρθουν πόλεις, Φιλαδέλφειάν τε καὶ Ἑσεβωπῖτιν καὶ Γέρασαν καὶ Πέλλαν καὶ Σκυθόπολιν.)

The Jewish raiders probably attacked the villages of the *chora* rather than the cities themselves.

v) *Joseph. Bell.Jud. 2.18.5*

... Not only did the people of Gerasa not mistreat those [Jews] wanting to depart but escorted them as far as the city boundary.

(... Γερασηνοὶ τε οὐτε τοὺς ἐμμέναντας ἐπλημμέλησαν καὶ τοὺς ἐξελθεῖν ἐθέλησαντας προέπεμψαν μέχρι τῶν ὄρων.)

Interesting that Gerasa did not engage in the pogroms of the other Greek cities of the region, but instead offered safe conduct to the refugees.

vi) Joseph. *Bell.Jud.* 4.9.1

Vespasian, hemming in Jerusalem from every side, set up camps at Jericho and Adida comprising contingents of Romans and allied forces. In addition, he sent Lucius Annius to Gerasa with a squadron of cavalry and a large unit of infantry. So taking the city by assault he killed a thousand young men who had not already fled, took their families prisoner and permitted the soldiers to plunder property. Afterwards, setting fire to houses he advanced upon the surrounding villages. Those who were able fled, the weak perished, all abandoned property burnt.

Ὁ δὲ Οὐέσπασιανὸς πανταχόε περιτειχίζων τοὺς ἐν τοῖς Ἱεροσολύμοις ἐν τε τῇ Ἱεριχοῖ καὶ ἐν Ἀδιδοῖς ἐγείρει στρατὸπεδὰ καὶ φρουροὺς ἀμφοτέραις ἐγκαθίστησιν ἔκ τε τοῦ Ῥωμαικοῦ καὶ συμμαχικοῦ τάγματος. Πέμπει δὲ καὶ εἰς Γέρασα Λούκιον Ἄννιον παραδοὺς μοῖραν ἱππέων καὶ συχνούς πεζοὺς. ὁ μὲν οὖν ἐξ ἐφόδου τὴν πόλιν ἐλὼν ἀποκτείνει μὲν χιλίους τῶν νέων, ὅσοι μὴ διαφυγεῖν ἔφθασαν, γενεὰς δὲ ἡχμαλωτίσατο καὶ τὰς κτήσεις διαρπάσαι τοῖς στρατιώταις ἐπέτρεψε· ἔπειτα τὰς οἰκίας ἐμπρήσας ἐπὶ τὰς πέριξ κώμας ἐχώρει. φυγαὶ δ' ἦσαν τῶν δυνατῶν καὶ φθοραὶ τῶν ἀσθενεστέρων, τὸ καταλειφθὲν δὲ πᾶν ἐνεπίμπρατο.

Again, interesting that Josephus shows Vespasian targeting Gerasa specifically.

vii) Plin. *Nat. Hist.* V.XVI.74.

lungitur et latere Syriae Decapolitana regio, a numero oppidorum, in quo non omnes eadem observant, plurimi tamen Damascus epoto riguis amne Chrysorroa fertilem, Philadelphiam, Rhaphanam (omnia in Arabiam recedentia), Scythopolim (antea Nysam, a Libero Patre sepulta nutrice ibi) scythis deductis,

Gadara, hieronmice praefluente, et iam dictum Hippon, Dion, Pellam, aquis divitem, Galasam, Canatham. intercurrent cinguntque has urbes tetrarchiae, regnorum instar singulae, et in regna contribuuntur – Trachonitis, Paneas (in qua aesarea cum supra dicto fonte), Abila, Arca, Ampeloessa, Gabe.

Lists Galasam (*sic*) as a member of the Decapolis.

2^d century CE

viii) Claudius Ptolemy *Geographia* 5.14 'Location of Syria'

Lists Gerasa as one of the towns of Apamene.

3^d century CE

ix) Origen *In Joan.* 6.24.

Gerasa of Arabia is a city that is neither near the sea nor marshes
(Γέρασα δε τῆς Ἀραβίας ἐστὶ πόλις οὔτε θάλασσαν οὔτε λίμνην
πλησίον ἔχουσα)

4th century CE

x) Marcellin. 14.8.13

Huic Arabia est conserta, ex alio latere Nabataeis contigua, opima varietate commerciorum castrisque oppleta validis et castellis, quae ad repellendos gentium vicinarum excursus, sollicitudo pervigil veterum per opportunos saltus erexit et cautos. Haec quoque civitates habet inter oppida quaedam ingentes, Bostram et Gerasam atque Philadelphiam, murorum firmitate cautissimas.

Arabia is adjacent to this region [Palestine]. On another side Arabia borders Nabataea, which operates a widely diverse trade; and is covered with strong redoubts and fortresses set in defiles, which the canny local people in former times raised as defence

against raids. Moreover, in addition to some towns, the region has substantial cities, Bostra, Gerasa and Philadelphia, secure behind sturdy walls.

The numismatic evidence

The largest single body of published coinage found at Gerasa seems to be that excavated by the 1930s Anglo-American expedition which comprised 1484 identifiable coins spanning eight centuries (1st century BCE – 7th century CE).¹²¹ But comparable numbers have subsequently been found with approximately 1200 being associated with the hippodrome excavations and hundreds being associated with the upper Zeus Temple complex excavations.¹²²

The coins found and published by the 1930s expedition came from specific excavation sites (notably around the south tetrapylon, the Baths of Placcus and the Artemis Temple);¹²³ and do not reflect distribution across the whole city. Thus the finding of 211 coins struck under Constantius II but only 5 issued under Hadrian, should not be interpreted as reflective of the relative levels of commercial activity in the city during the respective reigns. Scarcely any Hellenistic coins were found; a few Jewish ones from the second and first centuries BCE reflect Hasmonaean influence, while the emergence of the Nabataeans as a powerful influence at the beginning of the Common Era is reflected in the coinage. Most of the finds however are Roman.

Gerasa, in common with other cities of the Decapolis and the wider region, minted its own coinage for a period in the second century CE. The earliest three known coins show an image of Artemis on the reverse and describe her as *Tyche* of Gerasa; the remainder show images of *Tyche* in various poses without naming her. Several use an abbreviated form of the city

¹²¹ Bellinger (1938a). For a more detailed full catalogue and description of each coin with photographs see Bellinger (1938b). Byzantine and Omayyad coins minted in Gerasa are not considered here, for which, see Amitai-Priess, Berman and Qedar(1999).

¹²² Kehrberg (2013: *Personal communication*) provided these numbers noting that many have not been published. See also Augé (1998).

¹²³ Bellinger (1938b) 3.

name, Antiochus-on-the-Chrysorhoas (formerly known as Gerasa).¹²⁴ The largest single collection of coins minted in Gerasa is to be found in the Museum of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, Jerusalem, the catalogue of which was prepared by its curator, Fr. Spijkerman and published posthumously.¹²⁵ The collection contains thirty-four different coins including two quasi-autonomous issues from 67/8 CE and imperial issues from the reign of Nero (54-68 CE) until the reign of Elagabalus (218-222 CE). Three coins belong to 67/8 CE, one being issued by Nero and the other two being described as quasi-autonomous. One of the latter two bears an image of Zeus on the obverse while the other bears an image of *Tyche* without assimilating her to Artemis. A number of the coins cite Artemis as *Tyche* of the city (all being later than the single coin portraying Zeus) — ΑΡΤΕΜΙCΤΥΧΗΓΕΡΑCΩΝ ('Artemis Tyche of Gerasa').¹²⁶ In common with a number of other cities of the Transjordan, Gerasa from Septimius Severus' reign through to Elagabalus (193-222), attributes its foundation to Alexander — ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟCΜΑΚΚΤΙ ΓΑCΩΝ ('Alex. Mac. Founder of Gerasa'); ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟCΜΑΚΕΔΩΝ ('Alexander of Macedon').

When interpreting coins, Butcher emphasises the need to identify who the issuing authorities were, the message being conveyed and the intended audience.¹²⁷ He makes the further point that identities expressed on locally minted coins would be those of institutions or communities which the Roman authorities tolerated or encouraged. He further emphasises that if the coins were issued by civic elites it is likely that the 'message' may have had significance for those elites but did not necessarily have the same (or any significance) for passive coin-users from other social strata. He also emphasises that identifying a symbol ('Athena standing') is not the same as identifying its (subjective) meaning and significance to different users in a community.

What then can we make of the Gerasa coinage? First, there is the fact that Gerasa was authorised, along with many other cities, to issue it. This must

¹²⁴ Bellinger (1938b) 29-30, Plates 2-3.

¹²⁵ Spijkerman (1978). For Gerasa, see pages 156-167.

¹²⁶ Spijkerman (1978): 159-67; See also Seyrig (1965).

¹²⁷ Butcher (2005).

be taken to reflect something of its status in the eyes of the imperial authorities. Second, we should not assume that the images on the coins had the same symbolic significance for the whole civic community. At a minimum, they reflect symbols adopted by certain powerful families or individuals while at best they represent a shared symbolic value among a certain social class within the community. Within those constraints certain points stand out. The earliest of the coins bears an image of Zeus, without his customary attributes, but wearing a diadem, and was issued at a time when, from the archaeological evidence, he seems to have been the pre-eminent deity of the city. In the same year (67/8 CE) a coin issued with Nero on the obverse carries an image of Artemis the Huntress without any attempt at identifying her as *Tyche* of the city, although her choice must have some significance in terms of her standing with some sections of the Gerasene community. The earliest image in which Artemis is identified as *Tyche* of Gerasa occurs in the reign of Hadrian — in other words, at the time of the development of the city plan, the ambitious building programme based on that plan and the construction of the huge Artemis temple at the centre of the plan and alongside the new *bouleterion* and forum. Artemis is always recognised, apart from any inscription, by her usual attributes of quiver and bow. It seems that Artemis and not Zeus, is the deity associated with the new civic identity being developed. Images of *Tyche* on these new Gerasene coins typically have her wearing her turret crown and often sitting on a rock, holding ears of corn with a half figure of a river-god swimming below her. This is a shared image which is to be seen on coinage from Antioch-on-the Orontes, for example, and its choice may reflect some form of symbolic parallelism between the two Antiochs located on their respective rivers. Finally, the promotion of an Alexandrine foundation myth for Gerasa during the Severan period coincides with a period when interest in the origins of a civic community is common to a number of civic coins in the second and third century.¹²⁸

¹²⁸ Butcher (2005) 149.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have summarised the evidence relating to cultural change in Gerasa from the period of Achaemenid hegemony. By far the largest part of this evidence is archaeological and, to a much lesser extent, epigraphic. What literary and numismatic evidence exists corroborates trends evident in the major two evidential classes. I have not made any substantive reference to the archaeology of either the hippodrome or the Temple of Artemis, not because they are not intrinsically interesting, but because like so many other public monuments of the second century CE (*macellum*, *tetrapylon* and *tetrakionion*, *thermae*, and so forth) they belong to a major rebuilding of the city in conformity to a plan that sought to make the city conform to the principles of Roman civic planning. The interesting point is not the individual items of architecture *per se*, so much as the social and political dynamics which gave rise to the highly expensive civic re-design.

Several scholars have noted that the archaeological focus on individual monuments, their architectural dimensions, significance and restoration, has provided an incomplete image of Gerasa and its social life.¹²⁹ Particularly lacking is stratigraphy of the large tracts of unexplored land in areas between the *decumani* which are likely to reveal *insulae* and domestic architecture, especially of the lower social orders. The archaeology of two locales within the city walls, the two hills at the southern end of the city and the Artemis hill, have been reviewed in some detail for the highly significant stratification located there. What emerges from this archaeological material is a surprising lack of material from the Ptolemaic/Seleucid period of the city's history, subject to the caution that this may reflect the limitations of past excavation focuses. Kehrberg's discovery of an intact Hellenistic tomb under the western city wall is reflective of this cavil. The other highly significant factor is the huge civic rebuilding programme following Hadrian's visit in 129/130 CE, which resulted in the spectacular Roman style city that draws tens of thousands of tourists today.

¹²⁹ See especially Kehrberg, I. (2011); Pierobon (1984a)

The epigraphic evidence reflects what may be expected of an eastern city, one of the more important cities of *Provincia Arabia* and base for the provincial financial procurator. The numismatic evidence similarly demonstrates the identification of the civic elite with the Roman powers, while it provides some evidence of the emergence of Artemis as the dominant pre-Christian deity of the city. The limited literary evidence relating to Gerasa is also reflective of elite identification with Hellenic culture, though again subject to a caution. Literature, by definition, is correlated with literacy which in turn is correlated to social status. The cultural interests of the literate elites of the classical world were Hellenic, inevitably therefore it is those texts which were preserved. Secondly, the triumph of Christianity led to the suppression of much pagan scholarship, while Chalcedonian Christianity attempted the suppression of indigenous variants of the faith. Some books of the Hebrew Testament, the Christian testament, the literature of Rabbinic Judaism, Syriac literature and the Sybilline Oracles are surviving evidence of a non-Hellenistic literature that once existed.¹³⁰ In other words, there may well have been a non-classical literature, now lost, that once entertained, educated or inspired some inhabitants of Gerasa, or reflected dissident social, cultural or political identifications. The most significant, and tantalising, component of the literary evidence are the references to Gerasa in Josephus. It prompts a number of questions. How large and influential was the Jewish community in Gerasa? What was the city's relationship to first the Hasmonaeans and then Herod? How severe was the raid by Lucius Annus during the First Jewish Revolt? Why did he kill a large number of young men? Did he deem them followers of Simon Giora? Why did Gerasa not massacre Jewish residents at the time of the outbreak of the Revolt, as did so many other cities of region? Why did they safely escort Jewish refugees to the boundary of the Gerasa *chora*?

¹³⁰ At the First International Conference on the Nabataean Culture, May 2012, David F. Graf, the prominent Nabataean scholar attempted to demonstrate from references and inferences drawn from the relevant surviving classical and Byzantine literature the existence of a now lost extensive Arabic literature.

In the next chapter I focus on four elements of this evidence examining them from a post-colonial perspective rather than the traditional hellenisation model.

Chapter seven

Hellenistic and Roman Gerasa: interpreting the evidence

‘The barbarians changed their world ... However, they had not forgotten or rejected their ancestral ways that they had been born with and which unified them...’

Cassius Dio 56.18.¹

Introduction

We cannot recover past reality with an objective certitude. The best the historian and archaeologist can do is *infer* meaning, significance and, sometimes, motive from the detritus of history.² In doing so we bring to the exercise our own contemporary understandings and values. Thus it now seems inevitable that nineteenth and early twentieth century historians and archaeologists, working at the highpoint of European imperialism and trained in the classics, brought a Eurocentric perspective to their analysis. Droysen’s concept of hellenisation, with its assumption of the superiority of Greek civilisation, has been tremendously influential in shaping our understanding of social and cultural relations in the ancient Near East. But as subsequent new generations of scholars have progressively unstitched that model, so too a series of alternative views emerged — benevolent paternalism toward the Oriental in the Hellenistic states, oriental ‘mongrelising’ of the ‘manly’ European through inter-marriage; then with the collapse of modern imperialism, a ‘separatist’ view of minimal interaction between Greek settlers and indigenous people; followed by perceptions of the Hellenistic regimes as economically exploitive, and more latterly, use of the domination/resistance model.³ But each of these subsequent interpretations still perpetuate the perspective of the colonising power rather than that of the indigenous people — to place the latter

¹ ἔς τε τὸν κόσμον· σφῶν οἱ βάρβαροι μετερρμίζοντο ... οὐ μέντοι καὶ τῶν πατρῶν ἠθῶν τῶν τε συμφύων τρόων καὶ τῆς αὐτονόμου διαίτης τε ἐκ τῶν ὅπλων ἐξουσίας ἐκλελησμένοι (Refers to the Germans at the time of the appointment of Quinctilius Varus).

² Hence the inevitability of multiple narratives. For a useful discussion of multivocality in contemporary archaeology, see Habu, Fawcett and Matsunaga (2008).

³ For these trends with specific reference to Ptolemaic Egypt, see Moyer (2011) 1-41.

‘at the margins of someone else’s historical narrative’.⁴ To avoid these shortcomings in his discussion of Hellenism in Egypt, Moyer focused on four texts (Herodotus’ *Histories*; Manetho’s *Aegyptica*, an inscription from Delos, and Thessalos’ *de virtutibus herbarum*) to explore Egyptian/Greek cultural interaction in antiquity. Rather than create an historical narrative, he limited himself to four moments as reflected in those texts in which he examined the cultural interaction as social transactions by specific players.

Inspired by Moyer’s method I have chosen four ‘moments’ in the cultural history of Gerasa and subjected them to analysis utilising concepts from postcolonial theory. I do not pretend that my interpretations are the only possible explanations of the evidence, but using such an interpretive framework provides a stimulating model that hopefully provides new insights and suggests new research directions both for the historian and the archaeologist. The encounters chosen are

- i) Hellenistic period tombs;
- ii) the development of the Zeus temple site;
- iii) the development of the Artemis Temple site; and
- iv) the Roman period city plan.

I have tried to be genuinely inter-disciplinary by drawing on archaeological, literary, epigraphic and numismatic evidence and using it in an integrated way and not giving precedence to any single type, although the archaeological is the most plentiful. Because the archaeological is the largest *corpus* of evidence, and the other types so fragmentary and incomplete, there has been no attempt to use the textual evidence to create a socio-political narrative into which the archaeological evidence is fitted.

In developing my interpretations of these four encounters, I make several assumptions. First, that the Greek and Roman encounters were culturally highly significant for the local people, not in the sense of a couple of momentous impacts, but rather in terms of triggering long term cultural change as locals, settlers and the various imperial agents interacted at the individual level through a myriad of daily transactions. Giddens structuration theory

⁴ Moyer (2011) 34.

provides a useful conceptual frame for understanding the way in which those individual transactions are both shaped by societal norms while simultaneously and imperceptibly modifying those norms. Louise Revell's study of five western provincial cities provides an extended use of structuration theory to explain this process in operation.⁵ Second, I assume asymmetric power relations between coloniser and colonised — the colonisers were always able, in principle, to call on state military power if unduly threatened.⁶ Third, I assume that such power asymmetry was responded to through a multitude of sometimes contradictory individual and collective acts by the colonised — assimilation, outward social conformity, intensified identification with indigenous value systems including religion, innumerable acts of passive resistance (social mulishness, foot-dragging, deliberate misunderstanding/misinterpretation of instructions and directions, social withdrawal, creolisation of language and material culture, misinformation, poor workmanship, slow production rates), and isolated acts of active resistance (sabotage, banditry, joining Jewish, and possibly other, guerrilla groups). Fourth, I assume that the indigenous population of Gerasa was not ethnically homogenous, but included a (possibly significant) Jewish population originating in settlement from the Hasmonaean period and evidenced by the existence of a synagogue (beneath the remains of the so-called Synagogue Church) and references in Josephus.⁷ Similarly, there may have been a small community of Nabataean agents and itinerant traders who built a temple dedicated to their deity, Dushares.⁸ Kinship relations between the Gerasene rural and urban dwellers and nomad groups from the Steppe dating from the Iron Age on seem likely, although no explicit evidence of this exists. Finally, I assume the Gerasenes shared with the rest of the Levant a cultural perspective which looked north-eastward to Mesopotamia and Iran for inspiration. I fully accept that each of these assumptions is debatable, but each

⁵ Revell (2009).

⁶ Isaac (1984) suggests that the role of the army in the Judaea and Arabia was less to do with border protection and more to do with internal policing.

⁷ *Bell. Jud.* 2.18.5 refers to Jews in Gerasa, either residents or refugees from the upheavals in Judaea and pogroms in Syria.

⁸ Evidence of a Nabataean presence in the town includes inscriptions referring to either 'the Arabian god' (Dushares) or Pakeidas (Welles (1938): Inscriptions 17-22); dedication of a statue base to a Nabataean king (Welles (1938): Inscription 1); and some Nabataean coins found (Kraeling (1938b): 36). Kehrborg (2013, *personal communication*) doubts the existence of a permanent Nabataean community, citing the scarcity of Nabataean evidence compared to other towns such as Palmyra, Bosra, Madaba, Gadara.

is reasonable, evidence-based, and does not derive from eurocentrism and the privileging of Graeco-Roman culture.

Hellenistic period tombs

Two Hellenistic period tombs provide the first colonising encounter I examine in detail. The discovery and excavation of a Late Hellenistic *hypogeum* tomb under the second century CE north-western city wall is important in providing some insight early in the social and cultural life of Hellenistic Gerasa.⁹ The intact tomb, part of a Hellenistic/Early Roman necropolis, belonged to a child of an affluent family and was part of a larger family mausoleum which could not be excavated because it lay under a modern road adjoining the wall. Pottery within the *dromos* of the tomb, together with a coin of Demetrius I (185-150 BCE) found inside the chamber among the funerary goods, provide a *terminus post quem* of the second half of the second century BCE — after the Fifth Syrian War and the establishment of Seleucid control of the region. Funerary goods included toys (glass *astragals* and counters, model *clepsydra*, three pottery camels vases) and gold pectoral, iron *strigil*, bronze *fibula*, pottery *rhyton*, bull vase, and *lagynos*. The excavator, Ina Kehrberg, drew parallels between the *lagynos* and bull vase, dressed for sacrifice, and the Ptolemaic *lagynophoria* festivals described in Athenaeus' *Deipnosophists*. She also reports that a severed leg from the model bull was placed in the *dromos* in apparent imitation of Ptolemaic *lagynophoria* rites. She notes that *lagynoi*, a simple portable pottery wine flask found widely distributed around the Mediterranean, would have been affordable by most in Hellenistic communities. Finally, she found close similarities between Cypriot and locally produced *lagynoi* and noted imported ones found at Pella and Philadelphia.¹⁰

Kehrberg has emphasised that the evidence suggesting the practice of *lagynophoria* rites together with the gold pectoral leaves, glass astragal and counters and *strigil*, for example, points to continued Ptolemaic cultural influence.¹¹ It may be that this was restricted to one family if, for example, the child's family were recent emigrants from Alexandria. However, the presence of

⁹ Kehrberg (2004a (2006)); Kehrberg (2006); Kehrberg and Manley (2002b).

¹⁰ Kehrberg (2004a (2006)).

¹¹ Kehrberg (forthcoming A) 5.

imported *lagynoi* in Pella and Philadelphia, suggests the use of the *lagynos*, and possibly, the *lagynophoria* was not isolated to the one family but extended across northern Jordan. The toy camels laden with *amphorae* and also in the child's tomb reflect Gerasa's role as a trading town as originally proposed by Rostovtzeff.¹² Not only were they made from local clay and therefore not imported, but the potter who shaped them displayed sound knowledge of the animal's anatomy, especially in the manner in which the camels held their heads, suggesting first hand observation of the laden beasts.¹³ It should not surprise that Ptolemaic Alexandria exerted some cultural influence in the Levant given the prominence of the metropolis, earlier Ptolemaic rule in the region and, of course, the trade from the south passing up through Petra and the Kings Highway to Damascus and Antioch. Another example of that Alexandrine influence in Gerasa may be seen in the Egyptian, or *cuvetto*, cornice that featured on both the Hellenistic *naoi* of the lower terrace of the Zeus Temple complex and also in the second tomb discussed later.

The child's tomb does not belong in a small village backwater as it was part of a family mausoleum in a large necropolis of rock-carved *hypogea*, while the tomb goods reflected both affluence and participation in an eastern Mediterranean cultural *koine*, a point confirmed by Kehrberg in another publication on local pottery production and its conformity to international stylistic norms.¹⁴ In that sense the tomb is not consistent with the image of the Decapolis cities promoted by authorities such as Graf and Tidmarsh quoted earlier.¹⁵ This image of a prosperous Hellenistic town in touch with cultural trends of the wider region is also reflected in the painted masonry fragments found in wall trench 500 of the Jarash City Walls Project, the progressive monumentalisation of the Zeus Temple complex, the development of *heroön* in the northern metropolis and also in the later Hellenistic tomb discussed next.

¹² Rostovtzeff (1971 [1932]).

¹³ Kehrberg (2013) *Personal communication*.

¹⁴ Kehrberg (2004b);

¹⁵ Graf (1992); Tidmarsh (2004).

Fig. 24: Suggested restored elevation of Late Hellenistic Mausoleum. Gerasa. (From Seigne (1995)).

The second tomb to be discussed is a hypogeum with an above-ground mausoleum which only exists now as a paper restoration.¹⁶ It probably was part of the southern necropolis where in 1993 excavators of two Roman period *hypogea*, located about fifty metres south of Hadrian's Arch, found that their entrances had been sealed in the second century CE with sculpted masonry. Some of the masonry was identified as part of an ensemble of engaged half-columns, Ionic

half-capitals, Doric frieze, cornice with dentils; while another ensemble was of column bases and drums, Corinthian capitals, Doric frieze, cornice and dentils of a different style. The particular decorative style evident from these blocks was identical to that used in the *temenos* wall of the lower terrace of the Zeus Temple. That synchronism establishes a construction date of late first century BCE/early first century CE. Further blocks of the same structure were then found in the interior fill of Hadrian's Arch, thus providing a precise *terminus ante quem* of 129/30 CE.¹⁷ Other elements of the same structure were also found by Antoni Ostracz scattered in the hippodrome, while the Anglo-American expedition reported various pieces of masonry of the Doric order scattered around Hadrian's Arch, but now lost. In total, forty-nine blocks were recovered.

¹⁶ See Seigne (2006) for a full description of the discovery and reconstruction of the tomb. Abu Dalu (1995) for the first reportage of the tomb; Seigne and Morin (1995) for suggested reconstruction of the mausoleum.

¹⁷ Welles (1938) Inscription 38.

Morin and Seigne concluded that the various blocks were from a single structure made from *narsi* limestone, with identical decorative ensemble, and using the same technique to dress the stone blocks. They further decided it was a *tholos* of known radius and on two levels, with Doric frieze and architrave in two different styles. Based upon the dimensions of the blocks they determined that the upper level utilised Corinthian capitals and was of slightly

Fig. 25: Tower tomb, Serrin, Syria.

An approximate analogue of the suggested restoration of a LH mausoleum, Gerasa (From the Gertrude Bell Archive, (Source: www.gerty.ncl.ac.uk/photos.php)

smaller circumference from the lower level. Five blocks of curved and sloping dimensions and an urn indicated that the whole was surmounted by a conical roof. The unusually small dimensions of the Doric architrave is a distinctive styling found also on the *temenos* wall of the lower terrace of the Zeus Temple. The surviving *metope* decoration of the Doric frieze included a floral design, a bunch of grapes, wreath, and a bird. They were then able to reconstruct the structure

on paper as a funerary aedicule on a podium (see figure 26 above). More importantly, perhaps, they found approximate analogues in some other funerary monuments of Syria-Palestine, such as the tower tombs at Serrin and Amrith, Syria and the Kidron Valley, Jerusalem. The Gerasa structure is unique however, in being circular from its base, while only one other Hellenistic tower tomb is known using peripteral columns in the upper level (Hass, Syria). The southern necropolis, in which it was located, was destroyed later in the second century when the hippodrome was constructed.

Fig. 26: Absalom's tomb, Kidron Valley, Jerusalem.

Another suggested analogue of the restored LH mausoleum, Gerasa. (Author's photo.)

Built a century or more after the undisturbed child's tomb, this Late Hellenistic mausoleum is of great interest at several levels. Although utilising classical design elements it reflects regional Hellenistic idiosyncrasies in an ensemble that manages to be completely singular. Second, the grandeur of the structure and the technical complexity of its construction suggest that it was commissioned by an individual or family of substantial wealth. Third, its distinctive decorative elements parallel those used in the construction of the lower *temenos* of the Zeus Temple and suggested to Morin and

Seigne the probability that the both structures were designed by the same architect.

For present purposes, however, it is the tomb itself which provides insights into the engagement with Hellenism of the mixed community of Gerasa at the beginning of the early Roman Empire. First, reconstruction of such a grandiose Late Hellenistic funerary structure raises the probability of similar above ground structures having been more common in the early *necropoleis* of the period surmounting at least some of the surviving *hypogea*. The finds of painted decorative plaster in trench 500 of the Jarash City Walls Project provides further support for such a possibility.¹⁸ Second, the structure confirms Kehrberg's point that the funerary remains of the southern necropolis are indicative of the growing affluence of at least some elements of the community at the end of the

¹⁸ Kehrberg and Manley (2003) 84-5.

Hellenistic period.¹⁹ Third, the reconstruction together with the lower Zeus Temple *temenos* point to the emergence of a local architectural vernacular deriving from Hellenistic traditions. Fourth, the two tombs described, together with other *mausolea*, the Zeus temple *temenos* and *naos* and Temple C point to the beginnings of private and euergetist expenditure on public monumentalism in Gerasa by the end of the Hellenistic period. All this accumulated evidence strongly suggests the existence of a significant wealthy elite by the time of the Late Hellenistic/Early Roman transition, for whom the dominant cultural ethos was Hellenistic. We do not know the ethnic identity of the family who built the later tomb, but it is evident that they wished to identify with conspicuous expression of Hellenistic forms. Additionally, some elements of the structure and its decoration were singular, and seem to indicate that the local architect was capable of innovation in both structural technique and architectural decoration.

The two tombs are significant archaeological evidence of the transition of the Iron Age village of *Ġršu* into the Hellenistic town of Gerasa and the cultural changes that were occurring in the context of the Hellenistic encounter. It is not simply a question of the introduction of new architectural forms which need be no more than the pursuit of modernity for its own sake. Nor is it simply a matter of the growth in prosperity that is so evident. Rather, it is the extent to which new architectural forms and growth in material prosperity are evidence of new ways of thinking. In particular, the use of monumental funerary architecture and conspicuous display suggest new ways of thinking about the indigenous practice of inhumation and ancestor veneration. Seigne's speculation that the architect of the later tomb was the local architect, Diodorus, is significant. From the relevant inscription in the Zeus Temple complex we know that Diodorus was a Gerasene whose father had a Semitic name (see below pages 218) which in turn suggests he may have been a local man consciously identifying with Hellenistic culture, or alternatively, he was a Greek colonist married to a local woman. Whatever his ethnic origins, Diodorus, is an example of an indigene, competent in the colonising culture, using the Greek architectural repertoire in a distinctive style. The two tombs reflect the cultural impact of the Hellenistic

¹⁹ Kehrberg, (2004b) 194.

encounter, while the new regional adaptation of the classical architectural repertoire seen in the later tomb is evidence of the indigenous population engaging with the intrusive culture.

The development of the Zeus temple sanctuary

Fig.27: The Zeus temple complex c.170 CE.

A reconstruction of the complex as finally developed. Note the Roman-style *cella* dominating the site (structure A above) and contrast with the reconstruction of the Hellenistic *naos* in fig. 15 (structure B above), the style of the *temenos* of the lower terrace with its porticoed *peribolos* and the exterior altar before the *naos*. (From Seigne (2000).)

The site of the Zeus temple complex had cultic significance dating back at least to the Iron Age and possibly earlier. Despite difficulty in discerning in detail the hill's natural topography because of the extensive building that occurred in the Late Hellenistic and Roman periods, the main features are apparent. On the northern slopes of the hill (facing Museum Hill) there was a rocky spur with deep natural fissures while the southern slopes and around the summit of the hill there were further caves. Archaeological investigation of the hill by the Institut français Archéologie du Proche Orient IFAPO (IFPO since 2000) has demonstrated the Iron Age cultic and funerary significance of the hill and its continuing significance through the Hellenistic and Roman periods. The excavation was undertaken in two phases. The first (1982-c.2000) led by Jacques Seigne explored the lower terrace of the Zeus temple complex while the second phase (1996-2000), led by Jean-Paul Braun, explored the upper terrace, associated caves and related section of the city wall.

The lower terrace of the Zeus temple complex, the subject of the first phase of the IFAPO excavations, comprised a large enclosed *temenos* (approximately 40x60 metres) oriented roughly on a north-south axis on the eastern flank of the hill and with a *naos*/monumental altar at its northern end (see Fig. 27). During the Late Hellenistic, access to the *temenos* had been by three doors in the middle of the north, east and south walls.²⁰ From Roman times access to the *temenos* was from the Oval Plaza by the present monumental staircase in the middle of the east wall of the *peribolos* of the *temenos*. The *temenos* was enclosed by a porticoed *peribolos* with internal and external architectural decoration of the Ionic order. The eastern side of the *temenos* was supported on a crypto-portico to provide a sufficiently large level surface for the *temenos* platform. This completed structure remained the final form of the lower terrace although its conception and initial construction was Late Hellenistic. By careful excavation the IFAPO team were able to establish the stratification of the site, particularly of the cultic centre located at the northern end, dating back to the Iron Age which is critically important to understanding the development of the site.

²⁰ Seigne (1997c) 993.

Fig. 28: Lower *temenos* of Zeus temple complex, Gerasa.

The plan displays elements typical of Near Eastern temple architecture — the walled *temenos*, external altar, and large congregational space. (After Seigne (1985b).)

Three deep sondages in the southern arcade and in the courtyard of the *temenos* revealed archaeological levels from the beginning of the first century BCE ‘correspondant à un sanctuaire ancien, de type oriental’.²¹ But, as is evident from figure 29 below, there is a complex stratification at the northern end of the *temenos*.

As early as 1983, Will suggested that there may have been an altar to a Baalshamin (Canaanite) or Hadad (Syrian) type deity which was then built over

²¹ Seigne (1985b) 289 n.6

in the Hellenistic period with Baal being assimilated with Zeus Olympios.²² Subsequent excavation has provided evidence in support of this hypothesis although at the north end of the lower terrace rather than the summit. When the IFAPO team excavated the *naos* on the lower terrace they found at the lowest level a rocky spur with fissures that Seigne describes as a grotto containing burnt offerings and pottery dating back to the sixth-seventh centuries BCE. Unfortunately, there is no archaeological evidence, such as offerings or cult apparatus, which could provide us with any insights into the nature of the Iron Age cult itself. The first century BCE Hellenistic Zeus-Hammana (τοῦ Διὸς/[Τ]οῦ ἁμμανα) inscription discussed earlier (pages 177-8) may provide evidence of the actual name and local manifestation of Baal during the Iron Age. Importantly, the inscription provides epigraphic evidence of the assimilation of a Semitic god, probably called Baal-Hammon, and the Greek, Zeus.

It is the northern end of the lower terrace which provides the richest evidence of cultic development of the site since all the later structures are built over the Iron Age (and possibly earlier) sanctuary.²³ The following summary of the archaeology of the lower terrace is based upon the successive published reports by Seigne.²⁴ The rocky spur is characterised by a shallow basin together with both natural and artificial fissures and channels suggestive of flowing water.²⁵ The grotto contained ash and burnt animal bones and Iron Age pottery of a type widely found in 'la zone palestinienne'.²⁶ In his latest publications on the temple, Seigne confirms the dating of the Iron Age developments to the seventh and sixth centuries BCE.²⁷ The grotto itself, filled with cinders and deposits, was sealed at some unknown point in time and a structure of uncertain design, probably an enclosure, was built before it. The grotto and the small enclosure were subsequently incorporated in a terrace that was constructed at the level of the summit of the rocky spur. On this terrace a simple structure, of plastered soft limestone blocks, was constructed above the

²² Will (1983) 135-6.

²³ Seigne (1993) 349-51.

²⁴ Seigne (1985a), (1985b), (1989), (1990), (1992), (1993), (1997c), (1999), (2000); Gatier and Seigne (2006).

²⁵ Seigne (1997c) n.6, 995. Full excavation of the earliest levels of the site usage were abandoned for unspecified reasons in 1996, Seigne (1997c) n.3, 994.

²⁶ Seigne (1997c) n.5, 995.

²⁷ Seigne (2000) 91; Gatier and Seigne (2006) 171.

Fig. 29: Aerial view of *naos*, lower terrace, Zeus temple, Gerasa.

The successive layers of development of the sacred spot are clearly shown with a section of the fissured rocky spur visible in the upper left. It is located in the long vaulted subterranean corridor to the left which provided access to the spur and grotto during Late Hellenistic development of the original Iron Age sanctuary. The foundations of the earlier square tower altar, on a different orientation, are located in the upper right. Finally, note how the subterranean chambers were later filled with dressed masonry from the *naos* of Theon, blocking access to the Iron Age sanctuary. (After Seigne (1993).)

spur and grotto and which Seigne speculated housed an altar directly above the grotto entrance. The masonry style of this structure was Hellenistic.²⁸ This structure is not centred on the axis of the later *temenos* and, significantly, was angled apparently to face more directly toward Museum Hill.²⁹ In figure 29 above this earliest Hellenistic structure is visible, below the tower altar base, at an angle to the later structures and the later enlarged *temenos* itself.

Around 100 BCE a new temple structure was built over the earlier ones and involved the further extension of the terrace. Only a few levels of masonry of the new structure survived, but Seigne concluded from the surviving material that the most straightforward restoration is of a massive cube surmounted with

²⁸ Seigne (1997c) n.7, 996.

²⁹ Seigne (1992) 341.

a Doric frieze, cavetto (or Egyptian) cornice, and stepped merlons. In other words, a tower altar such as reported at a number of sites through Syria-Palestine. The base of the tower altar is clearly visible in figure 29 above. A number of Hellenistic decorative elements (palmettes, cornucopia, Heracles' club, Zeus' thunderbolts) found in the foundations of the second century CE *naos* may have formed a band around three sides of the structure below the Doric frieze.³⁰

The next stage of development of the site, again in the first century BCE,³¹ is of a building, that the IFAPO excavators envisage, from a number of masonry blocks and decorative elements found, as a square *naos* with four internal columns supporting a flat roof. Internally, it was decorated in painted plaster. Externally, it was decorated with a sculpted Ionic frieze of sinusoidal rinceaux (floral motif) with birds, supported by archaising Corinthian capitals, a double architrave, cavetto cornice, and merlons. The limited archaeological evidence suggests that the sacred space of this *naos* probably extended a little beyond the immediate environs of the high place.³²

The progressive monumentalisation of the sanctuary gathered pace and in the middle of the first century BCE the terrace was considerably enlarged to the south of the cult site and oriented at a twenty degree angle to the earlier constructions. Large *temenoi* are a characteristic of eastern-Hellenistic cult centres and are ascribed to the communal nature of Semitic cult.³³ The enlargement of the terrace, together with the construction of a Hellenistic style *naos*, may be attributable to a number of causes including a population increase in the Jarash Basin, the sanctuary assuming regional significance and therefore attracting larger numbers to its festivals, the adoption of new ideologies relating to religious and funerary architecture, or any combination of these factors.

³⁰ Seigne (1997c) 996.

³¹ Seigne (2002: 34-5) dates the structure to the first century BCE based on architectural and decorative style.

³² Seigne (1997c) 996-7.

³³ See, for example, those at Palmyra (Temple of Bel), Jerusalem (Temple of YHWH), Damascus (Hadad-Jupiter Temple), Hatra (Temple of the Sun), Philadelphia (Heracles Temple), and other small shrines. Ball (2000: 318) argues that cities of the Near East were dominated by a single huge temple, such as those noted above, which were the single most dominant architectural feature of the city. The *temenos* always occupied a substantial area.

Further major developments of the enlarged temple *temenos* occurred at the beginning of the first century CE.³⁴ In 9/10 CE a vaulted passage or arcade, of new construction technique, was built on the west side of the terrace abutting the hill. An inscription indicates that in 27/28 CE a Gerasene architect, Diodoros, further enlarged the terrace substantially and extended the vaulted passage around its other sides. The inscription itself is of interest. In addition to providing the name of the architect, Diodoros, and indicating that he was a Gerasene, it also reveals that his father had a Semitic name, Zebaou, which Seigne takes to be a stonemason's error for Zebeidou (genitive of Zebeidas or Zebedas).³⁵ The name of Diodoros' father implies the family was of Semitic origin.³⁶ If so, along with other inscriptions carrying Semitic names, it suggests that members of the Gerasene indigenous population were to be found among the town's elite. The extension of the *temenos* required the construction of a crypto-portico beneath the east side of the terrace to support the enlarged terrace on the slope of the hill. Three gates were introduced, the eastern one being monumentalised with a cupola supported on four columns. This extension involved a twenty degree rotation of the sanctuary precinct to the east while the eastern *propylon* marks the formal orientation of the precinct to the expanding city, reflecting its transition from rural to urban sanctuary.

In an early description of the *peribolos*, Will demonstrated that the Hellenistic period architecture and architectural decoration conformed to a regional Syrian Hellenistic style characterised by allusions to a Parthian style of arcade, distinctive use of the traditional Greek architectural orders, unusual decoration of the *metopes*, the elimination of architraves, the absence of moulding, together with the repetitive and striking use of foliage and animal figural decoration.³⁷ This is consistent with his earlier division of the Syrian landscape into three zones with each responding differently to the stimulus of hellenism.³⁸ The first zone, the Seleucid cities of northern Syria and the coastal cities of Phoenicia and Palestine, was characterised by the complete adoption of the

³⁴ Seigne (1997c) 998-999.

³⁵ Seigne (1985b) 289. The text reads: Διόδωρος/Ζεβαου/Γερασσηνος/Αρχιτεκτόνη/σεν

³⁶ But on the hazards of drawing historical conclusions from onomastics, see MacDonald (1999), esp. pages 254-7.

³⁷ Will (1983) 139-142.

³⁸ Will (1965) cited in Gawlikowski (1997) 46.

Greek idiom. The second zone was southern Syria and the Hauran; and here rural isolation resulted in naive renderings of Greek forms and a number of characteristic stylings. The third zone, further east, including Palmyra, Dura Europos and Hatra, was characterised by a very selective use of classical styles. Hellenistic Gerasa belongs in the second zone.

The next major development was the reconstruction of the *naos* which from an inscription we know was completed in 69/70 CE, financed by Theon, son of Demetrios. Excavations have shown that the earlier Hellenistic period temple was destroyed by fire around the time of the First Jewish Revolt and may provide some confirmation of Josephus' description of the Roman reprisals inflicted on Gerasa at this time (*Bell. Jud.* 4.9.1). Seigne suggests that construction of Theon's temple was necessitated by this incident and built on a podium in the Roman style. On the other hand it does not represent a complete break with past values in that it was designed to preserve and envelope the earlier sacred structures and restore the altar. Its decoration is in the eastern-Hellenistic idiom. There is a rear court, at a lower level, providing access to two underground rooms, one enclosing the base of the Hellenistic altar; above the podium a double row of Corinthian columns surrounded the *naos* and vestiges of the earlier Hellenistic structure thus providing an architectural 'envelope' of the earlier structures (see figure 29). The manner in which it both preserves and restores earlier structures following their violent damage, integrating all architectural elements of the *temenos*, while at the same time responding to Roman architectural styles is striking and suggests continuity of underlying traditional symbolic values.

Then around 135/140 CE, Theon's temple, in turn, was disassembled and its blocks of masonry were interred in the basement forming a solid base for a new temple. The discovery of hundreds of these blocks enabled IFAPO to create the model of Theon's temple (see figure 15). The new structure was smaller than Theon's temple and was surrounded on three sides by connecting rooms and utilised decorative elements from the preceding monumental Hellenistic altar. A new smaller altar was raised at the front of the new structure to replace the Hellenistic altar, the blocks of which were incorporated in the subterranean rooms. This work was unlike earlier construction in that it did not represent an

elaboration or enlargement of the sacred site, '*une mise en valeur*', so much as a cultural erasure of the earlier structures and their symbolic values. All elements of previous cult, the rocky spur, the Hellenistic altar, vestiges of the first *naos*, Theon's temple including his inscription, were carefully buried and no longer accessible.

Construction then commenced on a second grandiose temple in the Roman style built on the upper terrace and dedicated to Zeus Olympios in 162/3 CE. The peripteral, octostyle temple, had a pitched roof, stood on a pedestal, had external niches for statuary, and carried a frieze decorated with hunting animals sculpted in high relief. This temple faced east, more or less directly down the *cardo* from where it makes an imposing sight. It is at right angles to the axis of the lower temple complex and access is from the Oval Plaza by a broad

ceremonial staircase linking the west wall of the lower terrace with the entrance to the new temple.

The second phase of the IFAPO excavations, lead by Jean-Paul Braun (1996-2000) and subsequently under the new '*mise en scene*' project by Chrystelle March (2007-2010), focused on this last temple and the surrounding hilltop.

Investigations demonstrated that the upper *temenos* wall was built at the same time as the temple structure, while the whole complex was designed to fit within outcroppings left from the hill's use as a quarry. But the area had been much more

Fig. 30: View south down the *cardo*, Gerasa.

The Zeus temple complex is in the distance, dominated by the Roman style temple built on the upper terrace of the hill. (Author's photo.)

than just a quarry. To the south east of the temple complex, remains have been identified as a banqueting hall.³⁹ Two shaft tombs, located immediately below the grottoes, were carefully filled in during construction of the banqueting hall.⁴⁰ They were dated to the second-first century BCE thus providing a *post quem*

C. March / IFPO 2010, d'après J.-P. Braun / IFPO 2000, in C. March, " Le projet de restauration. Présentation scientifique. Réalisée en collaboration avec J-F Salles, C Augé et O Maillot . Exposition- conférence Ccf Amman/Ifpo Amman, 16-nov - 17 déc 2009, Publié par le Centre culturel français d'Amman 2010

Fig. 31: Plan of the IFAPO excavation of the Zeus Temple complex.
(From March (2010).

date for its construction, while access to it from within the city was prevented by the construction of the upper temple providing an *ante quem* date.⁴¹ There were further hypogean tombs contiguous with the southern slopes of the hill

³⁹ Braun (1998).

⁴⁰ Wright (2012) 129-30, after Kehrberg (unpublished).

⁴¹ Wright (2012) 129-30, n.200, after Kehrberg (unpublished).

dating through the LH and Roman periods. These investigations have demonstrated the extent to which the whole hill, with its caves, had been used for funerary and cultic purposes from the Iron Age. Ceramic fragments of eagle-like birds, together with fragments of incense altars were found in the area including in the caves.⁴² Kehrberg noted that under the ceremonial staircase between the two terraces there were small cavities containing ceramic fragments and ash, likely sacrificial deposits; and suggests that the hill to the south and east of the upper temple complex had earlier been an outdoor sanctuary or 'funerary garden' and continued to be used as such after the upper temple complex was built.⁴³ If the area was used as a garden for funerary feasting and ancestor veneration then that would be consistent with other evidence from the region.⁴⁴ Artefactual evidence found under the temple foundations point to its use in the Late Hellenistic and, at the latest, first century CE. The upper temple was never completed with incomplete decoration of architrave blocks, bedrock to the south and north being levelled but not paved and signs of careless execution of the upper parts of the structure.⁴⁵

The architectural development of the sacred site is of critical importance in tracing the development of cult on the site from at least the Iron Age onwards, while epigraphic evidence enables us to establish elements of absolute chronology thus synchronising these cultural developments with wider political events affecting the city. In this way it is possible to explore social memory and cultural change within the city within the colonial encounter. The site has threefold significance. First, it is at present the only location within the city walls where it is possible to track the same human activity diachronically for over seven hundred years.⁴⁶ Second, the human activity concerned, public religious

⁴² Wright (2012) 129-30.

⁴³ Kehrberg (2004b) 192 and *personal communication*.

⁴⁴ Earlier (chapter five) I had posited ancestor veneration as one of the core indigenous values carried forward from the Early Bronze Age based on archaeological evidence in the Jarash Basin. Gawlikowski (2005: 54) discusses funerary feasting among the Palmyrenes; Wadeson (2011: 9-10) discusses the evidence of Nabataean funerary feasting. Interestingly, Wadeson notes the feasting could occur either within the tomb or outside.

⁴⁵ Braun (1998) 597.

⁴⁶ Lichtenberger (2008: 148-50, cited in Wright (2012: 127-8) rejects any linkage between pre-Hellenistic and Hellenistic cult on the site because of the evidential lacuna between the sixth century BCE and the establishment of the Zeus cult. Wright (2012: 128) faults his argument noting that Lichtenberger himself acknowledges the 'orientalised' layout of the temple. 'It would be incredible for a population to xenophobically maintain the purely Greek

and funerary cult, is vital to the expression, transmission and modification of communal cultural values through successive generations. Third, originally an Iron Age rural cult centre, the site may have had regional significance in much the same way as, for example, the cult centres at Baitocaece in northern Syria and Banias/Caesarea Philippi in the Golan Heights.

According to Simon Schama

'Landscapes are culture before they are nature; constructs of the imagination projected onto wood and water and rock... But it should also be acknowledged that once a certain idea of landscape, a myth, a vision, establishes itself in an actual place, it has a peculiar way of muddling categories, of making metaphors more real than their referents; of becoming, in fact, part of the scenery.'⁴⁷

This principle, if one may call it that, is exemplified, in the Iron Age vision of the Zeus temple hill as a numinous sacred place. The 'referent' hill and outcrop are physically insignificant, but the human investment of the locality with symbolic religious significance transformed the landscape. The 'metaphor' of divine presence, *mysterium tremendum*, thereafter shaped the human response to the sacred landscape. This vision led to the successive human transformations of the location's natural physical features and the centring of the Iron Age and Hellenistic settlements here.

De Polignac has drawn attention to the interrelationship between sanctuaries and social developments in eighth and seventh century Greece and *polis* formation. The following analysis draws upon his concept of the sanctuary as a place of both social mediation and competition.⁴⁸ The physical remains on the hill, supplemented by the associated inscriptions, are the only evidence we have for understanding the social dynamics of those critical centuries culminating in the Antonine Roman temple looming over the southern end of Gerasa. The transition from Iron Age rural sanctuary, dedicated to Baal, to monumental Graeco-Roman urban temple, dedicated to Zeus Olympios, reflects the sanctuary's appropriation by successive generations of an emergent wealthy urban elite as they pursued an agenda of assimilation with Hellenism

worship of a deity, while simultaneously altering the physical and architectural space to reflect vernacular traditions.'

⁴⁷ Schama (1995) 61.

⁴⁸ de Polignac (1994); de Polignac (1995).

and, later, Roman imperialism. De Polignac's interpretive model of social mediation and competition helps in understanding this process. On the one hand, the mediating function of the sanctuary ensured cultural continuity through successive generations of Iron Age rural peasants of the Jarash Basin. On the other hand, the sanctuary became a centre of social competition as members of the new urban elite appropriated the site in pursuit of their agenda of conspicuous display through euergetism and monumentalisation of the site.

By the seventh or sixth century BCE, the site had become a rural sanctuary, probably dedicated to a manifestation of Baal, quite possibly Baal-Hammon, and with a cult characterised by burnt animal and ceramic offerings. It is reasonable to assume, from our knowledge of other sanctuaries, including descriptions of early rural cult in the Hebrew Bible, that this sanctuary was characterised by minimal architecture and few sacred personnel.⁴⁹ It is an inference supported by the archaeology of the site. Associated with the largest known settlement in the Jarash Basin, it is likely that this rural sanctuary acted as a regional centre in the basin, a focus for communal activity with religious festivals providing the opportunity for fairs, trade deals, family alliances, marriages and the like. It was thus acting as a *locus* of social mediation and critical to the transmission of cultural values within the indigenous community of the Jarash Basin.

If it is accepted that the early rural sanctuary 'belonged' to the local population in a society of only limited social differentiation, then its progressive monumentalisation and conversion into a major urban sanctuary reflects some form of social competition as an emergent urban elite progressively appropriated the sanctuary and used it as a symbol of their civic aspirations. Thus, on the one hand the sanctuary may be seen as a centre for communal activity preserving cultural memory and mediating cultural values in new contexts (De Polignac's social mediation). On the other hand, it may be seen as the source of possible social tension between the general population and the local elites as they pursue their agenda of adaptation to Hellenism and Roman imperialism (De Polignac's social competition). I would suggest that a cultural

⁴⁹ For example, I Sam.1-3 provides a vivid account reflecting the social intimacy of an Iron Age rural sanctuary.

resistance in the postcolonial sense is probably inherent in the dynamics of this social complex of mediation and competition.

Thus the archaeology reflects both cultural continuity and discontinuity. The first building structure that Seigne could identify as unambiguously Hellenistic uses Hellenistic-style masonry, while its orientation and location reflects continuity in veneration of the deity and the preservation of social memory of the significance of the sacred site. In the absence of contemporary relevant epigraphy it is impossible to determine whether the process of assimilation of Baal-Hammon to Zeus had begun at this early stage. The modesty of the structure may reflect limited wealth in the community or, alternatively, it may reflect a lack of substantial social and economic differentiation in what is now a small community of mixed ethnicity. In short, while the use of Hellenistic-style

Fig. 32: Tower Altar, Amrit, Syria.

A number of such altars provide analogues for a probable square tower altar on the LH sanctuary in the Zeus temple complex, Gerasa. (Source: www.wmf.org)

masonry probably reflects the presence of new settlers carrying new ideas, or at least the growing Hellenistic influence in the region, there is nothing to suggest social competition over the control and development of the sanctuary. I would suggest that at this stage the sanctuary cult was probably unchanged and reflected traditional indigenous practices undertaken by the rural community.

Shortly after, a further structure, a tower altar, 5.8 metres square, was constructed of the now standard courses of plastered header and stretcher masonry.⁵⁰ There is nothing to indicate an

⁵⁰ Seigne (1997c) 996.

internal stair and, in common, with other solid tower altars in Syria-Palestine officiating priests would have mounted by a ladder. Based on the attribution to it of some decorated blocks found in the foundations of later structures, Seigne conjectures that it carried Greek decoration. Which in turn raises the question: was such Hellenistic decoration mere popular fashion, the pursuit of modernity for its own sake, or does it reflect significant penetration of the core value systems of the native cult?⁵¹ Access by an external ladder would have made sacrifice of large animals improbable, which, in turn, raises questions concerning the liturgical use of the tower altar. Certainly, cult activity on the top of the tower would have been visible to worshippers watching from the *temenos* below.⁵² The tower altar then reflects continuity with regional practices as participation and viewing the cultic rites by the whole community, congregational worship, seems to have been one of the essential and distinguishing features of Near Eastern religious practice.⁵³ Towers are a common element of the archaeology of Near Eastern cult from the fire altars of Iran through the tower tombs of Palmyra, tower altars in Syria to the tower-mausolea of Phoenicia.⁵⁴ The great altar at Baalbek, was the grandest of the genre being several storeys high and with internal access to the terrace roof. As with the earlier structure, the tower altar certainly reflects continuity of indigenous cult at the Gerasa site, while Hellenistic evidence is limited to masonry construction and architectural decoration. Furthermore, if we accept linking the Zeus-Hammana inscription to the tower altar and a very tentative dating to late in the second century BCE, then we have early evidence of the assimilation of the native deity to Zeus.⁵⁵ The *Dios tou hammana hetereias* referred to in the inscription reflects devotees of the two sky-gods from different cultural traditions, belonging to the same association; using the same sanctuary, itself of Near Eastern form and decorated in Hellenistic style; engaging in the Hellenistic practice of euergetism, and joining the names of their respective deities. But at the same time, the cost of construction, the use of skilled stone masons and Hellenistic decorative motifs suggest the continued appropriation

⁵¹ Butcher (2003) 351.

⁵² Butcher (2003) 355; Downey (1976).

⁵³ Ball (2000) 334-5.

⁵⁴ See, for example, Clauss (2002), Braemer, Dentzer, Kalos and Tondon (1999)

⁵⁵ Gatier et Seigne (2006).

and conversion of the old rural sanctuary as wealthier members of the settlement now start to impose control in converting it into a monumental urban temple. This social competition continues with the next stage of development of the site, namely, the creation of the probable first *naos*. Seigne describes it as being built alongside the altar, having four columns *in antis*, and decorated with Hellenistic motifs in the style found in the Nabataean world of the first century BCE. Although the limits of the sacred space cannot be accurately defined, Seigne is confident the building extended beyond the high place itself and probably included other elements. The temple undoubtedly was an ambitious structure for Late Hellenistic *Ġršu*/Gerasa which, based on decoration, has been dated to 70-60 BCE.⁵⁶ The architect, whether local or hired in for the purpose, demonstrated fluency in the architectural style of the Nabataean milieu as evidenced in the use of Ionic frieze of wavy vines inhabited by birds, Corinthian columns, double architrave with Egyptian cornice, surmounted with merlons.⁵⁷ The quality of the building, therefore, represents a further stage in the elite aspirations for the site. Furthermore, the perceived need to re-house the deity above ground reflects the beginnings of a transition that culminated in the second century CE decision to render the Iron Age sacred spur completely inaccessible and presumably erased from the social memory. However, at this stage the new *naos* seems to have been constructed with the intention of providing some sort of physical continuity with the original sacred place. An examination of figure 29 shows the rocky spur preserved and accessible in subterranean rooms and corridor in the foundations of the new structure. It is unknown whether or not the *naos* housed any image such as a statue of the deity or a baetyl.

The *naos* was surmounted with stepped merlons which, as noted earlier, were an iconic Near Eastern decoration of great antiquity. It was extensively used by the Achaemenids who, Anderson argues, in classical texts (and modern positivist readings of them), were ‘the paradigmatic barbarian evil force’ whose cultural influence has been minimised.⁵⁸ Working on the assumption that by the first century BCE the stepped merlon would be seen as an Achaemenid icon,

⁵⁶ Gatier and Seigne (2006) 174.

⁵⁷ Seigne (1997c) 996-7.

⁵⁸ Anderson (2002).

Anderson then suggests that the Nabataean use of it in tomb facade decoration was an expression of a cultural resistance to Hellenistic influence. He argues that its use on the facades of the tombs of the Nabataean nobility was evidence of an expression of resistance to the Graeco-Roman influence being promoted

Fig. 33: Contrasting tomb facades, Petra.

The upper image is of the façade of a the tomb of a noble family. In its lack of decoration and use of the stepped merlon it is strikingly different from the baroque style of the royal tomb, el Khazneh, which displays Graeco-Roman influence from Alexandria. (Author's photos.)

by the royal family and evidenced in the contrasting Hellenistic decoration of royal tombs such as *el Khazneh*.

Such an argument cannot be sustained as an explanation of their use at Gerasa. On the other hand, if Anderson's argument has any validity in relation to Nabataean tomb facades, then it is an indication that the decorative form was capable of carrying deep cultural significance. At the very least their use, together with the use of the Egyptian cavetto cornice, indicates that the newly adopted Hellenistic decorative styles, were not a passive aping of imperial forms, but an active and selective process of blending ancestral and introduced forms.

At this stage of development the Zeus temple complex comprised tower altar, adjoining *naos* and *temenos* which in the middle of the first century BCE was enlarged and walled.⁵⁹ Such large enclosed sacred spaces encompassing a public altar and *naos* are of the essence of Near Eastern cult (carried forward into Islamic mosque design throughout the region) enabling communal or

⁵⁹ Seigne (1997c) 998.

congregational participation in the worship. Retention and enlargement of the enclosed sacred space reflects continued traditional Near Eastern communal worship at the site while its decoration reflects a now familiar use of classical forms in a distinctive style. The size of the *temenos* attests to both the wealth and size of the *polis* population.

In 27/28 CE, the *temenos* was further enlarged to its present dimensions (fifty by one hundred metres) by the local architect, Diodoros son of Zebeidas.⁶⁰ Inscriptions from this period provide strong evidence of elite emulation of Graeco-Roman culture — adoption of the Greek language for epigraphic purposes, the dedication of the complex to Zeus Olympios, adoption of the imperial cult and offices of the Greek *polis*. Thus by the beginning of the Common Era, control of the sanctuary lay firmly with the urban elite whose dominant cultural stance seems to have been one of emulation of Graeco-Roman culture, including the dedication of the temple complex to Zeus Olympios. On the other hand, the complex architecture decorated in Hellenistic style, continued to meet traditional native liturgical needs.

Seigne found evidence of fire in the *naos* which he suggested may be linked to the reprisal raid by Lucius Annius during the First Jewish Revolt as reported by Josephus. While that may be speculative, it is certain that the *naos* was replaced in 69/70 CE. The work was funded by Theon, son of Demetrios, who is listed in three separate inscriptions benefiting the temple as a suppliant (ἰκετης).⁶¹ By now the temple is dedicated unequivocally to Zeus Olympios which is relevant to our thesis of social competition and progressive appropriation of the temple by the civic elite. Conversely, the use of the epithet, Olympios (which by this time has supplanted the earlier Zeus-Hammana) may be an attempt to provide continuity with the Aramaic deity, Baal-Hadad, a sky god responsible for thunder and rain and who also has a thunderbolt as one of his attributes.

But then Theon's temple was itself dismantled between 135 and 140 CE, the time of the Second Jewish Revolt. There is a single significant design element

⁶⁰ Seigne (1985b).

⁶¹ Notably Rigsby (1996) and (2000); Jones (1930) 45; Fink (1933) 114; Welles (1938) Inscrs. 5, 6.

in the new *naos*, which seems to indicate a deliberate act of erasure of social memory. As Seigne remarked —

Sa surface fut réduite de moitié et les travaux entraînèrent la disparition absolument totale de toutes les installations anciennes, de toutes les racines du sanctuaire. Il s'agit là d'un tournant fondamental, d'un arrêt brutal, doublé d'une volonté affirmée de faire table rase du passé: toutes les traces des origines du culte, le rocher, l'autel hellénistique, les vestiges de la première *cella*, même les inscriptions de Theôn furent soigneusement enterrés et définitivement dissimulés aux regards. L'enfouissement des anciennes installations cultuelles de la reconstruction réduite du *naos* sur un plan fondamentalement différent ne peuvent être que le reflet d'une crise majeure ayant frappé la communauté des adorateurs de Zeus au moment de la deuxième révolte juive.⁶²

Was this act simply a matter of engineering? Clearly, Seigne thinks not. But what was the crisis that struck the community of worshippers of Zeus? Why obliterate religious continuity going back nearly a millennium? Why reverse the trend of increasing scale and build a smaller *naos* and replace the large Hellenistic altar with a much smaller one?

Approximately a generation later, in 162/3 CE, yet another major construction was undertaken on the site when a new huge temple in the Roman style was constructed on a new terrace carved out of the bedrock above the lower terrace and reached by a large ceremonial staircase from the lower terrace. The new *cella*, is set at right angles to the axis of the lower terrace. It has a small *temenos*, is set on a podium, with a pitched roof, octostyle, and peripteral with Corinthian columns. It is also characterised by ornamental niches in the external walls and with a side door in the south side. But it is the size of the new temple which now dominates the site and is surprising given the earlier down-scaling of its predecessor on the lower terrace. This new temple is unrelated in every respect to the earlier structures and represents a complete cultural rupture. The deity dwelling in this latest temple bears no connection with the deity residing in the Iron Age rock sanctuary.⁶³ Not only has the urban elite secured complete control of the holy site in de Polignac's sense of social competition, but they have divorced the temple cult from its origins and interred

⁶² Seigne (1997c) 1000.

⁶³ See p.238, n.82 on the contrasting attitudes of eastern and western cultures to moving a deity's location.

any architectural reference to the earlier cult, apparently attempting to erase any social memory of the indigenous deity and his cult.

Such a major temple, of course, was an integral part of the city itself and it is in the context of the emergence of a Roman period city plan in the second century CE that we are likely to find further clues as to the social and cultural crisis that seems to be reflected in the last stages of the development of the sanctuary.

*The development of the Artemis temple site*⁶⁴

In the third quarter of the second century CE, construction began on a huge new temple complex located in the centre of the Roman city with ceremonial entrance bestriding the *cardo* midway between the two *decumani*. The whole

Fig. 34: Model of the Artemis Temple.

In the bottom left a bridge crosses the Chrysorhoas river; in the centre a monumental approach bestrides the *cardo* whose colonnades may be seen running from left (south) to right; ceremonial stairs climb to the enclosed temenos and the *cella*. (Model by Centro Ricerche Archaeologiche e scavi di Torino per il Medio Oriente e l'Asia)

⁶⁴ Brizzi, Mastrogiacomo and Sepio (2001); Lazarrini (1989); Parapetti (1982), (1983), (1989), (1990), (1995); Pierobon (1984a), (1984b); Raja (2009)

complex is aligned at right angles to the *cardo* and was approached from the eastern side of the Chrysorhoas by a bridge and ceremonial *via sacra*, with a first monumental *propylaeum* and colonnaded trapezoidal square on the eastern side of the *cardo*. On the western side of the *cardo* there is a second square with fountains, a further *propylaeum* and two flights of ceremonial stairs that lead up onto the peristyle *temenos*, which was 122.5 x 88.3 metres in size. Before the temple was a massive altar. On the southern side of the temple there was what seems to have been a water pool. Whether the function of the pool was decorative or cultic is uncertain. The south side of the *temenos* is situated on a series of fully vaulted rooms which provide part of its foundation. The temple itself is peripteral with seven Corinthian columns along the front and eleven along the sides. Entirely absent is any surviving evidence of roof or entablature, while column drums and capitals which have fallen in earthquakes do not seem to have suffered the damage expected from the collapse of roofing. The excavators, therefore, have concluded that the temple was never completed.⁶⁵

The temple is located on the summit of a gently rising hill which had previously been used as a Hellenistic period cemetery. From inscriptions it is known that Artemis was venerated in Gerasa at least as early as 75/6 CE, but there is no archaeological evidence of an earlier sanctuary located where the present temple stands.⁶⁶ The location itself seems to have had an enduring religious significance as discussed earlier (pages 170-3).

Ball argues, providing examples, that a characteristic of eastern cities, dating back into the Bronze Age, was the presence of a single massive temple which dominated the city.⁶⁷ Until the construction of the second century temple of Artemis, this role had been fulfilled by the temple of Zeus Olympios in the southern part of the city, while other temples, including the earlier one to Artemis, were presumably subordinated to it. For some reason, this role was reversed in the middle of the second century with the earlier dismantling of Theon's temple to Zeus Olympios (135-140 CE), the construction of a smaller

⁶⁵ Parapetti (1983) 83.

⁶⁶ Welles (1938) Inscrs.27, 28, 29, 50. On the location of an earlier sanctuary Kraeling (1938b) 43, *contra* Pierobon (1984b) 99-100, Raja (2009) 390.

⁶⁷ Ball (2000) 256-61.

naos, followed by the construction of this new huge edifice to Artemis in the 160s, while at about the same time a large new Roman-style temple to Zeus Olympios is built on the upper terrace at the southern complex. All of this activity coincides with other major construction in accordance with a Roman city plan which places the new Artemis complex at the centre of the new city.

The centrality of the temple complex is political as well as geographical; adjoining it was the new north theatre/*bouleterion*/ forum and *agora* complex on the north *decumanus*. It seems clear that the Artemis temple was to be the main civic temple in the new city plan. This is not only evident in the scale of the complex and its geographical and civic centrality in the Roman city, but also in inscriptional and numismatic evidence relating to the goddess becoming the *tyche* of the new city at the same time.⁶⁸ Furthermore, the coins do not represent her as the Anatolian Artemis, but more as the Roman Diana.⁶⁹ There is a further point to note about this equation of Artemis and Tyche. Tyche, in the popular religion of the region, was often equated with the Semitic goddess of good fortune, Gad.⁷⁰

In summary, the new temple clearly was a key element of the new city plan and seems to have been intended to supplant the temple of Zeus. Whether this break was a benign or politically charged event is debated. Seigne and Parapetti, for example, believe it was, while Raja would see it rather as a benign process in the development of Gerasa's regional identity.⁷¹ Seigne sees the construction of the temple on the upper terrace of the Zeus complex, built more or less simultaneously as the Artemis temple, as an attempt by his devotees to reassert his primacy in civic life. For Raja, on the other hand, the two hugely ambitious and costly projects, neither of which was completed, are seen as no more than expressions of a regional identity for the city. I find this unconvincing. Without wishing to draw exact parallels, the political and religious enormity of supplanting the principal ancestral deity of an eastern city is readily apparent in Hadrian's decision to supplant Yahweh with Jupiter in Jerusalem/Aelia

⁶⁸ Raja (2009) 393

⁶⁹ Raja (2009) 393.

⁷⁰ Teixidor, (1977) 34-5, cited in Wineland (1992) 335.

⁷¹ Parapetti, (1990); Seigne (1992) 338; Raja (2005) 122, (2009) 395-6. For Raja, the implications of the scale of the second century Artemis cult is merely 'intriguing' and 'puzzling'.

Capitolina. If it is accepted that the Artemis temple was a key element in the new city plan, then its significance is bound up in the interpretation that is placed on that plan and its implementation in the Antonine period.

*The Roman period city plan*⁷²

In 129/130 CE the emperor Hadrian visited Gerasa and probably wintered over there.⁷³ In the decades after the visit there was a surge in public construction beautifying the city and providing all the traditional public amenities of a Roman style city (see the plan in Figure 14, page 154)⁷⁴ In the southern sector of the city, the implementation of the new plan included the construction of a ceremonial arch, redevelopment of the southern gate (129/30 CE) and construction of the hippodrome (mid-second century). The ceremonial arch, dedicated to Hadrian, is free standing and approximately five hundred metres outside the city wall, while the South Gate is an integral element of the wall. Construction of the hippodrome and Hadrian's arch involved clearing a substantial part of the Late Hellenistic/Augustan cemetery. However most of the new amenities of the new city plan are spread along the colonnaded street (the so-called *cardo*) in a northerly direction. The temple of Artemis (150-180 CE) is located in the centre of the plan and is adjoined by the north theatre/*bouleterion* (162-6 CE) and basilical forum and *agora*. Simultaneous with the construction of the Artemis temple, a new Roman style temple was built on the upper terrace of the Zeus complex in the southern end of the city (161-6 CE). All this building activity, stimulated by Hadrian's visit, resulted in the conversion of the Hellenistic *polis* into a Roman city. It is in the context of the adoption and implementation of this city plan that the major modifications to the

⁷² I have just learnt that S. Augusta-Boularot and J. Seigne presented a paper 'Hadrien, Gerasa et la seconde révolte Juive' at the conference *Artemide e Zeus a Gerasa: traarcheologia ed epigrafia, Napoli, 21 Feb. 2011*. At the time of submission of this thesis I am still seeking a copy of the paper. At the very least it will be relevant to the argument set out in this section and may reflect the same conclusions arrived at independently.

⁷³ Welles (1938) Inscriptions 30, 58, 143, 145 and esp. 144. Inscription 30 (now lost) by Marcus Calventius, a centurion of Hadrian's bodyguard, uses the expression *hibernati sunt* of their stay in Gerasa. Dvorjetski asserts that Hadrian established his headquarters there during the Bar Kokhba War, but this improbable assertion may be the result of a typographical error muddling Gerasa for Gadara where the tenth Legio Fretenis certainly was based. Dvorjetski (2005) 143.

⁷⁴ The city was well supplied with water from the river and several springs, however such Roman public facilities as nymphaeum, two *thermae*, and fountains resulted in unprecedented demand for water and therefore the need to improve the supply with the construction of various reservoirs and cisterns. See Seigne (2004).

temple to Zeus were made in 132-5 and 161-6 CE. The plan shifts the centre of gravity of the city north from the Zeus temple to the new Artemis temple.

The city wall defined the limits of the new city and, until recently, its dating has been disputed.⁷⁵ The Jarash City Wall Project, headed by Kehrberg, resolved the dispute establishing that the city wall was an integral part of the city plan.⁷⁶ The scale of the building programme is evident in Figure 35 below.

Amenity	Date of construction
Hadrian's Arch	129/30 CE
South Gate	129/30 CE
City wall	Early- ca.mid-2 ^d century CE
Hippodrome	Mid-2 ^d century CE
South tetrakionion	Mid-2 ^d century CE
North tetrapylon	c.165 CE
Macellum	150-200 CE
Artemis Temple	150-80 CE
Zeus Temple	
– major modification of <i>naos</i> on lower terrace	135-140 CE
- Construction of new upper temple and <i>temenos</i>	161-6 CE
North Theatre	162-6 CE
South Decumanus paved and colonnaded	170 CE
West Baths	150-200 CE
Nymphaeum	191 CE
Southern & central <i>cardo</i> widened and Corinthian columns replace earlier Doric columns	2 ^d century CE
East Baths	2 ^d century (?) CE

Fig. 35: Public amenities constructed in second century Gerasa.

(After Kennedy (2007: 41).

⁷⁵ Kraeling (1938b: 42ff) argued for 75CE;⁷⁵ Seigne (1992: 335) proposed the turn of the third/fourth centuries; while Kennedy (2007: 41) settled for 115 CE, presumably because that was the year in which the north gate was dedicated (Welles (1938) inscriptions 56/57.

⁷⁶ Kehrberg and Manley (2001), (2002a), (2002b), (2003), (forthcoming).

It is well known that Hadrian took an active interest in urban development and beautification as a means of promoting Roman values throughout the empire;⁷⁷ and that he travelled with an entourage of 'soldiers, workmen, surveyors and architects ... raising walls and beautifying cities'.⁷⁸ That being so, it is generally assumed that his visit in 129/130 CE was the critical factor in promoting the development of such a civic plan by way of imperial encouragement to the city's elite and, perhaps, the provision of professional planning advice. Another element of the city plan that has only recently been clarified is the civic administrative centre comprising the *bouleterion*, basilica and forum on the north *decumanus*.⁷⁹ It stands in close proximity to the Artemis temple, now the primary religious site associated with the new tutelary civic deity. The whole complex, civic temple, *bouleterion*, basilica and forum can be seen as the centre of the new Roman city and reflecting Roman urban ideology.

In summary then, the city plan has all the hallmarks of having been triggered in some manner by the visit of Hadrian. Over the next generation the city elite commenced implementation of the plan. The result was the transformation of the Hellenistic *polis* into a Roman city. But the plan was very ambitious, expensive and, ultimately, unsustainable; for example, neither the Artemis temple nor the Roman period Zeus temple was completed. Nor was the makeover of the *cardo*, for the northern section of the road was never widened to match the central and southern sections and the Ionic order colonnading was not replaced with Corinthian as had occurred with the other two sections. The transformation of the cityscape should not be seen in isolation however as all across the Empire, and the Roman Near East specifically, cities were remodelling their image. On the other hand, the impact of an imperial visit to a relatively minor city such as Gerasa cannot be over-estimated. Gerasa was not Antioch or Alexandria, but a small city of several thousand with a surrounding

⁷⁷ Boatwright (2000) 209.

⁷⁸ *Epit. de Caes.* 14.4-5. Immensi laboris, quippe qui provincias omnes passibus circumierit agmen comitantium praevertens, cum oppida universa restitueret, augeret ordinibus. Namque ad specimen legionum militarium fabros perpendiculatores architectos genusque cunctum exstruendorum moenium seu decorandorum in cohortes centuriaverat. It is often assumed that Hadrian's stay was lengthy and that he wintered over in Gerasa. Studies of Hadrian's itinerary in the east, including Boatwright, make no mention of any visit to Gerasa.

⁷⁹ See above pages 182-6.

chora supporting a peasantry of comparable size. Furthermore, the emperor concerned, Hadrian, had a clear urbanisation policy in support of a programme to unify the disparate cultural elements of the empire. But how to interpret the evidence? Should it be analysed as a benign cultural development? If the plan was too ambitious, was it imposed? How did the spectacle of the tragedy of the Second Jewish Revolt only a short distance away affect implementation of the civic programme? How did it affect the city's internal politics?

Discussion

In chapter five I attempted to establish that the indigenous inhabitants of the Jarash Basin were part of a regional cultural *koine* which reflected continuity of central ideas through the Neolithic, Bronze and Iron Ages. Some of the cultural values inherent in this cultural *koine* may be discerned in the early stratigraphy of the Zeus temple complex. Archaeological evidence from the Graeco-Roman period, limited though it is, suggests conscious or unconscious progressive erasure of such social memory from the urban landscape, culminating in the public buildings of the Antonine period Roman city. As long ago as 1982 the Jordanian archaeologist, Asem Barghouti, emphasised cultural continuity when he cautioned against regarding 'the architectural activity and town arrangement in this territory [i.e. Palestine and Jordan] as part of the same architectural and urban development in the rest of the Graeco-Roman world ...' He rejects such a position because it is 'biased' and ignores 'traditional and native tendencies'.⁸⁰ While 'outwardly', the eastern city may look as if it is conforming to western tenets of town planning, 'its essence and nature are oriental'.⁸¹ One of the key eastern features that could work against western regularity of urban design was in the approach to the placement of temples. Whereas the Greeks could move a temple from the acropolis to the lower city, in the ancient Near East '... the numinous presence of the deity is so precisely located that the sanctuaries cling forever to the same spot.'⁸²

In this chapter I have taken four inter-cultural encounters in Gerasa with which to explore in more detail the interactions and political dynamics implicit in the

⁸⁰ Barghouti (1982) 209.

⁸¹ Barghouti (1982) 211.

⁸² Oppenheim (1965:131) cited in Barghouti (1982) 213.

transition from Iron Age village to Seleucid town to Roman city. The encounters are embedded in the professionally excavated and published archaeology of the city. These were politically challenging years in which the region witnessed the decline of Seleucid hegemony, the emergence of local tyrants, Hasmonaean and Nabataean expansion, the Pompeian conquest and eastern settlement, the emergence of the Roman client king, Herod the Great, as a dominant regional political figure, the *pax Romana*, the looming presence of the Parthian Empire to the east, the two Jewish Revolts, and Hadrian's suspension of Roman expansion eastwards. Only about 100 kilometres from Jerusalem and even closer to the Galilee, Gerasa was immersed in a number of these events — a settler community, besieged by Alexander Jannaeus; a town of the Decapolis, it stood apart from the regional anti-Jewish pogroms prior to the First Jewish Revolt; suffered reprisals under Vespasian; was visited by Hadrian; experienced his use of Roman urbanism as a means of imperial consolidation and witnessed the savagery of the Hadrianic reprisals after the Second Jewish Revolt. Such events had to have galvanised a range of attitudes within the Gerasene community and have influenced the thinking and decision-making of the civic authorities. By placing the archaeological evidence in this politicised historical context, it becomes possible to start to gain some understanding of the community's responses to Seleucid and Roman imperialism.

In chapter four I argued that any modern interpretive model of cultural change in the Roman Near East needed to reflect four principles and seven interpretive modalities. In discussing the four colonial encounters I have applied these principles and modalities. I have also attempted to ground my discussion of the Late Hellenistic and Roman evidence from Gerasa in the context of the indigenous symbolic values by taking a *longue durée* approach to trace the durability and continuity of those values from the Neolithic and Bronze Ages.

The first obvious point to be made is that citizens of Gerasa, whatever their social status, must have been vividly conscious of the asymmetric power relations inherent in imperialism. From the Iron Age on, they had experienced successive imperial adventures imposing administrative organisation, extorting tribute, and confiscating land for settlers, all at the point of a sword. They had witnessed the continuous military jostling of the *Diadochoi* with all that that

meant in terms of extortionate tribute to fund the constant military adventures and experienced land confiscations as Greeks and Macedonians, probably Seleucid veterans, were settled in the town and its environs. Then with the decline of Seleucid power the town had been directly affected by the consequent political instability being besieged and taken by Alexander Jannaeus and subjected to Hasmonaean rule. Later they had experienced the imposition of Roman administration and rule, grateful probably for the peace and stability that brought, while at the same time watching the rise of Parthian power to the east. They had witnessed the ruthless suppression of two Jewish rebellions. The town experienced Roman reprisals firsthand, billeted imperial bureaucrats and military contingents, hosted an emperor for a lengthy period of time with all the costs that such hospitality imposed, listened to his views on city organisation and responded to them.

Secondly, it is essential to be sensitive to a likely diversity of opinions and responses in any indigenous population immersed in an imperial encounter. In the case of Gerasa, it is generally accepted that the overwhelming majority of the population would have been of local descent, with a small group of urban Greek/Macedonian settlers.⁸³ It is uncertain to what extent the two groups interacted socially, but names recorded in inscriptions suggest the possibility of at least some inter-marriage. Additionally, there is evidence of a Jewish community probably dating back to the period of Hasmonaean hegemony together with a small Nabataean community.⁸⁴ Given such ethnic diversity, a variety of attitudes toward Graeco-Roman culture and imperial power is inevitable.

The undisturbed mid-second century BCE Hellenistic tomb of the child provides a useful marker of the earliest days in the life of the Hellenistic period city. It conforms to Holt's image of a Hellenistic frontier society of mobility and opportunity.⁸⁵ The hypogeum tomb and the tomb contents are reflective of a prosperous family, possibly migrants from Alexandria. Traditionally, the Decapolis cities have been portrayed as oases of Hellenism within a

⁸³ Wineland (1992) 335.

⁸⁴ Evidence of the Jewish community: Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* 2.18.5. Evidence of a Nabataean sanctuary: Welles (1938) inscriptions 1, 17, 18.

⁸⁵ Holt (1993) 54.

surrounding sea of barbarism. But this image is now at best debatable and modern scholars tend to see their populations as predominantly Aramaean and Arab with only a few hundred Greek settlers at best. Graf suggests that they were no more than fortified towns and villages and, further, that Greek civic institutions only appeared during the Augustan era. Gerasa in the Hellenistic period was no more than 'a simple fortified agricultural village'.⁸⁶ Yet the tomb and its contents are reflective of moderate and unostentatious prosperity which moderates this assessment.⁸⁷

While the child's tomb belongs to the initial Seleucid settlement period, the mausoleum that Morin and Seigne reconstructed can be dated to the Augustan era and reflects significant change occurring in the cultural life of Gerasa. But the growth in wealth and the ostentatious display, so evident in the tomb's design, is not the essential point. Rather, the key is its place in the context of the transformation of a rural frontier village into the form of a Greek *polis* well located in the growing trade and prosperity of the post-Pompeian Roman Near East. Simultaneous with the construction of the tomb, monumentalisation of the Zeus Temple complex was well underway; classical motifs and designs were being used in both the temple *temenos* and the mausoleum, if in a somewhat idiosyncratic style; a Hellenistic city gate had been built (under the Oval Plaza), orthogonal streets to the west of the Oval Plaza were laid out; euergetism was being practised; and *polis* institutions were starting to appear in inscriptions.⁸⁸ But a number of authors caution against assuming that the indigenous culture was in decline or being abandoned.⁸⁹ Again, this is reflective of modern colonialism in which, after the initial catastrophic encounter, local cultures have in many cases responded vigorously to the cultural challenge together with any number of individuals who were competent in the conventions and practices of

⁸⁶ Graf (1992). *Contra*, Hoffman presents Gadara as a substantial city with very sophisticated well-maintained defences, orthogonal street planning, and city temple. He concludes it was a special project of the Seleucid, critical to the defence of the border with the Ptolemaic empire, Hoffman (2001). On the Hellenistic temple at Gadara, Hoffmann (1999).

⁸⁷ Kehrberg (2004a, 2006) suggests that the tomb belongs to a merchant family, the new middle class, growing rich in traded goods, such as wine, oil and spices, carried in amphorae and other vessels as shown on the model camels, as well as the other LH evidence reflecting growing wealth within the community.

⁸⁸ Welles(1938) γυμνασιάρχος (Inscr.3) is an early first century inscription in which Aristonas, son of Aristomachos, is referred to as γυμνασιάρχος; for inscriptions containing civic and imperial offices from all periods see page 192.

⁸⁹ For example. Barghouti (1982), Ball (2000), Sartre (2005).

both the imperial and indigenous cultures. It is precisely in this context, that the concept of creolisation is relevant as an explanatory mechanism.⁹⁰

In linguistics, a creole language is stable, with its own vocabulary (often derived from that of the language of the dominant social group) and grammar. It is learned by children as a first language and should be distinguished from pidgin. The creole becomes the natural language of the colonised people. In postcolonial studies of the Caribbean and colonial America the concept has been extended as an explanation for the adaptation of material elements of the dominant culture and their use by members of the subaltern culture in a way that perpetuates their own symbolic values. This is not a simple process of blending or syncretism of two bounded and equal cultural entities, but involves the preservation of older traditions and practices in a context of *social inequality*. In that sense it may be seen as a *resistant* strategy.⁹¹

The stages of monumentalisation of the sanctuary at the Zeus temple, for example, may be seen as an expression of such a strategy. On the one hand, the successive developments utilise elements of architectural form and decoration belonging to the imperial culture; on the other hand, those elements are transformed to preserve and express indigenous symbolic values — a high place of worship, the precise location of the sense of the numinous, sacrificial worship, the *via sacra*, and community worship. Not only that, but the architectural forms are modified. Thus, although each *naos* uses traditional classical elements in its entablature, the usage is eclectic and idiosyncratic. It is noticeable, for example, that representational art is limited to vegetation and birds. Furthermore, the roofs are flat, and therefore may have been used for traditional Eastern liturgical purposes. The use of stepped merlons on the temples is intriguing. While it was a long term regional architectural decoration, it was also most conspicuous in the architecture of Persepolis and was probably associated in the Greek mind with the Achaemenids. It may be therefore, that

⁹⁰ Wallace-Hadrill (2008) is critical of creolisation because it refers to the creation of a new blended cultural artefact and offers multi-lingualism as a metaphor of how members of a multi-cultural society 'code switch' as they negotiate the diverse social contexts they encounter. But blending *does* occur, as evidenced, for example, by the emergence of regional Hellenistic decorative styles in the Near East which preserved the indigenous cultural value of non-representational figural art.

⁹¹ Webster (2001).

its use on a temple dedicated to the Olympian Zeus was some form of resistant expression.⁹²

Fig. 36: Contrasting styles of frieze elements from the upper and lower Zeus temples.

The upper frieze is from the LH *naos* and is of a local design which avoids figural representation. In contrast, the lower image is from the upper temple and portrays collared hunting animals, mutilated in antiquity. The changed artistic style which occurred within approximately 100 years is both striking and abrupt. Is the change related to an elite response to Hadrian's visit and the subsequent brutal suppression of the Second Jewish Revolt? (Author's photos.)

These developments are repeated throughout the Near East, but are usually interpreted in terms of harmonious syncretism, ignoring the asymmetric power relations inherent in the context of the change. I am proposing instead that they should be interpreted as an expression of a resistant strategy intended to perpetuate the symbolic values of the subaltern society. In contrast, the final temple built on the upper terrace seems to be an expression of complete conformity to the imperial culture as the original sacred spot where the deity resided is abandoned, the temple is built on a podium, has a pitched roof, no substantial *temenos* suited to large scale communal worship and is decorated

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It may not be explicitly resistant in the sense of poking a finger in the Seleucid eye, but rather the appreciation of the merlon may reflect a social memory of Achaemenid hegemony as benign and just.

with high relief sculptures of a range of animal and human figures, which have been disfigured subsequently by iconoclasts (presumably local Christian or Islamic zealots) re-affirming the indigenous divine prohibition of representational images. It only remains to add that this final temple was built a generation after Hadrian's fateful visit to the city.

As noted earlier, Revell has made a good point in suggesting that it is important to distinguish between a community's initial response to the imposition of imperial power and later generations' response to that same power. During the early transitional period the subaltern people retain a firsthand memory of a pre-conquest past that was lived and therefore likely to be realistic. In contrast, for subsequent generations, it is a constructed memory which may be idealised and imbued with unhistorical symbolic values. In my interpretation of cultural adaptation under Roman rule this shift in attitude is given primacy as a driver of change. For the Gerasene of the last years before the Common Era, the firsthand experience of the pre-Roman past was likely one of political insecurity, resentment of Hasmonaean expansionism and associated economic depression, while the *pax Romana* was experienced as political stability, increasing prosperity and the beginnings of urban transformation. But what were later socially constructed memories of the pre-Roman period? Because of the survival of an extensive Judaic literature we know that in neighbouring Judaea there was an idealised memory of a Davidic golden age of Jewish independence and expansion, a rural resentment of Hellenistic practices, powerful messianic and apocalyptic beliefs in the eventual restoration of Jewish independence and the destruction of Rome, and hostility among elements of the common people to urban elite compromise with the imperial power — all of which eventually found expression in nativistic fanaticism and rebellion against Rome, twice in the space of seventy years.

We cannot know if any such attitudes existed in Gerasa's population, although some variant of them does seem both possible and reasonable, but we do have literary evidence pointing to a diversity of attitudes to Roman rule and the Jewish rebellion. We know from an inscription, for example, that by 22/23 CE the imperial cult, an indicator of pro-Roman loyalty, was well established in

Gerasa.⁹³ But it would be naive to interpret such evidence of elite identification with Roman hegemony as representative of the whole community. Indeed, from Josephus, we know otherwise. Simon bar Giora, one of the leaders of the First Jewish Revolt was a Gerasene (*Bell. Jud.* 4.9.3); Gerasa did not engage in the anti-Jewish pogroms of other regional Greek at that time, but instead provided safe conduct for Jews who decided to leave the city (*Bell. Jud.* 2.18.5); and subsequently, Gerasa suffered reprisals at the command of Vespasian (*Bell. Jud.* 4.9.1).

It does seem reasonable therefore, to assume there were anti-Roman, pro-rebellion elements within the *polis* population, but whether they were organised into a faction is more problematic. Further, such attitudes were more likely to be found in the rural peasant population of the city's *chora* with its indigenous social memory than among the more recently arrived city dwellers, some of whom would have Macedonian or Greek origins and had prospered under post-Pompeian Roman hegemony. After the defeat of the First Jewish Revolt, the citizens of Gerasa and the rest of the population would have heard accounts of the consequences of rebellion against Rome — the sack of Jerusalem, large numbers sold into slavery, exile for others, the obliteration of temple Judaism and the emergence of rabbinic Judaism. One can only surmise how this affected the internal politics of Gerasa. Certainly, if there had been any earlier doubt, the pro-Roman civic leadership almost certainly would now have been in the ascendancy. But worse was to follow. After wintering over in Gerasa in 129/30 CE, Hadrian moved into Judaea where he founded Aelia Capitolina on the ruins of Jerusalem (destroyed during the suppression of the First Jewish Revolt), constructed a temple to Jupiter on the site of the destroyed temple, and banned circumcision. Inevitably, these actions provoked another Jewish revolt and precipitated the Second Jewish War. It is doubtful that a former governor of the province of Syria would have adopted such a provocative programme naively or ignorant of its likely impact on Jewish feeling. After victory in 135 CE, Hadrian prohibited the Torah law, the Hebrew calendar, executed some Jewish scholars, ceremonially burned the Torah on the Temple Mount, renamed the province as Syria Palestina, and banned Jews from Aelia Capitolina. This then

⁹³ Welles (1938) Inscription 2.

was the geo-political context in which the Gerasa *boule* implemented the city plan manifest in today's civic topography. From a contemporary perspective we may view Hadrian's anti-Jewish programme as an explicit attempt at the erasure of indigenous social memory — today, recognised as one of the most visible manifestations of colonialism.⁹⁴ Certainly his inferred actions in Gerasa seem to have had the same purpose and strength of will as in Jerusalem with the difference in result being related to the differing levels of anti-Roman animosity in the two cities.

But even the apparent enthusiastic adoption of the new imperial values by the civic elite should not be interpreted as a uniform response. The name of the indigenous settlement, *Ġršu*, transliterated to the Greek Gerasa, continued in popular, literary and official usage for centuries. The pretentious Seleucid name, Antioch-on-the-Chrysorhoas, found on some coins and inscriptions, never seems to have threatened the Semitic name whose roots were embedded in the local cultural memory. In the fourth century, Ammianus noted the survival of indigenous city names in preference to the Greek ones bestowed on towns during the Seleucid period.⁹⁵ Jones attached significance to the survival of these old names and drew two conclusions. First, he considered that the survival of old Semitic names provides presumptive evidence of the existence of towns before the classical period. Second, he suggests that 'an old name survived only if the town and its population remained substantially unaltered; foreigners and the Hellenized upper classes of the town might use the official name, but the lower classes and the surrounding peasantry disregarded the newfangled name ...'⁹⁶ We have also noted earlier that among the civic elite, a minority continued to provide Semitic names for their children.

The stratification of the Zeus temple complex provides another example of the survival of social memory among the urban elite. Seigne's careful excavation of the temple has shown the stages by which strengthening control of the sanctuary by the elite led to the progressive monumentalisation of the lower

⁹⁴ On the obliteration of Palestinian social memory in modern Israel see, for example, Abu El-Haj (1998), (2001), Benvenisti (2000), Pappe (2006), Yahya (2010)

⁹⁵ *Res Gest.* 14.8.6. 'urbes construxit [Seleucis Nicator] – quarum ad praesens pleraque, licet Graecis nominibus appelluntur quae eisdem ad arbitrum imposita sont conditoris, primagenia tamen nomina amittunt, quae eis Assyria lingua institores veteres indiderunt'

⁹⁶ Jones (1971) [1937] 229-231.

terrace. But the development occurred in such a way as maintained and respected the social memory of the fissured spur as the abode of a Semitic deity, in conformity to Oppenheim's (1965) principle that in Semitic culture the presence of a deity is precisely located and never re-located (page 237, n.82). This continuity of social memory was only ruptured when Theon's temple was dismantled and replaced on the lower *temenos* following Hadrian's visit to Gerasa and at the time of the Second Jewish Revolt. Such a startling discontinuity raises important questions. Why did authorities (civic or imperial) require the dismantling of the earlier *naos* when only 60-70 years old? Why seal off and bury the sacred rocky spur central to indigenous social memory and beliefs? Why were the temple devotees allowed to build only a much smaller replacement temple on the lower terrace? But above all, why supplant both the temple and its deity with the new tutelary deity for the city, Artemis, simultaneous with a major re-build of the city? Are there innocuous explanations for these developments, or, when placed in the context of the regional political upheavals, are they evidence of political tensions within the community?

I would argue that the most plausible and coherent answer to these questions is tension and differences of view within the elite. I suggest that one *faction* (I am explicitly implying factional debate in the *boulē*), while conforming to the expectations of the new imperial masters, publicly complying with their requirements and emulating their cultural practices, continued to treasure their collective social memory of pre-Roman indigenous culture. Privately, some used Semitic names for their children. Publically, their euergetic acts had centred on the Zeus temple, progressively monumentalising the sanctuary and decorating the structure in the regional variants of the classical artistic canon, while honouring the indigenous deity and sacred spot, and providing for traditional community worship. They may have been the leaders of the φυλή Διός, the largest of the civic tribes, although that can only be speculation.⁹⁷ It is conceivable, again completely speculative, that the temple became a centre of anti-Roman dissidence and support for the Jewish rebels. In all probability these elite families provided a moderating influence and leadership for anti-

⁹⁷ Augusta-Boularot, Seigne and Mujjali (2004: 562-6) on the relative size of the *phylai*.

Roman sentiment among the common people, just as their counterparts in Jerusalem attempted. On the other hand, another grouping within the urban elite, strongly pro-Roman, possibly centred on the smaller φυλή Ἀρτεμιλος, or the recently established (or re-named), φυλή Ἀδριονος Ἡλίου,⁹⁸ actively strove for the complete suppression of such sentiments. It is this latter group that gained the ascendancy within the city's politics in the aftermath of the Second Jewish Revolt and forced the changes to the Zeus temple, the adoption of the new Roman city plan, the adoption of Artemis as the city *tyche*, and the massive building programme of the Antonine period with the Artemis Temple at its heart. In this interpretation, today's ruins are testimony to their comprehensive political victory.⁹⁹

The picture that emerges from such an analysis is not one of passive, progressive hellenisation or romanisation, but rather of discussion, controversy, cultural imperialism and resistance, social memory of an idealised pre-Roman past, and erasure of that social memory. Such an image is entirely congruent with the dynamics of indigenous responses in modern colonial encounters

How then should we interpret Hadrian's visit? Traditionally, his travels and urbanisation policy have been interpreted as a benign process of beautifying cities and encouraging the dissemination of Graeco-Roman values — so interpreted by a western scholarship embedded firmly in those same values. But does such an interpretation merely reflect the continuing privileging of western texts and western culture? Certainly, the Jews did not regard Hadrian, 'May his bones be ground to dust' (the traditional rabbinical execration expressed whenever Hadrian's name was uttered), with a benevolent eye after his efforts in 135-40 CE in Judaea. A post-Said interpretation must surely view his efforts as brutal cultural imperialism, an exercise in ethnic cleansing. Although, this is not the place to undertake a detailed and comprehensive examination of Hadrian's civic policy, it is sufficient to note that he was a well-read and avid pan-hellenist who would have been deeply imbued with the hellenist east/west dichotomy in which the east was perceived as the antithesis of hellenic values. Moreover, in his earlier career, Hadrian had participated in

⁹⁸ Augusta-Boularot, Seigne and Mujjali (2004) 362-6.

⁹⁹ Seigne(1999: 62-5) inferred such a political tension within the city.

Trajan's ill-fated eastern expedition of 114 CE and then, based in Antioch, had been legate in Syria until Trajan's death in 117; he had, therefore, several years' personal experience of the cultural divide, both in the eastern provinces and subject eastern principalities, prior to becoming emperor and developing his own imperial policies. He also had a known antipathy to the life of Antioch. In short, it seems possible that his policy of civic renewal, in the east at least, was driven by a hellenist's distaste of eastern culture as inimical with Graeco-Roman culture.¹⁰⁰

Placed in such a cultural context, Hadrian's visit and probable sojourn of several months in Gerasa just prior to his ill-fated engagement with the Jewish community of Judaea, assumes a more menacing aspect. Unlike the Jews, the Gerasene leadership did not incur the imperial wrath, but instead embarked upon a very costly rebuild which changed the face of their city in conformity with Roman civic planning precepts, abandoned their traditional tutelary deity, replacing him with another deity who is then commemorated on local coinage as the civic *Tyche*, built a massive temple dedicated to the new deity while downgrading their traditional primary religious sanctuary. One can only speculate as to whether the imperial will had been expressed with kindly persuasion or dour menace,¹⁰¹ or what would have been the consequences of opposition or apathy to the imperial urging. Certainly, there is nothing to suggest that the Gerasenes had already spontaneously embarked upon such a major programme of civic reconstruction prior to the visit.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined the evidence of four well-excavated encounters in Gerasa between the indigenous local culture and foreign imperial intrusions (a Late Hellenistic hypogeum and an Augustan mausoleum, the diachronic stratigraphy of the Zeus temple, the Antonine temple of Artemis and the Hadrianic city plan). Each is illustrative of how a section of the population

¹⁰⁰ Interestingly, Gray (1914) has argued for just such an interpretation of Hadrian's urbanisation policy, although as far as I can determine, his interpretation seems to have passed without significant scholarly notice.

¹⁰¹ 'One of Hadrian's main purposes was to protect the Graeco-Roman civilization of the Roman Empire from corrupting influences, particularly from the influences of northern barbarism and of orientalism, and to give to this civilization a more Roman character.' Gray (1914), cited in Harris (1920) 96.

negotiated their relationship with the imperial powers. The evidence is primarily archaeological and it is only in the last encounter that we have a significant textual narrative (relating to Hadrian, his civic and eastern policies, and their implementation in Judaea) to match with the archaeological narrative of a second century city plan. When the evidence is interpreted using the hellenisation model, the story that emerges is monochrome and positivist (the 'civilising' mission of the west). In contrast, the use of postcolonial categories has resulted in a polychrome image of social tension, resistant strategies and active indigenous adaptation to the intrusive Graeco-Roman culture.

By following Moyer's example and focusing on four inter-cultural encounters I have tried to reflect the postmodern dislike of the grand narrative. But apart from the ideological, there is another sound reason for doing so — we simply do not know enough at this time about Hellenistic and Roman Gerasa. In particular, most of the archaeology has been centred on the western side of the river and has been focused on public monumental buildings. Until there is more in-depth excavation of the lanes and private dwellings of the common people and their household rubbish and private artefacts our insights tend to be biased towards the strategies and goals of the urban male elite.

Chapter eight

Conclusion

‘Landscape is the work of the mind. Its scenery is built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock.’

— Simon Schama *Landscape and memory* (New York, 1995) p.7.

Until the second half of the second century CE, the Zeus temple was the preeminent cult centre in the growing city of Gerasa. Originally, an Iron Age rural sanctuary, the site was elaborated through the Hellenistic and Early Roman period in tandem with the growth of the *polis* until the visit of Hadrian in 129/30 CE and the Second Jewish Revolt that immediately followed. I have interpreted this development of the sanctuary using de Polignac’s concept of social competition as the emergent urban elite wrested control of the centre from the rural community and progressively elaborated it as an expression of their new cultural values. Its development under their control in turn reflects their responses to changing political circumstances — the initial Hellenistic settlement, growth in wealth and settlement, Hasmonaean expansion, feuding of petty local tyrants, the Pompeian settlement, the Jewish revolts. The development of the urban sanctuary, although using Hellenistic artistic motifs and architectural elements, was consistent with its use as a place of indigenous religious observance — it would have been used for communal worship on the *temenos* with the devotees approaching the complex along a sacred way, cult would have been conducted either on an earlier tower altar or later at an external altar before the *naos* which was built directly over the rocky spur and grotto, where the deity, a manifestation of Baal, resided. In other words, notwithstanding dedications identifying the temple as belong to Zeus Olympios, the cult practices for which it was designed were indigenous. But then in the aftermath of the First Jewish Revolt the *naos* is disassembled, the fissured spur is buried, and a new smaller *naos* and altar are built, followed by the construction of a new Roman-style temple built on an upper terrace after the Second Jewish Revolt.

This dramatic change in the fortunes of the Zeus temple was but one element in other major changes in the city’s design and public architecture which were so comprehensive and integrated that archaeologists accept that they reflect an explicit

urban plan rather than *ad hoc* loosely managed urban growth. Instead it is generally accepted that following Hadrian's visit the civic leaders adopted a new plan for the re-development of the city in accordance with Roman principles of urban design. While earlier discussions have emphasised the ambitious nature of the plan and the likely inability of the city to complete it, I have interpreted it as cultural imperialism imposed by an emperor committed to the dissemination of Graeco-Roman values as a unifying ideology in a polyglot empire of immense ethnic diversity. Such an application of the concept of cultural imperialism is but one element in my purpose of developing a new interpretive paradigm based upon the concepts of postcolonial studies and modern social theory.

Throughout the twentieth century, hellenisation and romanisation were the primary interpretive models for the interpretation of Graeco-Roman influence in the Near East. Hellenisation was important for drawing attention to the significance of cultural change in the Hellenistic period, while romanisation has served well in refocusing the Romanist on the life of the provinces. My central argument, however, is that it is time to replace them. In the first part of this thesis, therefore, I deconstructed the twin concepts noting that they were developed in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century when the goal of academic history was the recovery of an objective past reality and the subjectivity of interpretation was little recognised. Today it is recognised that both concepts were developed at the high point of modern western imperialism and reflected one of its central rationales, namely the role, even mission, of the colonial powers to bring western civilisation to the 'backward' world. This rationale lies at the core of both hellenisation and romanisation. Western culture has traditionally acknowledged the primacy of Greek and Roman civilisations in its development, and it is only really in the latter part of the twentieth century that the influence of eastern cultures has begun to be acknowledged. In particular, the Achaemenid Empire, the arch enemy of the classical Greeks, is increasingly recognised by Near Eastern historians as having exercised a relatively benign rule in which local cultures continued to flourish and which made enduring contributions to the ideas and artistic expression of the region. In developing the concept of hellenisation prior to these insights, Droysen reflected the prevailing nineteenth century eurocentrism in his assumption that Hellenistic influence in the east was a civilising process.

In addition to reflecting eurocentric and imperialistic assumptions, the concepts of hellenisation and romanisation do not reflect the insights of modern social theory. In particular, they reflect an assumption that such generalised terms as Greek or Roman culture are meaningful categories. Today we recognise that culture is not a bounded entity but is fluid reflecting the negotiation of social relations through time by individuals and groups of people. Secondly, implicit in both concepts is the assumption that the socially powerful or dominant culture was the active agent in effecting change, whereas modern postcolonial studies see change effected through the active agency of members of the subaltern culture as they seek to preserve their shared symbolic values in a changing and sometime hostile context. In this view change is effected through the resistant strategies adopted by the colonised.

The concepts also belong to a modernist view of history, whereas today in both academic history and archaeology postmodernism is a significant theoretical framework for examining the literary and artefactual detritus of past societies. In particular, there is recognition that interpretation of historical data, whether from the archive or from the archaeological site, is a construct of the imagination. There is also subjectivity in the selection of the data and in the inevitability that interpretations and inferences are drawn based upon the historian's, and the archaeologist's, contemporary experience and understanding of motive and human activity in the *modern* world. Thus Droysen, Mommsen and Haverfield interpreted the ancient literary, epigraphic and archaeological evidence through their own understanding and experience of modern European imperialism. In contrast, my understanding of historical process is shaped by my life in a postcolonial community in which the dominant settler culture is in the process of being profoundly modified by the vitality and vibrancy of the indigenous Māori culture. While the parallels are certainly not exact, that experience does suggest that key postcolonial concepts are certainly relevant to the interpretation of cultural interaction in the Hellenistic and Roman Near East.

One of the goals of both postmodern history and postprocessual archaeology is to counter-balance the bias of both the elite literary record and monumental architecture, epigraphy and luxury artefact. By explicitly seeking the voice of historically silent minorities, women, children, artisans, slaves, the dispossessed, the postmodern historian and postprocessual archaeologist accept the possibility of

multivocality and the legitimacy of alternative interpretation. But if alternative interpretation of the same data is legitimate, how does one distinguish the productive interpretation from the nonsensical? I suggest the productive interpretation is one which is

- i) true to the available evidence and does not ignore that which is inconsistent or contradictory;
- ii) integrates the available evidence into a coherent narrative;
- iii) is plausible (extra-terrestrial aliens are out as an explanation of monumental landmarks!);
- iv) has heuristic potential.

On that basis, I have proposed four principles and seven interpretive modalities, based on postcolonial theory, and suggested that they can be given operational effect through the use of the concepts of creolisation and Giddens's structuration theory. I have used the Roman city of Gerasa as the example on which to test this alternative interpretive paradigm. Typically, explanations of cultural interaction in Gerasa have drawn upon undifferentiated and generalised categories such as 'Semitic culture', 'Aramaean', 'rural Semitic peasantry'. In contrast, in chapter five I spent considerable time tracing the emergence of indigenous culture characterised by the durability of its key symbolic values and their strength and vitality in responding to changing historical circumstances from the Neolithic on. The archaeology of the Jarash Basin has been key to this discussion which was framed using the conceptual framework of Smith's *The ethnic origins of nations*. Field surveys have demonstrated that the Basin has a long history of human settlement going back to the Neolithic. Furthermore, literary documents demonstrate that the region of Gilead, in which the Basin nestles, has been recognised from the Iron Age as a discrete identity being identified in the Hebrew Testament, Assyrian and Achaemenid provincial administration, Josephus and as an Arabic toponym. The Gilead was not only settled from an early date, but from biblical records it is apparent that it was a prized area for both arable farming and grazing, being contested by Ramoth-Ammon, Aram-Damascus, and the two Hebrew kingdoms. The society then that the Greek settlers of the second century BCE encountered in the Jarash Basin had enduring values tying the population to the land.

One focus for the expression of those communal values was the rural sanctuary located on a rocky spur in which a manifestation of Baal resided, with human settlement clustering on the facing hillock. The stratigraphy of the site demonstrates clearly the determination of the local population to preserve their traditional values as expressed in cult and veneration of the site. As the community grew in size and control of the site shifted to the urban elite who progressively monumentalised it, the architecture continues to reflect traditional cultic principles although increasingly decorated in Hellenistic forms. The strength of traditional values is tellingly expressed in the continued use of the stepped merlon, a very old and durable Near Eastern architectural form that may have been used as a form of resistant strategy, possibly seen as a challenge to Greek sensibilities.

I have placed great emphasis on the visit of Hadrian to the city as being very influential in the development of a city plan which changed the public face of the city in the later second century. Rather than seeing this as a benign exercise in civic beautification I have portrayed it as an explicit programme of cultural imperialism driven by the menace of an emperor with an implacable determination to achieve his goals using all the immense *auctoritas* and *potestas* he embodied — as he amply demonstrated in the following years in adjoining Judaea. It seems to me that no single piece of evidence from Gerasa so amply demonstrates the asymmetric power relations of imperialism than that visitation of 129/30 CE.

By framing the interpretation of the evidence from Gerasa in the categories of postcolonialism — dominance/subalternity, active agency of the subaltern culture, resistant strategies, cultural imperialism — it has been possible to start to hear the voices of the dominated and not just the voice of the epigrapher and civic leader. Shadowy images of factional support for the Jewish rebels emerge, as does the Zeus Temple as a possible centre of resistance affirming traditional values and social forms. Similarly, we get a sense of possible conflicts as various groupings debating civic policy start to be differentiated. I do not suggest that this is the only interpretation possible of the evidence. But I do suggest that the use of postcolonial theory has heuristic value in throwing up challenging new possible research questions and shaping new directions in research, both historical and archaeological.

But did the traditional culture survive all the turmoil or did the population of Gerasa eventually fully assimilate into the dominant Graeco-Roman culture? I would argue that it did survive. Profoundly modified in its forms, it yet preserved key values, such as the prohibition of representational images, the veneration of baetyls, congregational or communal worship, an apocalyptic world view. The vigour and resilience of eastern culture is, perhaps, reflected in the different cultural trajectories followed in the western and eastern provinces as Roman power withdrew.

In the west, Roman and barbarian cultures blended and core elements of Roman culture continue as integral elements of modern western society to this day. Latin developed directly into the Romance languages, while contributing significantly to the vocabulary of contemporary Germanic languages. Until recently, Latin and Greek were essential components of a western liberal education. Christianity, the religion of the late empire, continued as the dominant religion. Imperial administrative titles — province, diocese, vicar, etc — remain as elements of Anglican and Catholic Church organisation; the pope still carries the ancient title of *pontifex maximus*. Modern western legal systems are grounded in the principles of Roman law. Greek plays are still performed in western society and Greek and Latin literature remain a vital component of western literature. Greek and Roman history and myth can still turn a dollar at the cinema. Greek philosophy remains the foundation of modern western philosophy. Principles of Graeco-Roman architectural and town planning continue to be an influence in the modern era.

In the east however, Greek, the *lingua franca* of the educated classes, and Latin, the language of law, were abandoned with remarkable rapidity (although not, of course, in Anatolia). Christianity was largely abandoned for Islam, and only survives in the region as a minority religion, primarily in its Monophysite form and expressed in mostly Semitic local languages such as Syriac and Aramaic. Roman law was supplanted by *sharia* law while a whole new Arabic literature developed. Graeco-Roman town planning was already being modified prior to the Arabic conquest of the eastern provinces. If the Byzantine and Omayyad stratigraphy of Gerasa had been better preserved by earlier archaeological exploitation it is possible that it would have materially helped our understanding of these processes.

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For primary sources cited see *Abbreviations used* on pages iv-vi.

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