

Antiquarianism in the sixth century AD: Easing The shift from Rome to Constantinople

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Abstract

One of the fundamental sources of cultural unease in late antiquity was the fall of the western Roman Empire and the transmission of imperial power and prestige from Rome to Constantinople. Through a close reading of the antiquarianism of three authors – John Lydus (c. AD 490 – c. 565), Cassiodorus (c. AD 485 – c. 585) and John Malalas (c. AD 490 – c. 570) – this paper analyses how the distant past is used in sixth century sources as a platform to compare and discuss the moral legitimacy of Rome and Constantinople as capitals of the Roman Empire. The paper shall present two case studies ; the antiquarian scrutiny of the questionable character of Romulus, who founded Rome on the blood of his brother Remus, and the antiquarian analyses of the fate of the statues in Rome and Constantinople.

Résumé

Une source fondamentale du malaise culturel de l'Antiquité tardive fut la chute de l'Empire romain et la transmission du pouvoir et du prestige impérial de Rome à Constantinople. Cet article analyse, à travers une lecture attentive des textes antiques de trois auteurs – Jean le Lydien (c. 490 – c. 565 ap. J.-C.), Cassiodore (c. 485 – c. 585 ap. J.-C.) et Jean Malalas (c. 490 – c. 570 ap. J.-C.) – comment le passé lointain est utilisé dans les sources du sixième siècle comme une plateforme pour comparer et discuter la légitimité morale de Rome et de Constantinople comme les capitales de l'Empire romain. La contribution présentera deux études de cas ; l'examen antique du caractère douteux de Romulus, qui a fondé Rome sur le sang de son frère Remus, et les analyses antiques du sort des statues à Rome et à Constantinople.

De val van het West-romeinse rijk was, samen met de overdracht van keizerlijke macht en prestige van Rome naar Constantinopel, een fundamentele bron van cultureel ongenoegen in de late oudheid. Deze bijdrage zal, door middel van een detaillezing van de antiquarische teksten van drie auteurs (Johannes van Lydië (ca. 490 – ca. 565 n. C.), Cassiodorus (ca. 485 – ca. 585 n. C.) en Johannes Malalas (c. 490 – c. 570 n. C.)) analyseren hoe het verre verleden in zesde-eeuwse historische bronnen werd gebruikt als een arena waarin de morele legitimiteit van Rome en Constantinopel werden vergeleken en bediscussieerd. Deze bijdrage zal deze analyse maken door middel van twee casussen : de antiquarische bevraging van het twijfelachtig personage Romulus, dat Rome stichtte in het bloed van zijn broer Remus, en de antiquarische analyses van de lotsbestemming van de standbeelden van Rome en Constantinopel.

Antiquarianism in the sixth century AD: Easing The shift from Rome to Constantinople

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Rome, Constantinople and Roman antiquarianism

From the crisis of the third century onward, several cities, such as Trier, Milan, Ravenna, Sirmium and Nicomedia, vied for supremacy as the capital of the Roman Empire.⁽¹⁾ These competitions crystallised after the second foundation of Constantinople by emperor Constantine (AD 324 – 330) into a contest between Rome and Constantinople.⁽²⁾ The symbolic end of the Western Roman Empire in AD 476 tipped the scales decisively in favour of Constantinople.⁽³⁾ By the sixth century, the eastern Roman emperor Justinian conceived his project of restoring the Roman Empire exclusively through the lens of its new capital. The results for the city of Rome were disastrous; by the middle of the sixth century, the Italian peninsula was subdued as a peripheral

(1) EIGLER, 2007, GRIG and KELLY, 2012, p. 6 – 8.

(2) An overview of previous scholarly debates on the comparison and competition between Rome and Constantinople can be found in GRIG and KELLY, 2012, p. 3-4. For an analysis of how the various late antique challenges to the image of Rome were tackled in different visualisations, see GRIG, 2012. See also DAGRON, 1974, p. 48-76. For an analysis of the use of antiquarianism and the distant past in the debate on the respective position of Rome and Constantinople in the fourth and fifth centuries, see ANDO, 2001.

(3) CROKE, 1983 traces the narrative of the fall of the western Roman Empire in AD 476 to sources in Constantinople at the beginning of the sixth century, most notably Marcellinus Comes and Jordanes; “By the turn of the sixth century it will have been obvious that however desirable and however often it was contemplated (...) the restoration of the western Empire was, practically speaking, a doubtful proposition. (...) Given the fact that, as far as the Byzantines were concerned at the beginning of the sixth century, the west had been overrun by barbarians and the western Empire itself had ceased to be, it is hardly surprising to find that they attempted to pinpoint its passing away.” (CROKE, 1983, p. 116). This specifically Byzantine viewpoint, as expressed by Marcellinus Comes and Jordanes, became common knowledge in the Latin west when it passed through Paulus Diaconus to the chroniclers of western Europe and, later on, to the Renaissance humanists (CROKE, 1983, p. 81-83; 118-9. See also CHANTRAINE, 1992. For a sketch of the “gradual evanescence” of the old Rome from the minds of inhabitants of the eastern Roman Empire in the sixth century, see BOWERSOCK, 2009, p. 42-44.

province to Justinian's Empire, and the former capital of the Empire lay in ruins due to the ongoing Gothic wars (AD 535-540 and 540/541-553).⁽⁴⁾

The demise of the ideological centre of the Roman world in favour of a relatively new foundation at the Bosphorus sparked an intense historiographical debate on the legitimacy of Rome and Constantinople. Being aware of the conceptual difficulties and opportunities which surround the concept of antiquarianism such as sketched in the introduction to this volume, I would like to use one of the islands of the antiquarian archipelago, in order to analyse how the distant past is used in sixth century sources as a platform to compare and discuss the moral legitimacy of Rome and Constantinople as capitals of the Roman Empire. I will coin this antiquarianism "Roman antiquarianism". This Roman antiquarianism is a textual attitude towards the distant past which results in antiquarian texts or antiquarian elements in other texts. I define this textual attitude to have three characteristics; 1) it exemplifies the distant past as an ideal model, 2) it is centred on Rome and the Roman legacy,⁽⁵⁾ 3) it is informed by an uncanny awareness of the present being distanced from the ideal past.⁽⁶⁾

This sensation of distancing or cultural unease finds its expression in different attitudes. Feelings of disappointment with the apparent decline of the legacy of the past in the present are, for instance, manifest in the antiquarian works of John Lydus (*Mag.*, I, 28):

And I myself clearly remember that this custom prevailed not only at Rome but, indeed, even in the provinces so long as the curial councils were governing the cities; when they had been done away with, the species slipped away along with the general.⁽⁷⁾

In other instances, late antique authors acquiesce in the workings of a divine plan which causes the apparent decline of the Roman legacy, such as in the case of John Lydus (*Mens.*, IV, 47, Bandy IV, p. 52):

That her [the Sibylla's] lines are found to be unfinished and non-metrical is not the fault of the prophetess but of the speedwriters, who

(4) HOLM, 2005, p. 97-98; GRIG and KELLY, 2012, p. 27-28; WARD-PERKINS, 2012, p. 54. The ultimate nadir of Rome after the Byzantine conquest of Italy saw the rise in significance of the city of Ravenna as the provincial capital of a newly acquired borderland; before that moment, the city of Ravenna remained inconspicuous in comparison with Rome – the so called late antique importance of Ravenna as an imperial residence is part of the fallacious yet attractive rhetoric of the decline and fall of Rome (GILLET, 2001).

(5) The Romanocentrism of antiquarianism has already been noted by STEVENSON, 2004, p. 150-151, RAWSON, 1985, p. 237 and MOMIGLIANO, 1990, p. 68.

(6) On the connection between antiquarianism and political and or intellectual crises see RAWSON, 1972, p. 35, MOMIGLIANO, 1990, p. 59; MOATTI, 1997, STEVENSON, 2004, p. 120; MACHADO, 2009, p. 333. This connection returns also in studies of antiquarianisms in other periods and other cultures. See, for example BEAULIEU, 2013, p. 132 for the Neo-Babylonian period, WENDRICH, 2013, p. 140-141; 151-152 for the 25th and 26th Egyptian dynasties, and MEIER, 2013, p. 256 for the late mediaeval period.

(7) "Καὶ οὐκ ἐπὶ τῆς Ῥώμης μόνης ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ ταῖς ἐπαρχίαις τοῦτο κρατήσαν αὐτὸς ἐγὼ διαμέμνημαι, ἕως ἂν τὰ βουλευτήρια διώκουν τὰς πόλεις, ὧν ἀπολομένων συνεξώλισθε τοῖς ἐν γένει τὰ ἐν εἶδει." (SCHAMP, 2006b, p. 37), trans. BANDY, 1983, p. 45.

had not kept pace with the continuous stream of the words being said, or even of the scribes, having been uneducated and inexperienced. For the remembrance of the words said by her along with her inspiration had ceased and for this reason unfinished lines and limping thought are found, or this has occurred by the dispensation of God that her oracles might not be understood by the many and unworthy.⁽⁸⁾

A third attitude exhibited by the Roman antiquarians is a hope for the future restoration of the brilliant past by a strong leader, such as Justinian (ca. 482 – 565) in the case of John Lydus (*Mag.*, III, 76), or Theodoric the Great (454 – 526) in the case of Cassiodorus (*Var.*, IV, 51, 2):

[Under Justinian the] political order regained its brilliance, precisely as one, just when a flame is about to go out, abundantly pours oil over it and revives it. And transactions had an excitement that was gratifying, and profits that were honest and acceptable to the law came to those who served it, and the Temple of Justice was reopened, and rhetoricians became conspicuous for their speeches, and books were produced, and competition returned over the whole complexion of the government.⁽⁹⁾

And therefore, I [Theodoric] have decided that the fabric of the Theatre [of Pompey], yielding to the pressure of its vast weight, should be strengthened by your [Symmachus'] counsel. Thus, what your ancestors evidently bestowed for the glory of their country will not seem to decay under their nobler descendants.⁽¹⁰⁾

In a way, the Roman antiquarian conducts his research as a means to come to terms with the cultural unease generated by the different crises and shifts in the late antique culture, politics and society of the Roman Empire. One of these shifts, as sketched above, was the shift of power and authority from Rome, the focal point of antiquarian research, to Constantinople.⁽¹¹⁾

(8) “ὅτι δὲ οἱ στίχοι αὐτῆς ἀτελεῖς εὐρίσκονται καὶ ἄμετροι, οὐ τῆς προφητιδὸς ἐστὶν ἡ αἰτία ἀλλὰ τῶν ταχυγράφων, οὐ συμφθασάντων τῇ ῥύμῃ τῶν λεγομένων ἢ καὶ ἀπαιδευτῶν γενομένων καὶ ἀπειρῶν γραμματικῶν· ἅμα γὰρ τῇ ἐπιπνοίᾳ ἐπέπαντο ἐν αὐτῇ ἢ τῶν λεχθέντων μνήμη, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο εὐρίσκονται στίχοι ἀτελεῖς καὶ διάνοια σκάρουσα, εἴτε κατ’ οἰκονομίαν θεοῦ τοῦτο γέγονεν, ὥς μὴ γινώσκοντο ὑπὸ τῶν πολλῶν καὶ ἀναξίων οἱ χρησμοὶ αὐτῆς.” (WÜNSCH, 1898, p. 102, trans. BANDY, 2013a, p. 231).

(9) “Ἡ δὲ τάξις, καθάπερ τις σβεννυμένης ἤδη φλογὸς ἔλαιον ἀφθόνως ἐπιχέει, ἀνέλαμψεν· καὶ θόρυβος ἦν τοῖς πραττομένοις χαρίεις καὶ κέρδη σφόδρα καὶ φίλα τῷ νόμῳ τοῖς ὑπηρετοῦσιν ἠκολούθει καὶ τὸ Τέμενος τῆς Δίκης ἀνέφγει καὶ ῥήτορες τοῖς λόγοις ἐνέπρεπον καὶ βιβλίων προαγωγὰ καὶ φιλονεικία ἐφ’ ὅλον τὸ χρῶμα ἐπανήει τοῦ πολιτεύματος.” (SCHAMP, 2006c, p. 140-141, trans. BANDY, 1983, p. 257).

(10) *Et ideo theatri fabricam magna se mole solventem consilio vestro credimus esse roborandam, ut quod ab auctoribus vestris in ornatum patriae constat esse concessum non videatur sub melioribus posteris imminutum* (GIARDINA *et al.*, 2014, p. 126, trans. BARNISH, 1992, p. 79).

(11) EDWARDS, 1996, p. 66-68. For a general sense of growing distance to the Roman past informing the reorganization and codifying of knowledge in the sixth century, see MAAS, 2005, p. 18-20.

In this paper, I will focus on two case studies which were of high interest to the historical image of the two cities and which were therefore suitable motives to debate on the authority of the two cities. These case studies are the character of Romulus as the founder of Rome and the fate of Rome's statues.

For these case studies, I will use the works of John Lydus, John Malalas and Cassiodorus. The antiquarian John Lydus (ca. 490 – ca. 565) divided his time between teaching at the imperial school in Constantinople and working in the praetorian prefecture.⁽¹²⁾ The chronicler with Syrian roots John Malalas (ca. 490 – ca. 570) enrolled in the Roman administration in the city of Antioch and went later on to Constantinople.⁽¹³⁾ Flavius Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus Senator (ca. 485 – ca. 585) served under the Ostrogothic king Theodoric and his successors in Italy until the collapse of the kingdom under the Byzantine armies (535 – c. 540).⁽¹⁴⁾ After the toppling of the Ostrogoths, Cassiodorus stayed – or was detained – in Constantinople (c. 540 – 554), where he presumably, according to the most recent dating by M.S. Bjornlie,⁽¹⁵⁾ published his collection of state letters, the *Variae*.

The three authors have a shared antiquarian interest in Rome's distant past and stayed at the same time in Constantinople. Although we cannot determine with any certainty whether they were personally acquainted, these connections become highly relevant when we see the same antiquarian themes, namely the role of Romulus and the fate of statues in Rome, recurring in their writings.

Romulus on trial

In this section, I shall argue that the attitude of the antiquarians towards Romulus and the foundation of Rome is determined by their stance in the contemporary debate on the legitimacy of Rome and Constantinople. On the one hand, sources which reflect the point of view of Constantinople such as Malalas and Lydus treat Romulus negatively in order to belittle the importance of Rome in comparison with Constantinople. On the other hand, the importance which Cassiodorus still attributed to the city of Rome precludes him from treating the negative aspects surrounding its foundational myth.

The motley and disreputable origin of some of the first inhabitants is only one of many “shameful” elements in the story of Romulus and Remus. The predatory (or meretricious!) foster-mother of the twins, the murder of Remus, and the rape of the Sabine women are the most noteworthy of these discreditable features, and all of them were at

(12) For a short introduction on the life and works of John of Lydia see BANDY, 1983, p. ix-xxxviii, 2013a, p. 1-29, MAAS, 1992, p. 28-37, KELLY, p. 2004, 11-17, TREADGOLD, 2007, p. 258-264, and BJORNIE, 2013, p. 113-117, more specifically 114115.

(13) Our biographical data on John Malalas are scarce and has to be inferred from his *Chronographia*. On Malalas' life and works see CROKE, 1990, JEFFREYS, 2003, p. 501508, and TREADGOLD, 2007, p. 235-240.

(14) An overview of the life and works of Cassiodorus can be found in O'DONNELL, 1979, BJORNIE, 2013, p. 16-19.

(15) BJORNIE, 2013, p. 19-26, 32.

various times exploited by Rome's enemies and by Christian critics of her pagan traditions.⁽¹⁶⁾

In their moral comparison between Rome and Constantinople, Greek sources from the eastern Roman Empire portray Rome as the evil counterpart of Constantinople. In their accounts, therefore, they undermine the role of Rome in comparison with Constantinople by targeting Romulus and the origin of Rome.

John Malalas is the most outspoken exponent of this anti-Roman and anti-imperial sentiment. The moral comparison between both cities actually provides a structure to the chronicle as a whole. For it is in fact a circle composition, in which the city of Rome mirrors the city of Constantinople.⁽¹⁷⁾ Its centre is book X which recounts the life of Christ. The seventh book recounts the history of the foundation of Rome, and is two books removed from the central book X. In the same way, book thirteen, which has the foundation of Constantinople, is two books removed from the central book X. Six books of the chronicle precede book VII with the foundation of Rome. Likewise, five books follow the thirteenth book with the foundation of Constantinople – we might even wonder whether Malalas did not intend his chronicle to have nineteen instead of the preserved eighteen books.⁽¹⁸⁾

I II III IV V VI VII VIII IX X XI XII XIII XIV XV XVI
XVII XVIII + ?

The pivotal position of book X also entails a moral shift; book VII reads as a very negative antiquarian comment on the city of Rome and its founders,

(16) CORNELL, 1995, p. 60. See also WISEMAN, 1995, DAGRON, 1974, p. 338-344. The celebration of the founders of the city of Rome was a key element in the imperial ideological programme, also in late antiquity. See MACHADO, 2009, p. 343-344. However, the unsettling presence of Remus, the murdered brother of Romulus, remained a dissonant note in the story of Rome's foundation. VER EECKE, 2008, p. 195 goes as far as to interpret the story of Romulus and Remus as an original sin, a cultural trauma, which became the interpretative model for Roman history. This sense of cultural trauma would account for the prevalence of a general pessimism in interpretations of the history of the two brothers instead of a partisan counter history (VER EECKE, 2008, p. 209-210, 219, 239). The politicizing of the foundational narrative of the city in late republican Rome led to the construction of the image of Romulus as a tyrant. This image of a tyrannical Romulus was mitigated in the Augustan period, but reemerges in a reinforced form in Christian polemicists (VER EECKE, 2008, p. 222-239). For an analysis of the ambivalent treatment of Rome's foundational myth in the Augustan period specifically, see also EDWARDS 1996, p. 41-42.

(17) MOFFATT, 1990, p. 98.

(18) CROKE, 1990, p. 23-25 argues in favour of the Chronicle being concluded with the death of Justinian in AD 565 and therefore comprising only 18 books. Yet he also mentions the possibility of a 19th book and concedes that the evidence at hand precludes any conclusive resolution of the question at hand. The hypothesis of a circle composition of Malalas' Chronicle is, therefore, a structural argument in favour of the 19 books hypothesis. I argued in favour of this hypothesis on the basis of this structural argument, the importance of number symbolism in Malalas and his contemporaries and the embedding of the Chronicle in the context of the palace in Constantinople in a paper given at the 23rd International Congress of Byzantine Studies in Belgrade (22nd-27th of August 2016), and intend to publish this paper.

whereas the city of Constantinople is presented in book XIII as the morally superior counterpart of the old Rome.⁽¹⁹⁾

In fact, the whole of book VII, with the title “On the foundation of Rome” (ΙΙΕΠΙ ΚΤΙΣΕΩΣ ΡΩΜΗΣ),⁽²⁰⁾ reads as an anti-Roman and anti-imperialist manifesto. One of the sources Malalas used for this book is the late republican historian Licinius Macer (c. 107 – 66 BC), who was, possibly because of his political affiliations with the *populares*, responsible for a historiographical tradition hostile to Romulus.⁽²¹⁾ The whole of the seventh book is littered with negative remarks on the founder of Rome. The fratricide of Romulus, or Romus, as Malalas calls him (*Chron.*, VII, 1) is the cause of natural disasters and civil unrest (*Chron.*, VII, 2 – 5).⁽²²⁾ In response to these calamities Romulus devised several ways to deal with his unruly subjects. On the advice of an oracle, he orders the production of golden busts of his brother to foster the illusion of fraternal love (*Chron.*, VII, 2).⁽²³⁾ Romulus furthermore issued his decrees in the first person plural, as if his brother were still alive. Malalas uses this habit of Romulus to explain the fact that imperial decrees are issued in the first person plural. The implication of this explanation is clear; an imperial practice has its origins in the Roman cover-up of a fratricide.

Further on in book VII, the hippodrome turns also out to be a Machiavellian device, designed by Romulus only to divide his populace into factions and to divert them from plotting against their tyrant (*Chron.*, VII, 4-5).⁽²⁴⁾ To further discredit Romulus, Malalas mentions that his introduction of horse racing was not even an original find, as he derived the practice from the Persians. The slanderous account of Romulus’ reign continues with the abduction of the Sabine women (*Chron.*, VII, 6). Instead of a premeditated assault on the neighbouring Sabines, the abduction of the women is a ruse to end the squalor reigning at Rome.

Malalas ends his account of Romulus with stating that Romulus and Remus were born out of wedlock (*Chron.*, VII, 7). The two brothers were begotten by Ilia, priestess of Ares, and a soldier. According to Malalas, the tradition which considers the two brothers to be sons of Ares is merely a euhemerizing explanation. The two brothers were reproached for their lowly origin, namely that they were nurtured by strangers. Romus instituted the *Brumalia*, during which he fed the aristocrats in order to overcome these criticisms. This analysis of the lowly origin of the brothers and the resulting institution of the *Brumalia* in Malalas most possibly is the product of Licinius Macer, who is mentioned as a source at the end of *Chron.* VII, 7. Furthermore,

(19) For an analysis of Malalas’ Christian framework informing his historical construction of a succession from pagan empires and the pagan Roman Empire to a Christian Roman Empire, see SCOTT, 1990, p. 158-161.

(20) THURN, 2000, p. 132.

(21) JEFFREYS, 1990b, p. 185, HODGKINSON, 1997, BERNARDI, 2006, p. 56, VER EECKE, 2008, p. 206, 219, 226. For an introduction to the life and work of Macer, his *popularis* politics, which comply with Malalas’ anti-imperialist views and his use of antiquarian source material and techniques, see CORNELL and BISPHAM, 2013, p. 320-331. For his political action in favour of the *populares*, see MARSHALL and BENESS, 1987.

(22) VER EECKE, 2008, p. 219, 226.

(23) MOFFATT, 1990, p. 102.

(24) BELL, 2013, p. 159.

this explanation does not appear in John Lydus. Lydus considers the brothers to be the genuine sons of Ares (*Mens.*, IV, 150, Bandy IV, 133), and does not make any mention of Romulus or his parentage in his elaborate discussion of the *Brumalia* (*Mens.*, IV, 158, Bandy IV, 143).⁽²⁵⁾ The specific sting of Malalas lies in the fact that he points out that the *Brumalia* persist until his own day, and that he describes the host of the festival as “the emperor”, thereby associating the imperial reign with a festival used to legitimise an otherwise illegitimate rule – John Lydus likewise mentions the persistence of the festival without, however, mentioning neither the emperor nor Romulus.

The atmosphere of illegitimacy surrounding the foundation of Rome is coupled in Malalas to a notion of continuous civil strife. The original murder of Remus by Romulus sets in motion a continuing succession of civil unrest and factionalism during the reign of Romulus (*Chron.*, VII, 1-7), which endures throughout the account of Rome’s early history. The following two sections (*Chron.*, VII, 8-9) recount of the uprising against Tarquinius Superbus (died 495 BC), which results in the creation of the Roman republic. However, the civil unrest continues after the deposition of the last king. *Chron.*, VII, 10 recounts how the Roman general Manlius Capitolinus (died 384 BC) was driven from the city after an initial victory against the Gauls, on the instigation of one Februius. Manlius eventually is recalled from exile to deliver the city from the ensuing Gallic siege (*Chron.*, VII, 11), and returns the favour by exiling Februius (*Chron.*, VII, 12). The account on Rome closes with two short paragraphs on Augustus and chronology (*Chron.*, VII, 13-14).⁽²⁶⁾

The close association between Rome and fraternal hate or civil strife echoes throughout the rest of the chronicle. For instance, in book XIII of the chronicle, the account on the reign of Constantine (*Chron.*, XIII, 1-14), which focuses on Constantinople and Christian moral superiority, is sharply juxtaposed by the following section (*Chron.*, XIII, 15). In this section, Constantine’s son, Constantine II, the new emperor of Rome, is murdered on the order of his brother. Apparently the city of Romulus incites fratricide.

As already mentioned, Malalas stresses the continuity⁽²⁷⁾ between the illegitimate rule of Romulus and the Roman kings on the one hand and the emperors on the other hand by pointing out how different imperial practices and customs have their origin in the edgy earliest history of Rome. Furthermore, the same word βασιλεύς is used to denote both the Roman kings and the emperors. Indeed the Roman republic is pictured by Malalas as only a short interlude of freedom in the history of the Roman Empire – after the account of the troubled war with the Gallic tribes (*Chron.*, VII, 10-13),

(25) BERNARDI, 2006 compares the analyses of the *Brumalia* in John of Lydia and John Malalas; the analyses represent different ways to emphasise and create continuity between the past and the present for purposes of legitimation.

(26) The same association can explain, for example, passages in John of Lydia such as *Mens.*, IV, 52 (Bandy IV, 118), which recounts how a rebellion at the Capitoline Hill in Rome was nipped in the bud by the appearance of a mysterious shepherd.

(27) The same continuity in tyranny between Romulus, the first emperors and contemporary emperors can be found John of Antioch (ROBERTO, 2011).

only two short passages suffice to summarise more than four centuries of Rome's republican history.⁽²⁸⁾

Malalas hints at his republican view on Roman history throughout the rest of the chronicle. Malalas portrays the accession to power of Julius Caesar in the darkest colours (*Chron.*, IX, 1-7). Caesar is consistently called a dictator or monarch – also later in the chronicle, for example in *Chron.*, XII, 7. He “rebelled against the Romans” (*Chron.*, IX, 2)⁽²⁹⁾ and gained sole control of the Empire by “winning over the Roman's enemies” and through fear (*Chron.*, IX, 2).⁽³⁰⁾ He slaughtered the whole of the senate (*Chron.*, IX, 2) and “controlled everything arrogantly and as a usurper” (*Chron.*, IX, 3).⁽³¹⁾ Caesar's rule ends with his murder by the second Brutus (*Chron.*, IX, 7), who is coupled to the republican Brutus the great of *Chron.*, VII, 14. The same anti-imperial views underlie the negative description on the accession to power of Augustus; “He rebelled against the senate and ruled on his own authority and was arrogant” (*Chron.*, IX, 19).⁽³²⁾ As with Romulus and Julius Caesar, the illegitimacy of Augustus' kingly power is the main critique against it. The reign of Caesar and Augustus parallel in their illegitimacy neatly the rule of Romulus; the Roman kings and emperors are different aspects of the same illegitimate rule.

John Lydus gives the fratricide of Remus by Romulus a prominent place in his theoretical reflections on the Roman political system at the beginning of his *De magistratibus*.⁽³³⁾ In *Mag.*, I, 3, Rome is founded by Romulus and Remus, after which their rule is characterised as *regium* or tyranny. There follows a theoretical reflection on the distinction between just, constitutional kingship and mere tyranny – the constitutional king acts within the framework of the law, whereas the tyrant follows his own whim.⁽³⁴⁾ In *Mag.*, I, 5 John Lydus specifies why the rule of Romulus does not qualify for the first variant:

Consequently, Romulus was a tyrant; first of all because he had killed his brother, though older, and because he used to do rashly whatever

(28) For an interpretation of the ideological and religious dimensions of this stress on the continuity of Roman kings and emperors in texts from the fourth century Latin west, such as the *Origo Gentis Romanae*, see ANDO, 2015, p. 217-218). According to SCOTT, 1990, p. 157-158, Malalas deliberately omitted the republican history of Rome, the knowledge of which he does share with John of Lydia. Scott explains this omission through Malalas' autocratic focus and Christian bias. Yet, as this analysis shows, Malalas' focus on the continuity between *tyranny* in the regal and imperial periods of Rome can also be a proof of Malalas' implicit republicanism, or, at least, anti-imperialism.

(29) ἐτυράννησε Ῥωμαίους (THURN, 2000, p. 161), trans. JEFFREYS *et al.*, 1986, p. 113.

(30) προτρεψάμενος τοὺς κατὰ Ῥωμαίων πολεμίους (THURN, 2000, p. 161, trans. JEFFREYS *et al.*, 1986, p. 113).

(31) τῶν πάντων ἐκράτησεν ἐν ὑπερηφανείᾳ (THURN, 2000, p. 162, trans. JEFFREYS *et al.*, 1986, p. 114).

(32) καὶ τυρρανῆσας τὴν σύγκλητον ἐβασίλευσεν ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ ὑπερηφανείᾳ ὧν (THURN, 2000, p. 170, trans. JEFFREYS *et al.*, 1986, p. 118). ROBERTO, 2015, however, ascribes to Malalas a positive attitude towards Augustus as the tool of divine providence.

(33) KALDELLIS, 2005, p. 2-5.

(34) DEBUISSON, 1991, PAZDERNIK, 2005, p. 194-195.

occurred to him. For this reason he was called also *Quirinus*, that is to say, *kyrios* (...).⁽³⁵⁾

John Lydus provides a theoretical framework for coupling the illegitimacy of Romulus' rule to the whimsical act of killing his own brother. We will never know whether John Lydus was the first to articulate such a theory, yet we can see how Malalas constructed his view on early Roman history on the premises of this theoretical framework.⁽³⁶⁾ As we have seen, Malalas also makes the link between the illegitimate rule of whimsical Romulus and the origins of the Empire in Julius Caesar's and Augustus' "rebellion" against the senate. John Lydus is – most possibly for reasons of political nature⁽³⁷⁾ – not as straightforward in asserting this tyrannical link between Romulus and the emperors, yet he does associate Romulus with Augustus, albeit implicitly. For instance, in *Mens.*, IV, 111 (Bandy IV, 101), John Lydus points out that Augustus received many nicknames, "for some called him *Quirinus*, as if to say, *Romulus*, but others *Caesar*."⁽³⁸⁾ In the light of the analysis in *Mag.*, I, 5 of the name Quirinus, Augustus' new title acquires an edgy association, to say the least. Also in *Mag.*, II, 3, we hear how Augustus used the same insignia of Romulus and his father Julius Caesar. The otherwise glorious association between Romulus, Caesar and Augustus is shaded by the echoes of tyranny, civil strife and fraternal hate.⁽³⁹⁾

In the Latin west, the centrality of Rome in the antiquarian imagination precludes any negative treatment of Romulus as the founder of Rome. Sources in the west remain tacit on the fratricide of Romulus and exploit other mythological characters when dealing with the notion of fratricide. For example, Cassiodorus does not give any hints as to the foundational murder of Remus by Romulus. Letter II, 14 is in this context of eloquent silence an interesting case. The letter deals with a person by the name Romulus, who is suspected of having killed his own father Martinus. The notion of parricide combined with the name of Romulus would give ample opportunity for Cassiodorus to digress on the historical precedent of Romulus and Remus. Yet Cassiodorus does not indulge in any antiquarian digression, but gives an

(35) Ὡστε τύραννος ἦν ὁ Ῥωμύλος, πρῶτον μὲν τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἀνελὼν καὶ τὸν μείζονα, καὶ πρᾶττων ἀλόγως τὰ προσπίπτοντα· ταύτη καὶ Κυρίνος προσηγορεύθη, οἷον εἰ κύριος (...) (SCHAMP, 2006b, p. 12, trans. BANDY, 1983, p. 15). On this passage, see DEBUISSON, 1991, p. 64-65, KALDELLIS, 2005, p. 4, PAZDERNIK, 2005, p. 196, VER EECKE, 2008, p. 198, 223, 387.

(36) Despite his apt analysis of John of Lydia's republican views in connection with John's network, KALDELLIS, 2005 does not make any mention of a possible connection between John of Lydia and John Malalas.

(37) For an analysis of the art of giving veiled criticism on the emperor in late antiquity in general and in the works of John of Lydia in particular, see KALDELLIS, 2005, p. 912. On the dilemmas behind John's judgment of Justinian, see PAZDERNIK, 2005, p. 193-198.

(38) οἱ μὲν γὰρ αὐτὸν ὀνόμαζον Κυρίνον οἰοεὶ Ῥωμύλον, ἄλλοι Καίσαρα (WÜNSCH, 1898, p. 150), trans. BANDY (2013a, p. 286). This connection between Romulus and Augustus was initially fostered by Augustus himself, to positively assert his authority as the second founder of Rome (Suet., *Aug.*, VII, 2 and Cass. Dio, LIII, 16, 4-8).

(39) See KALDELLIS, 2005, p. 5-8 for an analysis of John of Lydia's association between the emperors and the tyrants of the late republic in order to construct a "sequence of tyrants". See also BEKE, 1947, p. 14-18, DEBUISSON, 1991, p. 60-67.

array of examples of love between parents and their offspring from the natural world. In view of the addressee of the letter, namely, the Roman aristocrat Symmachus, this choice of digression seems even more out of place. For Cassiodorus has a distinct tendency to reserve comparisons from the natural world for Gothic addressees, whilst providing Roman addressees with historical lore.⁽⁴⁰⁾ Only at the end of the letter there is an ironical hint at the association between the parricide Romulus and his mythological counterpart; “Therefore, you are to bring before your court Romulus, who, polluted by the atrocity of his deed, disgraces the Roman name”.⁽⁴¹⁾ The unease over the tainted history of the founder of Rome clearly makes the otherwise talkative Cassiodorus rather tacit. In the case of civil discord or fratricide, Cassiodorus refers to other mythological examples to embellish his letters. For instance, in letter IX.1, Theodoric threatens the Vandal king Hilderic with war after the murder of Amalafrida, Theodoric’s sister. The end of the letter has a short reference to a mythological precedent of fratricide. Yet in this case, there is no mention of Romulus and Remus, but of Cain killing Abel.

In the same way as the negative associations between Romulus, the notion of internal strife, and the notion of illegitimate rule are absent in Cassiodorus, also the republican framework of John Lydus and John Malalas is missing. Cassiodorus does not oppose the legitimate republic on the one hand to illegitimate kingship and empire on the other hand. On the contrary, he describes the consulship as a natural predecessor to the Empire in letter VI.1.

One case of explicit analysis of Romulus’ fratricide in the west deserves our special attention. The poet and contemporary of Cassiodorus, Luxorius, edited in Vandal Africa a book of his epigrams (AD 534). Poem 39 has the title “About a Painting of Romulus Showing Him Killing His Brother on the Walls”.⁽⁴²⁾ It is worth quoting in full:

Realize that yours was a virtuous crime, Romulus. When you struck down your brother, Rome was given to you by that act. Let no one now accuse you of this deed as murder, if the omen of the walls proves that what you did was right.⁽⁴³⁾

Disce pium facinus: percusso, Romule, fratre
Sic tibi Roma datur, huius iam nomine culpat
Nemo te c(a)edis, murorum si decet omen.

(40) “The most learned letters, moreover, tend to be directed to Romans of known learning, like Boethius, while biblical allusions tend to occur in letters to, or on behalf of, men of known religious interests, like Theodahad. There is, then, some attempt at adaptation to the audience (...)” (BARNISH, 2001, p. 367).

(41) *Romulum itaque, qui facti sui acerbitate pollutus nomen foedat Romanum, ad vestrum facite venire iudicium* (FRIDH and HALPORN, 1973, p. 66), trans. BARNISH (1992, p. 28).

(42) *De Romulo picto ubi in muris fratrem occidit* (ROSENBLUM, 1961, p. 134), trans. ROSENBLUM, 1961, p. 135.

(43) ROSENBLUM, 1961, p. 134-135.

In the poem, the murder of Remus by Romulus is justified by the result, namely the foundation of Rome. Notice the irony at the end of the poem; “the omen of the walls” refers to the fact that Romulus proclaimed after the death of Remus that no enemy will transgress the walls of Rome alive.⁽⁴⁴⁾ In a late antique context which saw the city of Rome plundered by Alaric (in AD 410) and Genseric (in AD 455) – not to mention the prospective sieges and captures of Rome by Byzantines and Ostrogoths during the Gothic wars (in AD 537 – 538, AD 546 and AD 549) – the poem can be interpreted not only as a justification, but also as an accusation; because Romulus implicated the city of Rome with murder, the city walls did not prove invulnerable. Perhaps the double twist of this poem is also underscored by its form; the last verse is a palindrome which means that the poem can literally be read in both directions. This poem is next to the letters of Cassiodorus a nice indication of the anxiety surrounding the reception of Romulus’ history in the sixth-century Latin west; if Luxorius made a poetical description of an existing painting, as he claims in the title, the motive of Romulus killing Remus was not only confined to antiquarian discussions but also present in contemporary pictorial imagination.

As this section has shown, the Roman antiquarians remoulded the myths surrounding the foundation of Rome according to their position in the debate on the legitimacy of Rome and Constantinople. Malalas’ and Lydus’ slandering remarks on Rome through its founder were met uneasy silences in Cassiodorus and ambiguity and irony in Luxorius.

The Fate of Rome’s Statues

A similar mechanism can be perceived in the antiquarian treatment of a material aspect which embodied the prestige and power of a late antique city, namely its statues. I shall argue that Lydus and Malalas, arguing in favour of Constantinople, use their antiquarian researches on the fate of Rome’s statues in order to rationalise the demise of this city. Cassiodorus, in contrast, emphasised the continuing care in Rome for its statues in order strengthen its moral authority.

The transfer of Roman power from the city of Rome to Constantinople elicited in the sixth century a general discussion on what it meant to be Roman. In the course of this broad debate, the antiquarians also singled out more abstract emblems of the Roman heritage. The antiquarians presented these emblems as vital to the endurance of the Roman legacy by tying them to the preservation of Rome. Therefore, prophesies with the pattern; “if the Romans stop cultivating emblem X or Y, the Roman Empire will fall”, appear in antiquarian writings.

In the east, John Lydus and John Malalas use this type of prophecy to come to terms with the decline of the western Roman Empire. In the west, Cassiodorus’ stress on the same emblems as singled out by John Lydus attests to the existence of a common ground for the debate on Rome’s heritage – and

(44) WISEMAN, 1995, p. 9-11. For a more general interpretation of this passage in Luxorius, see ROSENBLUM, 1961, p. 207.

to the unease in the west at the conclusions drawn in the east from prophecies favouring Constantinople over Rome. Cassiodorus is at pains to show how Rome did in fact not lose the emblems vital to her existence.

The care for ancient statues is a case in point. During the foundation of the city under Constantine, the conscious collection and assembly⁽⁴⁵⁾ of statues from all parts of the Empire was a vital means to emphasise the new civic identity of Constantinople as new capital and ruling city of the Roman world.⁽⁴⁶⁾ Although the practice of sculptural appropriation was a common practice in antiquity and especially late antiquity,⁽⁴⁷⁾ the consistency and scope of Constantine's statuary collection was unprecedented.⁽⁴⁸⁾ Although Constantine's sculptural project witnessed some minor follow-ups during the Theodosian dynasty, the reign of Justinian saw a sharp decline in the care for and preservation of the Constantinian statuary collection.⁽⁴⁹⁾ The indifference towards the statues of Constantinople under Justinian must have been a cause of certain unease among the educated civil servants of Constantinople, such as John Lydus, specifically since the collection was closely linked to the civic identity of the city. John Lydus must have been acutely aware of the vicissitudes of Constantinople's statues, especially because he worked in the department of the praetorian prefecture which was responsible for the collection and assembly of the collection under Constantine.⁽⁵⁰⁾ Unsurprisingly, therefore, statues figure prominently in John's speculations on the fate of Rome. He recounts prophecy made by the Sibylla related to the care of statues in Rome (*Mens.*, IV, 145, Bandy IV, 53):

An oracle from the *The Sibylline Books* declared that the Romans would preserve their sovereignty as long as they continuously cared for the statues of the city, which oracle clearly also has been fulfilled, for, after Avitus has reigned as emperor of Rome for the last time and

(45) For a general overview of the collection, its history and early Byzantine attitudes towards it, see BASSETT, 2004, DAGRON, 1984, p. 128-143.

(46) MANGO, 1963, p. 55-59, BASSETT, 2004, p. 37, 45-49; 2007, STIRLING, 2014, p. 101-105, ALTO BAUER and WITSCHERL, 2007, p. 5, 7.

(47) MACHADO, 2009, p. 350 n. 102; 350-353, STIRLING, 2014, p. 96-114. For an introduction to the late antique attitude towards statues with extensive bibliography, see ALTO BAUER and WITSCHERL, 2007. Archaeological findings confirm the late antique cultivation of antique statues was also established well beyond the official cultural mainstream of literature and architecture. In the French municipality Dax, for instance, the remains of the workshop of an antique-dealer and restorer of statues have been unearthed (SANTROT, 1996).

(48) BASSETT, 2004, p. 39-40; 2007, p. 190.

(49) BASSETT, 2004, p. 121-136, COATES-STEPHENS, 2007, p. 183-184. For a general sketch of the decline and end of the antique statuary habitus in late antiquity, see ALTO BAUER and WITSCHERL, 2007, 11-17 and COATES-STEPHENS, 2007. For the late antique textual responses elicited by this transformation of the statuary habitus, see STEWART, 2007.

(50) BASSETT, 2004, p. 42-45.

dared to melt down the statues, the imperial seat was removed far from Italia.⁽⁵¹⁾

As a privileged witness of the history and decline of the collection, John Lydus's mention of this prophesy on Rome is also a warning to Justinian; the New Rome can suffer the same fate as the old Rome if her statues are neglected. John Lydus gives his ominous assertion on the doom of Rome a philosophical basis in his *De ostentis* (47, transl. Bandy, p. 93):

If [a thunderbolt] descends upon statues, it threatens various and serious calamities to public affairs, for, since statues were thought by the ancients to be physical representations of ideal forms and ornaments of the cities, insolence to them is a curse to public affairs.⁽⁵²⁾

As such, John Malalas used in his chronicle the same theoretical framework as John Lydus. John Malalas namely gives lavish attention to the Palladium, the cult statue of the goddess Athena, which was rescued from burning Troy by Aeneas and brought to Rome. Constantine stole the Palladium and placed it, during the dedication ceremony of his new city, under his column on the forum of Constantine. The Palladium is mentioned in different books of Malalas' chronicle (Books V, VI, VII, XIII) as a Leitmotiv,⁽⁵³⁾ giving coherence to the historical narrative of Malalas

(51) Ὅτι χρησμός ἐκ τῶν Σιβυλλείων ἐδήλου, μέχρι τότε Ῥωμαίοις φυλάττεσθαι τὴν βασιλείαν, ἄχρις ἂν τῶν ἀγαλμάτων τῆς πόλεως φροντίζωσιν· ὅς δὴ χρησμός καὶ πεπέρασται· τοῦ γὰρ Ἀβίτου πύματον βασιλεύσαντος τῆς Ῥώμης καὶ ἀγάλματα χωνεῦσαι τολμήσαντος, πόρρω τῆς Ἰταλίας ἢ βασιλεία. (WÜNSCH, 1898, p. 165), trans. BANDY (2013a, p. 237).

(52) εἰ δὲ κατ' ἀγαλμάτων κατενεχθῇ, ποικίλας καὶ ἐπαλλήλους τὰς συμφορὰς τοῖς πράγμασιν ἀπειλεῖ· εἰ γὰρ χαρακτήρες ἰδεῶν τινῶν καὶ κόσμια πόλεων τὰ ἀγάλματα ὑποπτεύθῃ τοῖς παλαιοῖς, ἀρὰ τοῖς πράγμασιν ἢ περὶ αὐτὰ ὕβρις. (WACHSMUTH, 1897, p. 102), trans. BANDY (2013b, p. 203).

(53) In *Chron.*, V, 12-15, Malalas recounts the quarrel between Ajax Telamonius, Diomedes and Ulysses over the Palladium. The Palladium is an image of Pallas, given by the wonder worker Asius to Tros when building Troy. Tros gives the name Asia given to his lands in honour of Asius. During the siege of Troy, the Palladium is stolen on advice of Antenor by Ulysses and Diomedes during a festival. The Palladium claimed by Ajax, and Ulysses pleads in favour of him receiving the statue. Because the Greeks do not attain an agreement on the question, the Palladium is taken in custody by Diomedes. Ajax is murdered the same night and riots occur against Ulysses. Diomedes sets off from Troy with the Palladium (*Chron.*, V, 22). In book six, Diomedes meets Aeneas and hands him over the statue therefore complying with an oracle from the Pythia to give the Palladium to the Trojans (*Chron.*, VI, 24). Thereafter Aeneas founds the city of Albania and deposits the Palladium there. Ascanius Iulius, son of Aeneas and Creousa, builds the city of Lavinia, and transfers the Palladium from Albania to Lavinia (*Chron.*, VI, 25). At the end of book six, Albas transfers the Palladium from Lavinia to Silva (*Chron.*, VI, 29). At the beginning of book seven (*Chron.*, VII, 1) the two brothers Romus and Remus take the Palladium to their newly founded city of Rome. The account of the Palladium comes to an end in book thirteen, which digresses on the dedication of Byzantium by emperor Constantine (*Chron.*, XIII, 7). Constantine took in secret the Palladium from Rome and buried it under the column at the centre of his forum.

and emphasizing the continuity between the mythical past of Troy,⁽⁵⁴⁾ the imperial legacy of Rome and the city of Constantinople.⁽⁵⁵⁾ In this succession of three cities, Constantinople is presented as the natural ending point; the spectacular wanderings of the Palladium come to an end in *Chron.*, XIII, 7 with Constantine literally anchoring the object under the pillar of the forum of Constantine in his new city.⁽⁵⁶⁾ Malalas' extensive focus on the transfer of the Palladium becomes entirely logical from the theoretical viewpoint of John Lydus; with the secretive transfer of the Palladium, the statue of Athena, from Rome to Constantinople, Constantine actually transferred the representation of the ideal form of Rome from the old to the new capital.⁽⁵⁷⁾

The connection made by John Lydus and John Malalas between the fate of Rome and her statuary returns in a different way in Cassiodorus; we see him at pains to emphasize the contemporary care for statues at the city of Rome. Cassiodorus traces the marvellous aspect of Rome, amongst other things, to her statues and equestrian statues in *Var.*, VII, 15. Furthermore, the Ostrogoths are presented by Cassiodorus as investing a lot of time and energy in the preservation of ancient statuary. Letter VII, 13, for example, digresses on the duties of the Count of Rome, who is charged with the protection of statues at the eternal city. The letters II, 35 and II, 36 describe a specific case of Ostrogothic heritage management. After the "sacrilegious" theft of a brazen statue at Como, the local authorities are instructed to issue a reward and, if necessary, even to apply torture, in order to retrieve the stolen statue. Cassiodorus' letters on the preservation of statues in Rome can be read as an implicit answer to the antiquarian analysis of John Lydus; as Rome did not neglect her statuary, the city is not to be bypassed as seat of the Empire.⁽⁵⁸⁾

There are also specific indications that Cassiodorus has the statuary of Constantinople in mind in his creation of an image of Rome still superior to Constantinople. Letter X, 30 is a case in point. In this letter, the Ostrogothic king Theodahad orders the repair of bronze elephant statues along the Via Sacra. Although this letter has been interpreted by M.S. Bjornlie as a lampoon on the dysfunctional rule of Theodahad by Cassiodorus,⁽⁵⁹⁾ we can also see

(54) On the ideological connections between Troy and Rome, see EDWARDS, 1996, p. 63-66. BOWERSOCK, 2009, p. 38-40 analyses how the special relationship between Rome and Troy in the Augustan foundational myth of Rome elicited late antique reports on Constantine's envisaging Alexandria Troas as an alternative location to Byzantium for his new city.

(55) JEFFREYS, 1990a, p. 58-59, 61, MOFFATT, 1990, p. 98. "Thus, the Palladion, together with other statues of its ilk, referred to Rome and through it to Troy, rooting the new city's history deep in the soil of the heroic past." (BASSETT, 2007, p. 194).

(56) John Malalas is the first of three attestations to claim the Palladium for Constantinople. Procopius, *Bel. Goth.* I, 15 opposes the Romans, who profess not to know where the statue is, to the Byzantines who profess the statue to be in Constantinople (BASSETT, 2004, p. 205-206).

(57) On the later Byzantine belief in the animated or even demonic nature of statues, see MANGO, 1963, p. 59-64.

(58) "Increasingly, old portrait statues may have come to be regarded (...) as works of art. This, at any rate, is the assumption that underlies the sixth-century pleas drafted by Cassiodorus for the preservation of Rome's threatened heritage of public sculpture, or for the recovery of a stolen bronze statue at Como." (STEWART, 2007, p. 39).

(59) BJORNIE, 2009, p. 162-166. On Cassiodorus' attention for the preservation of statues, see also WITSCHEL, 2007, p. 128, n. 80.

this letter as an implicit response to the statuary in Constantinople. Indeed, there were several statues of elephants extant in the city of Constantinople in the times of Cassiodorus.⁽⁶⁰⁾ By emphasizing the elephant statues extant in Rome, Cassiodorus takes his response to the antiquarian argument on the fate of Rome and her statues one step further. Not only is the city of Rome not doomed because she did not forsake her statues. In comparison with the statuary collection of Constantinople, Rome still outdoes her younger sister at the Bosphorus.

As this section has shown, the antiquarian history of Rome's statues and the care or neglect of its statues is used by the Roman antiquarians in order to discuss the moral legitimacy of Rome as compared to Constantinople. Lydus and Malalas stressed how Rome's neglect of her statues made her loose her claims to legitimacy as the capital of the Roman world. The same sensitivities are apparent in the works of Cassiodorus, who emphasised the continuing care for Rome's statues, and the resulting moral superiority of the old Rome in comparison to her younger sister at the Bosphorus.

Conclusion

As I have tried to show, antiquarianism in the sixth century created a common ground for scholars and intellectuals of both east and west to debate through the lens of the distant past on the nature and future of the Empire. In the east, the mythological origins and founders of Rome were discredited in order to profile Constantinople as the better alternative to the old Rome – a tactic which met with uneasy silences in the west. Yet in the debate on the fate of Rome and her statues, authors from the west such as Cassiodorus still staunchly defended the continuing supremacy of Rome over Constantinople. As such, late antique antiquarianism does not attest to dusty, bookish and unworldly erudition; it was a vital cultural response of intellectuals in the sixth century to the changed state of affairs in the sixth-century Empire. Through Roman antiquarianism, intellectuals conceived of, came to terms with and even tried to influence the fundamental transformations which heralded the beginning of the mediaeval period.

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(60) A first elephant statue, possibly erected by Septimius Severus, stood at the Basilika. Another statue, which was most possibly erected by Constantine, adorned the forum of Constantine. Likewise the golden gate was adorned by a group of brazen elephants which were reported to have been taken to the city by Theodosius the Younger. Also the hippodrome had a bronzen elephant statue (BASSETT, 2004, p. 152, 204, 212, 216).

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SUMMARY

One of the fundamental sources of cultural unease in late antiquity was the fall of the western Roman Empire and the transmission of imperial power and prestige from Rome to Constantinople. Through a close reading of the antiquarianism of three authors – John Lydus (c. AD 490 – c. 565), Cassiodorus (c. AD 485 – c. 585) and John Malalas (c. AD 490 – c. 570) – this paper analyses how the distant past is used in sixth century sources as a platform to compare and discuss the moral legitimacy of Rome and Constantinople as capitals of the Roman Empire. The paper shall present two case studies; the antiquarian scrutiny of the questionable character of Romulus, who founded Rome on the blood of his brother Remus, and the antiquarian analyses of the fate of the statues in Rome and Constantinople.

SOMMAIRE

Raf Praet, L'antiquarianisme pendant le sixième siècle après J.C. Atténuer le déplacement de Rome à Constantinople

Une source fondamentale du malaise culturel de l'Antiquité tardive fut la chute de l'Empire romain et la transmission du pouvoir et du prestige impérial de Rome à Constantinople. Cet article analyse, à travers une lecture attentive des textes antiques de trois auteurs – Jean le Lydien (c. 490 – c. 565 ap. J.-C.), Cassiodore (c. 485 – c. 585 ap. J.-C.) et Jean Malalas (c. 490 – c. 570 ap. J.-C.) – comment le passé lointain est utilisé dans les sources du sixième siècle comme une plateforme pour comparer et discuter la légitimité morale de Rome et de Constantinople comme les capitales de l'Empire romain. La contribution présentera deux études de

cas; l'examen antiquaire du caractère douteux de Romulus, qui a fondé Rome sur le sang de son frère Remus, et les analyses antiques du sort des statues à Rome et à Constantinople.

SAMENVATTING

Raf PRAET, Het antiquarianisme tijdens de zesde eeuw na Christus. Het verzachten van de shift van Rome naar Constantinopel

De val van het West-romeinse rijk was, samen met de overdracht van keizerlijke macht en prestige van Rome naar Constantinopel, een fundamentele bron van cultureel ongenoegen in de late oudheid. Deze bijdrage zal, door middel van een detaillezing van de antiquarische teksten van drie auteurs (Johannes van Lydië (ca. 490 – ca. 565 n.C.), Cassiodorus (ca. 485 – ca. 585 n.C.) en Johannes Malalas (c. 490 – c. 570 n.C.)) analyseren hoe het verre verleden in zesde-eeuwse historische bronnen werd gebruikt als een arena waarin de morele legitimiteit van Rome en Constantinopel werden vergeleken en bediscussieerd. Deze bijdrage zal deze analyse maken door middel van twee casussen: de antiquarische bevraging van het twijfelachtig personage Romulus, dat Rome stichtte in het bloed van zijn broer Remus, en de antiquarische analyses van de lotsbestemming van de standbeelden van Rome en Constantinopel.