AMPAH 2016

‘Messages and Media’

Saturday 19th March

Armstrong Building

School of History, Classics and Archaeology

Newcastle University
‘Messages and Media’

The world is full of messages. From text to images to sounds, messages dominate society, past and present. How can we explore this phenomenon in and through ancient history? What are media? Where is the message? AMPAH 2016, as usual, invites papers of all topics from postgraduate students of Ancient History and Classics, but in particular we would like to explore sending and receiving in the Ancient World whether through images and statues, through text, inscriptions, or the proverbial ‘writing on the wall’; from ‘putting on a show’, to performing in the public arena, how do we interpret their interactions? And how can we, as ancient historians, use media to ‘get our message across’?

The School of History, Classics and Archaeology at Newcastle University are delighted to be hosting the Annual Meeting for Postgraduates in Ancient History for 2016.

Welcome to Newcastle!

Programme

The programme outline can be found on the back page of this booklet.

Wifi

Delegates should use ‘eduroam’. But, if you are having issues connecting, come and see us and we will be able to connect you another way.

AMPAH 2017

The keynote session will be followed by a vote on where AMPAH 2017 will be hosted: if you would like to make a bid on behalf of your institution (UK), let us know as soon as possible.

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Chris Mowat (Newcastle University): “Whose line is it, anyway? Sibylline messages and the decemviral college”

The Sibylline Books were a collection of prophetic (or, at least, oracular) messages used by the Roman senate in times of need. Locked away in the heart of Roman religion and politics, access to them was only granted to members of the decemviral college. This paper seeks to interrogate the details of those consultations, and ask who is actually being questioned in these instances.

The statements in the Books were often the instruction for the expiations of prodigies, and frequently linked with the importation of new cults into Rome, that would be transmitted to the Senate in order to be carried out in maintenance of the pax deorum (‘the peace of the gods’). These Books present a unique relationship between deity, prophet and the decemviral college who curated them. This college also acted as interpreters and expiators, but this leads to the question of ‘whose prophecy?’ In the course of this paper I am going to look at the construction and the role of the decemviral college in the Roman Republic, and their relationship to the Books from which their identity was drawn.

Much of what we know about the set-up of the college and its members seems to be a reaction to, and at the same time an extension of sibylline identity(ies). Mysterious in their own way, the Sibyls were both apart from and a part of Roman society (and the wider ancient Mediterranean), and the construction of their prophetic messages and their identities seems to have been centered on paradox. The decemviral college, in their own way, contributed to that paradoxical nature in their relationship to the Sibylline Books. One conclusion suggested by this paper will be the extent to which we can treat decemvir as an actual sibylline identity itself.
Janico Albrecht (University of Erfurt): “Religious Deviance and Media: The exemplum of Ti. Gracchus’ Murder”

While the studies in religious deviance in (western) historical societies have bloomed in the last decades it is mostly the Christian religion which has been covered. Ancient Roman religion on the other hand apparently didn’t offer the prerequisites for such studies, such as a strict set of rules fixed in writing and a means to effectively sanction any divergent behaviour or opinion. Therefore, Roman religion appeared to be somewhat unhinged from the expected ways of enforcing beliefs. Models of ‘Polis Religion’ or ‘Urban Religion’ are usually the answer: they define and (controversially) subordinate religion as something ‘taking place’ in the sphere of public political communication. A considerable amount of our oratory sources from the Late Republican era convey religious matters as disputes about right and wrong, about pious and superstitious behavior, which leads to the assumption that public debates served as media for a much more fundamental discourse about societal core values.

In the presentation I would like to show how the appropriation of a sociological methods in the analysis of religious deviance allows us to further our understanding of the characteristics of Roman public religion as (in a Durkheimian, functionalist sense) instruments to mediate the moral boundaries of the community. As a case study the long lasting and religiously charged public discourse about the murder of the tribunus plebis Ti. Sempronius Gracchus will be analysed using a constructionist approach borrowed from the Sociology of Deviance, thereby focusing on the processes in which the label of deviance is constructed and applied. The case study allows to demonstrate how the manifold publicly staged controversies over religious issues in the Late Republic can be regarded as typical and natural expressions of a social elite that defined itself via competition as well as moral homogeneity rather than as manifestations of a vain religion in a decaying society as it sometimes has.
Alison Ewins (Durham University): “‘Religious bilingualism’ in the Roman Empire”

Throughout the Roman Empire there were many communities that displayed varying degrees of bilingualism, and issues of the true extent of this multilingualism remain very relevant within the broader question of linguistic interactions. This paper will explore to what extent different populations in the Roman Empire can be said to have been ‘religiously bilingual’. Do bilingual religious messages indicate that these worshippers felt able to communicate to and about their gods in multiple languages, or was only one language intended to convey the ‘true’ religious message? The main focus will be on bilingual epigraphic material where the different versions of the same inscription appear to have been composed at the same time, but the issue of the later translation of sacred texts will also be considered.

Examples will be drawn from across the ancient world, from South Shields in the north of England to the eastern frontier of the Roman Empire. Even when restricted to the sphere of religious life this surviving epigraphic material covers a wide range of situations, from dedications to the gods and records of generous donations to religious laws and funerary inscriptions. These different situations can be contrasted with each other and also with non-religious bilingual material in order to construct a more accurate picture of how and why languages interacted in the Roman Empire.
Francesco Strocchi (UCL): “Caesar’s Commentarii: Sulla as counter-model”

My paper explores whether and to what extent, Sulla's memoirs could have constituted a model for Caesar's Commentarii. The scholarship takes for granted that Sulla's work remains in the background as a precedent of Caesar's Commentarii. At first glance, similarities - such as the title, the length of the account and the content related to a civil conflict - seem to emerge, but the fragmentary survival of Sulla's work does not allow much speculation. Crucial for Caesar might have been rather the idea of engaging and challenging the champion Sulla, as an intellectual dictator who wrote a historia. In a letter to Cicero (Att. 9.7c.1), Caesar explicitly breaks away from Sulla's methods (the proscriptions), referring to a new ratio vincendi, which arguably might have an equivalent to a new ratio scribendi in the literary field. Beyond style and content, one aspect appears to be the most striking sign of similarity and novelty between the two works: the role played by Epicadius in continuing Sulla's account and by Hirtius in completing Caesar's Commentarii. On this note my paper suggests the importance of a Roman entourage, on whom Caesar clearly relied throughout his entire military life, as different from the aristocratic habit of being surrounded by intellectual Greeks, as Sulla was. This practice seems to be genuinely Caesar's creation, and a significant trait of distinction from Sulla.
Benjamin Pedersen (University of Southern Denmark): “Ephorus, Theopompus and the advent of universal historiography”

The current revival of universalistic approaches in the study of the past (e.g. Global History, Transnational History and World History) has generated increasing scholarly interest in universal historiography. The roots of the genre are to be found in Hellenistic Greece where it constituted one of the most significant historiographical approaches, and includes some of the most important works on which we rely heavily for our knowledge of ancient history. Emerging with the Greek historian Ephorus in the 4th century BC and finding its final form with the Sicilian historian Diodorus in 1st century BC, this historiographical tradition represents a fundamental break with the traditional monographic historians by creating a new understanding of space, time and narrative. The purpose of my PhD dissertation is to examine the cause, nature and development of universal history as a distinct historiographical approach in the Hellenistic era.

The most challenging aspect of my research is the fact that almost all of the source material exists only as references, paraphrases, and quotations by later ancient authors meaning that it reflects the style, scope, and quality of the author citing them more than the characteristics of the lost historian. The paper will discuss some essential aspects concerning the advent of universal history in fourth century historiography, and touch upon a number of important methodological pitfalls that one must address in the search for the lost histories of Hellenism.
Miriam Hay (Warwick University): “Reviewing the classics: sarcophagus reliefs and the Late Roman eye”

Late Antique poetry’s defining feature has been described as its relationship with the past, and this is arguably equally true of Late Antique art, both secular and Christian. As in literature, this preoccupation with the past did not mean in practice a strictly traditional form, but a complex negotiation and rearrangement of forms in light of this retrospective reflection. Traditional media were adapted to convey new messages, dressed in the reassuring authority of the past.

Sarcophagi are a unique body of material for studying these issues: in providing a virtually continuous run of material well into Late Antiquity, they offer a good opportunity to trace transformations in the expression of Roman identity among the higher levels of society during a period of rapid and profound change. Moreover as sculpture, they are bound up in a fundamental way in the renegotiation of the intellectual tradition and its role in a changing society.

These monuments are traditional in the sense of representing a high valuation of the past and an existing artistic repertoire, but at the same time they represent an evolution in which bits of that past are chosen to be remembered through a self-conscious process of selection, and the form in which these pieces of the past are evoked. They represent innovation masquerading as tradition.

This paper will look at various inheritances and reuses of classical frameworks within the medium of the sarcophagus relief; both literal and visual structures of form, and metaphorical, intellectual structures of thought. It will consider how these inherited frameworks for composing and interpreting images continued to shape expression in Late Antiquity; how they were themselves reshaped for the needs of a very different context; and how all this would shape how Christianity was reformulated for the Roman visual sphere, and, beyond that, for Roman culture.
Andrea Scarpato (University of Leicester): “The Limits of realism: Sparta in the third century”

The 21st century has seen the first application of International Relations theories (IR) to Ancient History. The interpretative tools offered by realism, a branch of IR, have been employed to explore the interactions among Hellenistic powers. This has generated both a pessimistic and also a simplistic view of the Hellenistic world: a world characterized by continuous warfare where states were trapped in a cruel logic of self-help and self-interest. The Hellenistic Mediterranean featured a constellation of states consistently engaged in the struggle for power and obliged to survive in a hostile environment where “international law” was minimal and not by any means unenforceable. Was this really grim the reality of the Hellenistic world? Were states trapped in this cruel logic of self-help and self-interest as postulated by IR realism?

In contrast with the latest studies, this paper aims to suggest the limitations of realism for the assessment of Hellenistic history and the multifaceted nature of the new world arisen after the death of Alexander. This world can be seen to have featured a more complex reality characterized not only by consistent warfare, but also by a significant increase in interstate co-operation and efforts to circumvent conflicts without recourse to violence. Foreign policy performed by Sparta in the third century constitutes an important caveat to assess the interaction among Hellenistic states. The resort by Sparta to kinship bonds (syngheneia) with Taras in order to contain the expansionism of Romans and Lucanians, its intervention in the interstate arbitration involving two Cretan poleis and its leadership of a vast coalition animated by the same feelings constitute the tip of the iceberg of the interstate interactions. The cruel logic postulated by Realism per se will not be sufficient to describe such a complex world.
Graham Andrews (Cambridge University): “Creating a barbarian: Maximinus Thrax, the first ‘Soldier-Emperor’”

The third century AD is one of the murkier periods of Roman history. For much of the century the Roman Empire faced considerable political instability, which is made more difficult to analyse by a very poor written record. In this paper, an example is offered of how the limits of narrative evidence have strongly affected modern understanding of the period. In the year 235, the emperor Maximinus Thrax came to power. His reign has not been well received by historians, ancient or modern. Maximinus is often presented as a military figure with neither ability or inclination to engage with the traditional political elite, laying bare the reality that it was the army who held real power. He has been labelled the first “soldier-emperor”, and a key figure in the narrative of the so-called Third-Century Crisis. It is my argument that this characterisation is much too simplistic.

Our main source for Maximinus’ reign is the Greek historian Herodian, who wrote around two decades after the emperor’s assassination by his own soldiers in 238. Herodian’s narrative is built on a highly moralising historiographical method: the emperor is his primary focus, and it is his personal character which dictates the nature of the rest of Roman society. This paper focuses on that characterisation, showing how deeply it affects all aspects of Herodian’s narrative. The tendency to accept the detail of Maximinus’ reign can in turn lead to a skewed understanding of political events in the third century. However tempting it may be to base reconstructions on ancient narratives, this example will demonstrate that it is also necessary to be willing to move away from them.
Liam Klein (Cambridge University): “Personal politics on display: ‘political stereotyping’ in fourth-century Athens”

Most contemporary scholars would nowadays agree that Greeks of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E. used their outward appearance to ‘perform’ or ‘counter-perform’ socio-political roles on a daily basis. The appropriation of concrete socio-political roles within the culture of the polis is therefore ancient history. Far less attention has been paid, however, to the visible performance of strictly political dispositions beyond this more-or-less commonly shared cultural fabric.

How did the Greeks attempt to ‘read’ from bodies, mannerisms, clothing, or choice of words whether a person subscribed to democratic, oligarchical or monarchical ideals? Or whether that person was capable of being a just or law-abiding citizen at all? Certainly, this is the province of idealisation, caricature and stereotyping – not of reality. However, a prominent feature of many of the avenues of cultural production in this period (e.g. philosophy, rhetoric, comedy) is indeed the fiction that one can readily identify political allegiances and/or political potential simply by empirical observation. The fact that we are dealing with a fiction here does not reduce its importance as a method to investigate how Greeks imagined the mutual influence between the shaping of one’s character and one’s political environment. This, then, is a topic in which the debate among the Greeks between phusis and nomos came heavily into the fore: was a certain constitutional preference somehow innate, or was it possible to switch colours according to experience?

In my paper, I investigate these questions by examining the elaboration by Greeks of models and criteria for predicting one’s politics on the basis of outward signs. Since I am only concerned with the Greek practice of making circumstantial inferences about one’s politics, the source material I am mainly interested in include comedic plays, philosophical treatises and sculpture – rather than for instance Pericles’ funeral oration.
Mattias Gassman (Cambridge University): “‘Paganism’ and Fourth-Century Piety”

The fourth century witnessed many profound changes to the social and legal position of traditional Roman religion. One important conceptual development is the formulation, by Christian critics of urban Roman senatorial religion, of a new view of non-Christian rites, whatever their origin or traditional legal status, as a more-or-less unified system, a paganitas opposed to Christianitas (Ambrosiaster, Quaestio 114). As this paper will argue, this new conception, rather than being pure fiction or polemic, reflects the religious pursuits of some contemporary senators in Rome, such as those who erected altars commemorating taurobolia performed at the Phrygianum, the Vatican shrine of the Magna Mater. The inscriptions on many of these altars give a cursus honorum listing the dedicator’s often numerous priesthoods, in which the legal and social boundaries separating public priestly colleges, peregrina sacra, and unofficial initiatory cults disappear. This blurring of traditional lines is not, as sometimes argued, a response to the rise of Christianity post-Constantine, as the trend is already evident in the 290s and early 300s. Christian theorists of a unitary ‘paganism’ are thus witnesses to a transformation of pagan senatorial devotion, not the agents of that transformation. The nature of this new devotion has been questioned in recent scholarship, which interprets the inscriptions not as demonstrations of pagan piety, but as vehicles for an essentially secular senatorial prestige. Yet only a few inscriptions list civic titles, while others selectively omit civic offices attested elsewhere; many also commemorate the dedicator's individual connection to the gods, allude to current philosophical ideas, or emphasize the profundity of the dedicator's initiatory experiences. As this paper argues, religious devotion and priestly expertise, not aristocratic self-promotion, are the dominant features of the Phrygianum inscriptions, which bear witness to the development, within some senatorial circles in Rome, of a new approach to ‘pagan’ religion.
Roberto Ciucciove (Newcastle University): “Lex Marcia Atinia: New strategies of communication and legislative elaboration within the Roman nobilitas at the beginning of the II Century BC”

In the present work I will attempt to offer a new historiographical perspective on the lex Marcia Atinia de pace cum Philippo facienda, put forward by the tribunes Q. Marcius Ralla and C. Atinius in 196 BC. According to the topic of the conference, my twofold aim will be: firstly, to present the Roman public laws, with particular regard to the tribunician legislative commitment, as the more effective and, at the same time, complex way the Roman nobilitas had to express itself and its political targets; secondly, to specifically analyse the strategies our primary sources put in place, in order to pass on the content of the statute mentioned above to a widely varied reading public. We are going to deal, therefore, with two different and simultaneously working levels of communication: the lex itself and, consequently, the mediation the ancient literary evidences made of it.

The two texts I will present are, respectively, Livy XXXIII, 25, 4-7, and Polybius XVIII, 42, 1-5. The comparison, made between the Latin and the Greek historical perspectives, will also provide an interesting idea of how peculiar Polybius’ approach to the Roman juridical matters was, with special reference to the political role the tribunes played within the Republic.

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Robert Stone (Nottingham University): “Inviting the enemy in: integrating barbarians in the panegyrics of Late Antiquity”

How could Romans welcome the sight of former enemies settling as free men on the lands they had ravaged? How could they support policies that entrusted part of the defence of the empire to the very people who had so recently been killed Roman citizens? Transforming those with negative attitudes towards the integration of barbarian tribes into supporters of imperial policy was part of the job of orators in late antiquity and this paper will explore the techniques used in panegyrics when discussing these settlements.

From an economic and military standpoint, the settlement of tribes within Roman territory helped emperors to secure the empire at a time when their resources were stretched thin. However, embracing those who were widely characterised as the antithesis of civilisation could prove to be a potentially unpopular act.

Imperial panegyrics offered, therefore, an opportunity to reassure the leading members of Roman society that the right decision had been made. However, to do this orators would have to deconstruct certain traditional images of barbarians that they themselves had helped to create: by raising the possibility that barbarians could overcome their innate savagery and embrace Roman laws, orators could suggest that there was a possibility of civilising non-Romans despite inconsistencies with the view expressed in other speeches that barbarians could never overcome their nature.

Similarly, manipulating the scale of threat that these tribes posed to the empire allowed orators to present the enemies of the empire as less of a concern for those who would be affected by their settlement. Orators also drew upon examples from earlier, successful settlements to add the weight of history to their argument. These techniques combined to create a bright vision of the future in which former barbarians would live as model citizens rather than enemies to be destroyed.
Louis Autin (Universities of Grenoble and Osnabrück): “In ore vulgi: rumour as mass-media in Tacitus”

Lots has been written on the tacitean rumours and on its overwhelming presence in the narrative; yet, researchers have mostly studied it on the historiographical level, putting forward how Tacitus could use it to express his own views without compromising the claimed objectivity of the historian, or on the literary-rhetorical level, showing that rumours often turn to tools of dramatization. In this paper, we shall demonstrate that one should not leave aside the historical analysis of the tacitean rumours, as the historian, in spite of his declared contempt for the crowd, does give account of its communication: as a matter of fact, in his narrative, rumours appear to be the true medium of information and communication for the imperial vulgus.

This implies that the Latin rumores were far more than mere gossips or uncertain and intrusive talks: that is why we will start by defining what a ‘rumor’ was from a sociological insight, using mostly Tacitus’ text but also the works of his contemporaries. Our view is that we should count as rumours not only passages, where words like rumor/sermones/fama appear, but also any anonymous, collective, public and unofficial discourse reported in the history: those are, to us, the four basic characteristics defining together what an imperial rumour was.

Then, we shall highlight that those rumours are mostly connected with the crowd and very little with the upper classes of the society. Both the vulgus urbanum (the crowd of Rome) and the vulgus militum (the mob of soldiers) are using rumours to communicate, whereas individuals (the general or the emperor) as well as the aristocratic groups (like the Senate) are informed by and communicate with other media, written or not, like nuntii, litterae, epistula, etc. In Tacitus, those terms are often used in contrast with rumor and its “synonyms”.

Then, on that foundation, we should ask and try to answer several more complex questions: how could someone from the elite communicate with the crowd? And the other way around? Were rumours used only to communicate, or, just like other media, could they serve as instrument of political pressure? And was it effective?
Aeschylus’ Agamemnon starts with an impressive image. After a year in waiting, Klytaimnestra’s watchman finally sees the signal announcing the fall of Troy. A relay of fires brings the news across the space between Argos and Troy, reaching Agamemnon’s palace. It has been noted that the complex system of communication devised by Klytaimnestra is an unusual one. In Greek Tragedy news and messages normally come via a messenger. The ingenious chain of beacons contrasts signs with words, the latter being the standard medium of information. The peculiarity of this system is clearly stated in the first episode through the distrust of the chorus. Despite their opposite features, both oral communication via a messenger and Klytaimnestra’s fires are described through the same lexical apparatus. In explaining the working of the relay, Aeschylus’ characters use a large number of terms derived from ἀγγέλος, messenger, or linked to the sphere of the orality. It has already been observed that the influence of Homer on this part of the Agamemnon is huge. The vocabulary is not the only common point: also the way the play stages the transmission of a message is consistent with Homeric style. The use of certain figures of speech, like litotes, is reminiscent of the messenger-scenes in the Iliad. Even when it is based on signs instead of words, the communicative system is defined and shaped by orality. We will show that the narrative codes of the Agamemnon as well, when dealing with communication, are influenced by oral poetic habits.
Giuditta Mirizio (Universities of Bologna and Heidelberg): “A two-sided approach to the study of the communication between offices in Ptolemaic Egypt”

Many of the thousands papyri which have emerged up to now from the sands of Egypt attest a rich and constant exchange of communication between the offices sited in the chôra of the Ptolemaic kingdom. The process and direction of the messages, and the identification of the officials involved in the multi-layers net of connections are occasionally hard to trace back: studying the administrative praxis means for the modern scholar to evaluate both the material aspect of the medium and the philological one, without disregarding the analysis of textual significant elements that could be of precious help. A special perspective on the first approach is offered by a practice that apparently was established as a model in the circumstances of forwarding official papers. Indeed the pattern mostly employed consisted in enclosing all the documents related to the matter, by copying them below the main record in the same sheet of papyrus. It is exactly in this view that the medium embodies the key to reconstruct the path of the information: the document bears a meaning not only as a text, but primarily as an object, which has undergone several phases, has acquired complexity and therefore enhanced its meanings, when it is at last stored in an office. That this was not, however, the only technique at the scribes’ disposal is shown by the many exemplars that contain an allusion to further files already sent to the same addressee or to parallel notifications: the alternative of summing up or mentioning the content of a text instead of appending it, is also recorded and represents a different scenario, in which the textual interpretation is crucial. In this presentation I will therefore make an attempt to give a sample of this knot of cross-references and stratified information, by examining some relevant instances.
In AD 360, whilst on campaign in Gaul, Julian was proclaimed Emperor by his troops. Civil war seemed imminent as he marched east to confront his cousin, the emperor Constantius II, who had reigned for 24 years. Fortunately for Julian, Constantius died and Julian became the legitimate sole emperor of the Roman Empire. He would reign for only nineteen months, and become known as the ‘Apostate’ for his attempts to revive paganism after decades of the Christianisation of the empire.

Before the death of Constantius, Julian sent letters to Athens, Rome, Sparta and Corinth, of which only the letter to the Athenians survives. This letter defended his actions and described his cousin in unflattering terms, in an effort to gain support. It offers a revealing insight into how Julian wished to present himself at the start of his reign. It shows him consciously presenting a public image that is inclined towards the intellectual and traditionalist, whilst also taking great pains to distance himself from his predecessor.

This paper will examine the Letter to the Athenians and Julian’s attempts at forging an imperial public image, and will compare it with the Misopogon, published at the end of his short reign. The Misopogon was a satirical reply to the insults of the Antiochenes, who throughout a torrid stay in Antioch had openly mocked his asceticism, piety and appearance. Like the Letter to the Athenians, the Misopogon gives insight into Julian’s public image and how it changed or developed during his time as emperor. Both pieces show Julian to be an educated, moralizing traditionalist concerned with his image, but the tone and reception of Julian’s public image had changed. This paper will examine how and why.
Chris de Lisle (University of Oxford): “Ancient Coin Iconography: political messages or economic imperative?”

What did the images on ancient coins mean to their minters and users? Determining how to interpret numismatic iconography is a key question, because coins are one of our major sources of official state messages from the ancient world and among the forms of message most widely experienced by ancient people. Some scholars sense subtle political and religious messages in numismatic iconography, but these can often be countered by claims that iconography was primarily determined by economic imperatives like maintaining trust in a coinage’s reliability and preventing forgery. In their extreme forms, these two types of interpretation appear mutually incompatible.

In this paper, I will focus on changes to imagery, considering three phenomena which are often invested with great significance in scholarship: the sudden adoption of new images, small changes to existing images, and the adoption of images from elsewhere. I will outline how each of these phenomena might be seen as transmitting messages or as examples of economic functionality, drawing case studies primarily from the coinages of Athens, Syracuse and Carthage.

I will conclude that, methodologically, both interpretations are often possible for all three phenomena, but that certain factors, such as metrology, the iconographic relationship to related coins, and relationships with other media can help to suggest the more likely interpretation in individual cases.
Manolis Pagkalos (University of Leicester): “Βασιλέως Ἀρέως: Spartan propaganda and the use of the past”

For many years, scholars describe king Areus I as the monarch who followed the Hellenistic model of ruling. He was the only one of the two Spartan kings mentioned by name at the Chremonidean Decree and he issued Sparta’s first silver coins, which bore inscription with his name. These changes are implemented in a period during which Sparta is nowhere near its former glorious self. I will argue that during the early Hellenistic period, an era of major political, cultural and social changes, the past is used, more than ever, as a prominent political instrument. As new structures of power and political organization rise, the status quo of the city-states of Classical Greece is transformed. The past always occupied a specific role in the history of the polis throughout the Archaic and Classical periods as civic identity was authenticated by more or less exclusive local myths. However, now the past is urgently needed to be rewritten as it possesses the potential to reshape contemporary worldviews. Areus I initiatives brought Sparta again at the forefront of the Hellenistic world and were the result of the mentality of Hegemony built in Sparta through a long history of hegemonial presence both in Peloponnesos and Greece. This paper aims to assess the use of the past during the reign of Areus I of Sparta (r. 309-265) and to evaluate the iconographic choices on the first example of Spartan silver coinage, the most intended means of communicating messages. The discussion will highlight the potential of the active manipulation of the past as political tool and as the force behind the propaganda that promoted Sparta as a strong and independent entity.
Olivia Webster (University of Nottingham): “Fact and Fiction: Re-interpreting two coin types from Roman Phoenicia”

Coins, as one of the earliest forms of mass communication, were an immensely effective form of spreading political, religious and social ideologies to largely illiterate populations. During the Roman period, coinage linked the image of the emperor with images of civic authority, thus helping to legitimise Roman rule in the provinces. In Phoenicia, civic coins provide a corpus of gods, temples and festivals, which are now mostly either lost or inaccessible due to the political instability in the region today.

During my paper, I will explore the messages carried on two coin types. Firstly, a popular type which was issued by the colonia of Berytus – modern Beirut – depicting Poseidon surprising the eponymous nymph Beroé. The second coin type was issued by Tyre, and depicts two large domed rocks, which according to legend floated through the sea, eventually becoming the site of the foundation of Tyre.

Both coin types, depending on your interpretation, can either depict ‘actual’ events, a snapshot of a moment which occurred at some point in mythical history. Or, they could represent architectural sites or statue groups, which once existed in the urban or religious landscapes of these two cities. I will focus on how this ambiguity alters the reading of these two scenes, and examine what they can reveal about the relationship between these cities and their divine origins.

How did these images relate to civic identity? Were they intended to be understood by all, or were they reserved for an elite minority? How far can these coins illustrate how these Phoenician cities perceived their relationship with the Roman authorities? How significant is it that Tyre celebrated its pre-Greek origins, and Berytus chose to depict their origins through a Graeco-Roman lens? These are all questions which will be addressed through exploration of just two coin types.
Jack Schofield-Newton (Durham University): “The Roman Imperial Cult in Egypt”

The Roman imperial cult used to be seen as a centrally-imposed institution as a means of transmitting its ideology, and a display of its domination in the provinces. Simon Price’s work Rituals and Power dispelled this belief and showed the relationship and role of the citizens of the cities in Asia Minor in coming to terms with the new authority, by way of aligning it with the cult owed to gods. Egypt, with its tradition of ruler-cult is an interesting case study to see how the new Roman rulers, and Roman emperors in particular, came to terms with their self-image to the people. It is interesting to see how emperors, particularly Augustus, dealt with the transmission of his public image. Did he truly have disdain for the newly made province and want break with Egyptian tradition in not wanting to be cast as a new Pharaoh, for wanting to illustrate that this was the beginning of a new, Roman era, as is described by Cassius Dio? Was the emperor seen as a god among the people of Egypt, or were they know rulers of the known world? Through the analysis of the symbolism that is represented in ritual, deity association and religious architecture, one is able to observe the messages that were being spread. Local variation in Egypt of the iconography and setting of the cult, against those displayed in other parts of the empire, may illustrate what Dio intended, or that the emperor was concerned more with his image here than anywhere else. Studies on the imperial cult in Egypt have largely been restricted to German scholarship, but I am hoping to stimulate the research in this field in the Anglophone academic environment.
Julia Preisigke (LMU Munich): “Locations for private prayer at temples in the Western oases of Egypt – temple architecture and private messages to the gods”

This paper aims to investigate the so called “Bittplätze” which are locations for private prayer at Egyptian temples. Apart from a definition of this term some examples from the western oases are given as well as their distribution within the temples and their significance for the Egyptian population. Moreover some of the messages to and from the gods in (non-) elite media like ostraca, graffiti, and stelae as well as statues will be discussed.

Locations for private prayer are places within the Egyptian temple complexes where people probably even without priestly offices had the possibility to get in contact with their gods (popular culture) although they usually had no access to the inner parts of the temple. These locations are mostly situated at the outer rear walls of Egyptian temples, but also at their gates, their enclosure walls and in their court yards. The traditional term “contra-temple” used by L. Borchardt (1933) is unfortunately inadequate for this type of architecture. Due to their integration in bigger temple complexes and their “annex-character” the research of these areas was neglected for a long time. Especially the locations for private prayer in more provincial temples of the western oases in the Libyan desert (Siwa, Fayum, Baharija, Dachla and Charga) during the Late period (7th century BCE until the 4th century AD) need to be studied closely which is the aim of my PhD project.

During the study of this topic some difficulties occur in terminology and in the interpretation of the textual evidence according to popular religious belief and practice of the ancient Egyptian population which I plan to discuss during the lecture.
Melissa Gardner (Durham University): “Divine Inspiration and Traumatic Experience in the Akkadian *Epic of Erra*”

The Epic of Erra, an Akkadian poem from 1050-750BCE that has long puzzled modern scholars, has recently given rise to a wealth of new interpretations as a counter-text to ideologies enshrined in popular myth (Frahm, 2010) and as an allegorical denunciation of war (George, 2013). The poem’s claim to be a message from the gods, however, is often ignored. Taking this as its starting point, my paper argues that the claim to divine inspiration, and the fact that copies of the epic have been found written on amulets, is central to the poem’s interpretation and to the poet’s understanding of the type of history he is recording. In particular, I suggest that it leads us to read the text as a therapeutic conversation (Herman, 1992; Sperl, 2013) written down for the benefit of those who encounter it.

My paper considers how, with the text understood as the words of a god, the events it records in the divine realm enable the poet to gain critical perspective on a traumatic event. Additionally, I discuss how allusions to the Flood, which in many ways acts as the beginning of recorded human history in Akkadian narratives, incorporate this poem into a wider network of texts about collective suffering and loss. I conclude that the *Epic of Erra*’s status as a message from the gods enables it to promote therapeutic recovery from trauma in the community within which it circulated. In turn, this sheds light on the process of turning individual memory into collective history in the ancient world.
Alessandro Roncaglia (University of Bologna): “The Ara Pacis Augustae: a state of tension behind the harmony?”

The Ara Pacis Augustae represents one of the most important and famous monument of the Augustan age: it became the symbol of the external peace that Rome had imposed by military campaigns and of the internal harmony that Caesar’s son had restored after the bloodshed of the civil wars.

The representation of the imperial family in the north and south sides of the enclosure that surrounded the altar is an interesting part of a propagandistic message: it was, indeed, intended as a snap-shot of a dynasty, portrayed in an imaginary procession that never took place; it was, above all, an incisive message of unity that the authority wanted to transmit.

The iconography of the Ara Pacis has been already examined broadly and the scholars are nowadays unanimous in the identification of the characters. It would be nevertheless interesting to reflect over the validity of this message: which internal situation was reflected or concealed by this representation? The purpose of this paper is to establish a connection between this masterpiece of Augustan art (and propaganda) and the evolution of the internal events, seeking to demonstrate that the reality was instead more complex and that the divisions and the faction conflicts which animated the Republican age had continued under the domination of Augustus in different fashions and on different levels than before, even inside the Domus Augusta. I will try to achieve this objective with a prosopographical approach, holding that the only way to have a clearer comprehension of this period and of the political situation is to know the means and the actions by which the political groups - which were connected even with the members of Augustus’ family - tied and bonded among each other and worked to gain power, to improve their political significance or to keep themselves on the side of other stronger or dominant “parties”.
Andrew Fox (University of Nottingham): “Creating a wasteland: the ramifications of Roman war on the environment”

As Otho’s men rampaged through the Empire, followed months later by Vitellius’ army, they left a trail of destruction and devastation, visible not only in the people they encountered, but also in the land they traversed. These events, presented by Tacitus in his *Histories*, are treated as representative of the difference between war and peace. The destruction of the world around them is symptomatic of the army’s lack of concern for Roman ideals, and so the land, healthy in peacetime, is damaged by their march. This concern with the natural environment could be assumed to be a feature of the ancient world that is unique to Tacitus, but several other literary sources understand the symbiotic relationship between the land and people, and the cost of war on man’s natural surroundings is represented most prominently on one of Rome’s largest monuments.

Trajan’s Column contains almost fifty examples of trees and timber depicted in the context of deforestation. In addition to this, the sheer amount of timber constructions, from palisades to log piles, siege engines to boats, on the Column’s relief serve to indicate the sheer amount of timber that was required for a war. The message that this source relates is markedly different from that which can be found in the earlier writings of Tacitus, Lucan, Virgil, and Ovid, who take a romantic approach to the landscape.

The means by which this different message was communicated, and the motivation for the change will be explored in this paper. This will be achieved by a consideration of context and overall purpose, incorporating the role of Trajan’s Column as propaganda of its time, and will address changing manner in which the Roman relationship with the environment was communicated, from one of deep reverence to exploitation.
Nigel Porter (Newcastle University): “Athenian vase painters and their messages of social conformity”

Athenian decorated pottery from the archaic and classical periods provided a medium that produced iconic and frequently repeated imagery that created messages for citizens of Athens. The pottery was popular among the social class familiar with formal dining arrangements, with evidence of widespread use at symposia. There is also evidence of its popularity at religious sanctuaries and public dining sites used by magistrates and other public officials. Taking one of the more popular and frequently repeated images, namely that of warrior departure scenes and scenes of arming, it is possible to chart the changing social and cultural forces that inspire the imagery. Much of the style and content of the iconography on decorated pottery is anachronistic in portraying images of warriors and warfare that belong to earlier periods of history. Pictures of chariots, Scythian archers and warriors on horseback bear no relation to the reality of warfare that involved Athens in the 6th and 5th centuries BC. Athens was successful in the many conflicts in which it was involved, particularly in the 6th century BC, because of its use of the disciplined Hoplite phalanx in which individualism was subjugated to the power of the group. This was very different to the imagery celebrating the heroic actions of mythical figures from Homer where warfare was understood as the conflict between heroic warriors in individual combat.

What can therefore be understood from the imagery is the tradition of a heroic and possibly mythical bronze-age acting to provide a social context that encouraged conformity to values of courage and self-sacrifice among Athenians called to serve in a war setting. Decorated pottery was a popular medium acting to reinforce a message that “Athens expects” of its young men and families: pots produced for propaganda.
Christine Hue-Aacré (University of Strasbourg): “Papyri and ostraca as media of denunciation and regulation of interpersonal violence in ancient Egypt: the rule or the exception?”

The written material from Egypt bears witness to acts of interpersonal violence, i.e. violence occurring in the setting of social interactions. These documents, written on both ostraca and papyri, either denounce the aggression, or aim at the resolution of the conflict. Surprisingly, these texts represent a very small part of the whole Egyptian written evidence documenting the daily life: there are 40 of them for the New Kingdom and Graeco-Roman era, while economic texts number in the thousands for these periods.

This paper will question the choice of writing a denunciation or judgement proceedings when a violent act occurred: was it the rule, and then, does the small amount of texts documenting violence reflect the place of this social phenomenon in the Egyptian society? Or was the use of papyri and ostraca the exception, which could imply that orality was the rule?

In order to bring answers to these questions, the author will analyse the features of the resort to a written support to denounce and regulate violent conflicts.

Two specific corpora will be the focus of this discussion: first, the documents from Deir el-Medina, the village of the workmen of the Theban necropolis during the New Kingdom (14th – 10th c. B.C.); second, the Demotic texts from the Ptolemaic period (4th – 1st c. B.C.).

Through the study of these documents, this paper aims at enlightening the place of writing as a medium in violent conflicts regulation in the New Kingdom and Graeco-Roman Egypt.
Fernando Gorab Leme (Durham University): “Homiles 11: Asterius’ message, Christian experience and the importance of seeing the Martyrs”

According to early 5th Century Byzantine author Asterius of Amasea, in his “Encomium on Phocas” (Homiles IX), vision, over hearing, is far more apt for conveying the message of a martyr. Hence, this message, itself a performance of humility and righteousness for Christians anywhere, needs a “vivid teacher” (ἐναργεῖς διδασκάλους) to be rhetorically convincing. Asterius, however, and his audience were not eyewitnesses of any martyrdoms. Therefore, the author has to construct a literary representation of martyrdoms using the sophisticated resources he had in hands to present the facts as if they were being seen. His Homile XI, on Saint Euphemia, serves as a practical example of how to use ekphrasis, a vivid narration that turns readers and listeners into viewers, in order to leave the readers lost between image and text and actually see the message. This presentation comments on the accumulation of ekphraseis Asterius of Amasea uses to blur the limits between reality and fiction in his Homile XI, making his audience at once viewers and partakers in the narrated pain and glory of faith. Thus, the narrator experiences vividly (and makes his audience experience too) with the “eyes of the soul” the physical effect of ineffability reached when in proximity or contact with the martyr’s relics in the martyrium, a holy place where heaven and earth meet.
Lizzie Cooper (Newcastle University): “Sending out a message: Zaleucus of Locri and the punishment of blinding in and beyond Antiquity”

Zaleucus of Locri, the 7th-century BC lawgiver, was credited with the development of a variety of laws and regulations, the effectiveness and utility of which is attested by their longevity. Broadly, his main achievement was the instrumental part he played in the organisation of the legal system; the improvement of the process by introducing fixed penalties and definitive procedures. One of the laws he developed stated that the crime of adultery should be punished with blindness, which subsequently placed him in an awkward position when his own son was brought before him, charged with that very crime. Zaleucus, apparently following some intervention from the public, struck a balance between being a just lawgiver and a compassionate father by having one of his son’s eyes removed and one of his own, so that the law received its two eyeballs, but neither father nor son was completely blinded.

This paper will study the story more closely, looking at the sociocultural and medical context and connotations of the law, as well as exactly what it entailed, how it was applied and how it fitted into the wider legal context at the time. This will enable us to assess its effectiveness, before applying this understanding to its reception, both at the time and later. The story reappears, quite strikingly in frequency, centuries later in Renaissance artwork. Noteworthy depictions include Zaleucus sentencing his son, his son removing his own eyeball and Zaleucus demonstrating his own blind eye afterwards. A comparison of these later pictorial representations to the original sources will give a useful insight into how a preventative message of this kind can span such a vast and changeable time period.
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<td>1.2 Creating a message in history</td>
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<td>2.2 Communicating messages</td>
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