

ROMAN

in the Provinces



Art on the Periphery of Empire

edited by Lisa R. Brody and Gail L. Hoffman

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Cover: Detail of mosaic floor with geometric design, Gerasa, Church of Bishop Paul (Procopius Church), c. 526 CE, Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-British School Excavations at Gerasa, 1929.418 (see plate 4)

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PREFACE

Nancy Netzer and Jock Reynolds

In June 2011 at the McMullen Museum, during the packing of *Dura-Europos: Crossroads of Antiquity*, the previous collaborative exhibition between our institutions, the exhibition's co-curator Lisa R. Brody, Yale University Art Gallery's Associate Curator of Ancient Art, mused about organizing a sequel exhibition. Its goal would be to focus on other works from the periphery of the Roman Empire—primarily from the collections of the Gallery—to explore limitations of the concept of “Roman art” as it pertains to production in the far-flung provinces, each of which had its own indigenous culture and artistic tradition. Rather than seeking recognizably Roman elements in provincial objects, this exhibition would explore the various ways that people inhabiting the Roman Empire constructed and expressed their local social, religious, civic, and cultural identities. In other words, the exhibition and accompanying publication would examine what the material culture reveals about how people in the provinces responded to being Roman. The McMullen immediately offered to be a partner in this endeavor, with Gail L. Hoffman, Assistant Professor of Classical Studies at Boston College, once again serving as co-curator with Brody. Thus, the present exhibition and publication were born.

During the ensuing years, Brody and Hoffman chose and refined the list of works to be included from the Yale collection, adding several loans from public institutions and many textiles from a local private collection. They assembled an outstanding team of scholars from around the world to contribute essays to this volume, and Brody organized a two-day symposium in September 2013, hosted by Yale, for the scholars to share research and ideas and to study the works to be displayed.

Needless to say, it is Hoffman and Brody to whom we owe our greatest debt of gratitude. We thank them for putting their abundant disciplinary expertise and intellectual creativity into the service of organizing this exhibition and editing this volume. Their collaboration serves as a model of its kind. We also extend appreciation to the scholars who contributed essays to the book: Lisa R. Brody, Kimberly Cassibry, Lucinda Dirven, Robin Fleming, Tyler V. Franconi, Elizabeth M. Greene, Gail L. Hoffman, Álvaro Ibarra, Simon James, Andrew C. Johnston, Christine Kondoleon, David J. Mattingly, Matthew M. McCarty, William E. Metcalf, and Ann M. Nicgorski.

Of course, none of this would have been possible without the wisdom and help of our colleagues. At the Yale University Art Gallery, we recognize especially Susan B. Matheson, Laurence Kanter, Pamela Franks, and Ian McClure for wise counsel and support of the project; Carol Snow, Anne Gunnison, Elena Torok, and Joseluis Lazarte Luna for conserving

objects in the exhibition; Jason DeBlock, Laura Hartman, Robin Hodgson, Frank Johnson, Sue Kiss, Ashley Kosa, Lillia McEnaney, Sarah Norvell, Vicky Onofrio, Paul Panamarenko, Megan Salas, and Catherine Stevens for work on the Gerasa mosaic; Thomas Biggs, Amelia Eichengreen, and Benjamin Jerue for the exhibition didactics; Christopher Sleboda, Mike Krol, Tiffany Sprague, and Molly Balikov for graphic design and editing; John French, Richard House, Anthony De Camillo, and David Whaples for photography for the catalogue; Jeffrey Yoshimine, Anna Russell, Clarkson Crolius, and Christina Czap for assistance with the installation at the Gallery; Lynne Addison and Amy Dowe for overseeing loan arrangements; and Megan Doyon for help organizing the symposium and exhibition.

At Boston College, special acknowledgment is owed to John McCoy, who designed this publication and exhibition graphics; Kate Shugert, who copyedited all materials and managed this book's production; Diana Larsen, who designed the McMullen installation; Kerry Burke, who photographed textiles for the catalogue; David Quigley, Patricia DeLeeuw, Mary Crane, Charles Ahern, Kendra Eshleman, and Brigitte Libby, who provided advice and support; and Chris Canniff, Andrew Gilbert, C. J. Miller, Logan Wren, and the students in the seminar on the exhibition, FA370, taught in the fall of 2013, all of whom assisted with organization and research.

We are grateful to several scholars for participation in the symposium and for sharing unpublished research: Jennifer Baird, Sebastian Heath, Thomas Morton, Marden Nichols, Candace Rice, and Ben Rubin. For their generous loans, we thank Donald and Barbara Tellalian; Malcolm Rogers, Christine Kondoleon, and Rita Freed at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; James Christen Steward and Michael Padgett at the Princeton University Art Museum; and Julia Marciari-Alexander at the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore.

As always, we could not have attempted such an ambitious project were it not for the continued generosity of the administrations of our respective institutions and the McMullen family. For major support of the exhibition, we are indebted to Sharon and Richard A. Hurowitz, Leslie and Peter Ciampi, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Patrons of the McMullen Museum. This project would not have come to fruition without the collective contributions of everyone mentioned here.

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EXCAVATIONS AND IDENTITIES: ART FROM THE ROMAN PROVINCES AT THE YALE UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY

Lisa R. Brody

Yale University has a long and distinguished history of interest in excavating the ancient world. Its involvement during the 1920s and 1930s in two simultaneous archaeological projects—Dura-Europos, in modern-day Syria, and Gerasa, in Jordan—brought a significant collection of artifacts and historical records to New Haven. As features of the permanent installation of ancient Mediterranean art at the Yale University Art Gallery, and as resources for researchers, the objects and archives from these excavations provide valuable insight into life in the eastern Mediterranean in the Roman and early Byzantine eras. The exhibition *Roman in the Provinces: Art on the Periphery of Empire* draws upon strengths of the Gallery's entire ancient collection and archives, supplemented with important loans from collaborating institutions, with the goal of putting Dura-Europos and Gerasa into a broader geographical and historical context and showing how these provincial Roman cities fit into the larger picture of the ancient world.

In 2011, while the Yale University Art Gallery was undergoing a major renovation and expansion, a special exhibition was organized by the Gallery in collaboration with the McMullen Museum of Art at Boston College, curated by Lisa R. Brody and Gail L. Hoffman. This exhibition, *Dura-Europos: Crossroads of Antiquity*, brought artifacts out of the Gallery's storage facilities, many of them newly restored, to show the amazing juxtaposition of cultures that existed in the ancient city. An accompanying publication, with the same title, contains scholarly essays by international specialists from diverse fields (archaeologists, art historians, linguists, classicists, and theologians), focusing on the discovery, conservation, and interpretation of objects in the show as well as other aspects of life and identity in ancient Dura-Europos. The exhibition traveled to the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World at New York University in the fall of 2011, where it appeared under the title *Edge of Empires: Pagans, Jews, and Christians at Roman Dura-Europos*.

The new permanent installations at Yale officially opened to the public in December 2012 and include the Mary and James Ottaway Gallery of Dura-Europos, a thematic display that focuses on the history of the city, the site's extraordinary preservation, and the evidence of multiculturalism and exchange in the archaeological remains (fig. 1.1). Objects from Gerasa are also on view, in the adjacent Isabel B. and Wallace S. Wilson Gallery of Ancient Art. The city mosaic from the Church of Saints Peter and Paul (plate 3), after decades in storage and an innovative conservation treatment, is now displayed on the central wall of the Gallery



1.1. Mary and James Ottaway Gallery of Dura-Europos at the Yale University Art Gallery.



1.2. Isabel B. and Wallace S. Wilson Gallery of Ancient Art at the Yale University Art Gallery.

and is recognized as one of Yale's greatest treasures (fig. 1.2). Following the opening, planning commenced for a logical next step: a special exhibition that would place these sites and others into much broader context and explore the multifaceted identities within the provinces of the Roman Empire.

The vast success of Roman imperialism, which reached its greatest geographic expanse in the second century CE (see map, p. v), meant that regions as disparate and far-flung as Syria, Turkey, Gaul, Britain, Egypt, and Tunisia became, to varying degrees, Roman. The concept of a Roman identity or identities and what that meant to inhabitants varied significantly in different parts of the empire. Earlier scholarship in this field used the term "Romanization," but more recent research and analysis has shown the concept represented by this word to be inadequate, as it implies a single-directional, top-down process. In fact, Roman provincial identities resulted from a much more complex system of exchange and influence.

Identities in the provinces could also vary within a particular town or city depending on the specific context, including the home (both as a private space and

as a space for hosting visitors) and the community (public religious spaces, areas of artisan production or commerce, etc.). The exhibition explores each of these contexts through works of art that show how elements of Roman culture were juxtaposed with local tradition and what this reveals about Roman identities around the empire. Focusing primarily on the eastern Mediterranean in the Roman and early Byzantine periods, as this is the material that provides the most relevant context for Dura-Europos and Gerasa, the exhibition also looks elsewhere around the empire. Mechanisms of exchange and contact, including trade, manufacture, imperial influence, and military maneuvers, are explored through examination of the archaeological record.

DURA-EUROPUS

The ancient city of Dura-Europos, named Europos by the Macedonian (Seleucid) Greeks who founded it around 300 BCE and known as Dura ("the fortress" in Aramaic) to subsequent local inhabitants, was as ethnically and culturally mixed as its modern compound designation would suggest. In many ways it was a Greek urban center, with Greek-influenced architecture, street plan, religion, and art. Much of its population, however, was of a local Syro-Mesopotamian origin, and these inhabitants clung firmly to various cultural elements, integrating them with imported Greek ones. In the second century CE, Dura was seized by the Romans, in their fight against the Parthian Empire, and an additional cultural and ethnic presence arrived strongly on the scene. Sub-groups within the pop-

ulation of Dura included Syrians (especially Palmyrenes), Mesopotamians, Greeks, Roman soldiers, conscripted “barbarians” from northern Europe, Jews, and Christians. All of these groups left their mark on the archaeological remains of the city, whose excavation and analysis illuminates the deep cultural interactions that were common in the ancient Mediterranean world. The objects that survive from Dura-Europos date predominantly from the final phase of its history—the second century and first half of the third century CE—when it was a Roman garrison town on the eastern edge of the empire. In this period, the population included soldiers and civilians; Jews, pagans, and Christians; and natives as well as immigrants from as far away as Britain or Rome.

Archaeological investigation of Dura-Europos was undertaken in 1920, after British troops uncovered some wall paintings there and immediately requested a consultation by American archaeologist James Henry Breasted, who was working in Syria. The region was under French mandate at the time, and the first excavations in 1922–24 were sponsored by the French Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres and directed by Belgian scholar Franz Cumont. After a four-year hiatus, the Académie agreed upon a collaboration with Yale, and 10 seasons of intensive investigation followed—from 1928 to 1937—overseen by Russian scholar and Yale classics professor Mikhail (Michael) I. Rostovtzeff (fig. 1.3). Successive field directors included French archaeologist and architect Maurice Pillet (1928–31) and Clark Hopkins and Frank E. Brown, both of Yale (1932–35 and 1936–37, respectively) (figs. 1.4–5). Funding for the project ran out after the tenth season, and little additional work took place at the site until the mid-1980s, when a new Franco-Syrian research project began under the direction of Pierre Leriche, involving a team of international scholars.

Because of Yale’s involvement in the critical early investigations of Dura-Europos, the archives of the Yale University Art Gallery and Yale’s Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library contain a tremendously important collection of photographs, artifact cards, field notebooks, and other records from the excavation, in addition to the over 12,000 objects that represent Yale’s share of the objects found. Digitized photographs from the Dura-Europos excavations (as well as those from the Yale excavation of ancient Gerasa in Jordan) are available to scholars through collaboration with



1.3. Franz Cumont and Michael Rostovtzeff in front of the Mithraeum at Dura-Europos, 1933–34.



1.4. Excavation team at Dura-Europos, 1931–32 (Clark Hopkins in front row, left, and Henry Pearson standing third from left).



1.5. Frank Brown and crew at Dura-Europos, 1934–35.

the Artstor Digital Library.¹ Plans are underway to make all of these images even more universally accessible. Approximately 150 parchment and papyrus documents from Dura that are currently preserved at the Beinecke are also available online.²

The Mary and James Ottaway Gallery of Ancient Dura-Europos at the Yale University Art Gallery provides a thematic look at the ancient city and its archaeological exploration. This gallery presents to the public approximately 200 objects, numerous excavation photographs and drawings, and a computer kiosk with additional information, archival documents, and virtual 3-D renderings of the Mithraeum, the Synagogue, and the Christian House-Church.³ Situated immediately adjacent to the Isabel B. and Wallace S. Wilson Gallery of Ancient Art, the Dura-Europos gallery explores themes of daily life, religion, military, and death, using the extraordinarily preserved material remains from the site to investigate how the arrival and conquest of Rome affected identities there, how its multiculturalism manifested itself in various contexts, and how “being Roman” at Dura-Europos related to identities elsewhere in the Roman world.

GERASA

In contrast to Dura-Europos, which was buried in the sands of the Syrian Desert from its conquest by the Sasanians until the twentieth century, the magnificent standing ruins of ancient Gerasa have always been known. Also in contrast to Dura, Gerasa was occupied long beyond the Roman period, continuously into the Ottoman era. Sporadic surface exploration and soundings of the site took place during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, culminating in the systematic excavation project that Yale participated in around the same time that a team from Yale was working at Dura-Europos.

Ancient Gerasa, located beneath the modern city of Jerash on the Chrysorhoas River in Jordan, is a site that contributes much to scholars’ understanding of the Roman and Byzantine Near East. As with Dura-Europos, the city’s long and significant history has been revealed by its high level of preservation and years of systematic archaeological exploration.



1.6. Excavation team at Gerasa, 1928–29.

The site was first explored in the 1920s and 1930s by the team of scholars from Yale University, the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, and the American Schools of Oriental Research (fig. 1.6).⁴ These excavations focused primarily on the early Byzantine churches and their associated pagan temples. The areas have been further investigated since 1982 by the Jerash Archaeological Project, sponsored by Jordan’s Department of Antiquities and involving a team of scholars from several countries. This project has expanded its focus to study other aspects of the Roman city, such

as the hippodrome, as well as the site’s Islamic structures, including houses, shops, and a large Umayyad mosque.⁵

Gerasa is the best preserved of the Decapolis, a collective of 10 cities in Roman Judea and Syria.⁶ Due to its strategic position along ancient trade routes, it is considered to have been one of the most important cities in the Roman Near East. Although sources such as Pliny the Elder (*HN* 5.16.74) imply that the Decapolis was founded during the Hellenistic period (c. 323–63 BCE), excavations at Gerasa have found evidence of occupation as least

as early as the Bronze Age (second to third millennium BCE). The first and second centuries CE were a time of great prosperity for Gerasa, reflected architecturally by its paved and colonnaded streets (fig. 1.7), theaters, temples, baths, fountains, grand public squares, and a hippodrome. A monumental triumphal arch dedicated to the emperor Hadrian was erected to commemorate the ruler's visit to Gerasa in 129/30 (fig. 1.8). The city is estimated to have housed a population of approximately 20,000 at this time. Gerasa's wealth gradually diminished during the third century CE, as many of the overland trade routes that had contributed to its growth and prosperity were superseded by maritime routes.

By the fourth century, the population of Gerasa included a significant Christian community.⁷ The fifth and sixth centuries saw the construction of more than a dozen churches in the city, including a cathedral, most of them adorned with elaborate mosaic floors and architectural detail. Although the Persian invasion of 614 and the Muslim conquest of 636 contributed to the city's decline, recent excavations have revealed a still thriving city in the Umayyad period (661–750).⁸ Gerasa was hit hard by a series of earthquakes in 749, and its population decreased sharply. The site remained virtually abandoned, its ruins always a remarkable feature of the Jordanian landscape. Europeans rediscovered the site in the early nineteenth century. It was first visited by the German traveler Ulrich Jasper Seetzen in 1806 and then by Johann Ludwig Burckhardt and James Silk Buckingham in 1812 and 1816, respectively, all of whom explored the area and recorded visible archaeological remains.

The joint Yale-British School expedition to Gerasa was first proposed in September 1927 at a meeting at the American Schools of Oriental Research. The project was twofold: to excavate the Church of Saint Theodore and other churches and to publish a series of inscriptions that had recently been found at the site. Yale's primary interest was in the churches, the British School's in the inscriptions. The expedition was approved and financial support obtained; work began in the spring of 1928 under the direction of Yale's Professor Benjamin W. Bacon and the director of the British School, John Winter Crowfoot (who also served as field director). In 1930, the British School withdrew from the collaboration and Yale continued the project with the participation of the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem, co-directed by Yale Professors Bacon and Rostovtzeff, on behalf of the Archaeological Committee of Yale University and the Executive Committee of the American Schools. Clarence S. Fisher and Chester C. McCown of the American School in Jerusalem acted as field directors beginning in the 1930 season.

Reduced funding resulted in a small-scale excavation in 1931, no work at all in 1932, and another small-scale investigation in 1933 under Nelson Glueck, director of the Amer-



1.7. Via Antoninianus at Gerasa, 1931.



1.8. Arch of Hadrian at Gerasa, 1930–31.

ican School at Jerusalem, while Fisher was temporarily occupied with the excavations at Antioch. The final season in which Yale participated in the Gerasa excavations, 1934, was led by Carl Kraeling, then acting director of the American School. As a result of this project, the Yale University Art Gallery received approximately 540 artifacts from Gerasa, over half of which are mosaic floor fragments and lamps. A select number of these objects, including two important mosaics, are now on view in the Gallery's Isabel B. and Wallace S. Wilson Gallery of Ancient Art (plate 3 and fig. 15.6). The mosaic on display from the Church of Saints Peter and Paul, showing images of Alexandria and Memphis, underwent a major conservation treatment that allowed it to be included in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's *Byzantium and Islam: Age of Transition* exhibition in the spring of 2012 before being installed in Yale's newly renovated gallery.⁹ The innovative conservation techniques that were developed for the city mosaic¹⁰ were adapted for the treatment of the geometric mosaic from the Procopius Church; it is on display for the first time in this exhibition (plate 4).

OTHER COLLECTIONS OF ROMAN PROVINCIAL ART AT YALE

Another strength of the Gallery's collection of ancient art is an assortment of pottery, lamps, and figurines that were purchased from the American Colony Store in Jerusalem in 1914; it is now known as the Whiting Palestinian Collection.¹¹ The objects had been acquired in Syria and Palestine by John D. Whiting and others, mostly between 1909 and 1912. Several objects in the exhibition belong to this collection (see plates 155–59). Although most of them were purchased from Arab farmers and dealers and lack precise excavated contexts, the members of the American Colony recognized the importance of trying to obtain as much provenance information as possible: "Full inquiries were always made as to the locality and type of tomb or other position in which the objects were found."¹² The artifacts remain valuable documents of the eastern Roman provinces.

A large number of the Gallery's ancient Greek and Roman vases belong to the Rebecca Darlington Stoddard Collection, named for the donor who gave Yale the money to acquire the collection in 1913.¹³ The vases were purchased from the German classical archaeologist Paul Arndt, who had bought the majority of them at a Paris auction, with others added in subsequent years to fill in specific gaps to create a comprehensive collection for teaching Greek and Roman art. The collection ranges from prehistoric Egyptian (c. 5000 BCE) to late Roman and Egyptian (third to sixth century CE) and includes lamps as well as vessels. It continues to be an essential core of Yale's object-based courses in ancient art, and several of the vases are included in the exhibition (see, for example, plates 118–20, 123–27, 160–62, 166).

Another significant collection of objects, particularly featuring artifacts of the ancient Americas and late Roman Egypt, were donated to the Gallery in the 1950s by Frederick and Florence Olsen and their charitable organization. Of these, several Egyptian textiles and limestone relief sculptures have been selected for *Roman in the Provinces* (see plates 131–35, 138–39, 145, 149). Many of these objects were first shown in an exhibition called *Coptic Art*, which appeared in the Olsen's Guilford, Connecticut home in November and December 1955.¹⁴

Several other objects in the exhibition were acquired by the Gallery in the 1980s as part of a substantial gift of antiquities from William L. Eagleton Jr. (1926–2011), a 1948 graduate of Yale College. Eagleton served as United States Ambassador to several countries over the course of two decades (1967–88), including Yemen, Tunisia, Libya, Algeria, Iraq, and Syria. During his terms of service in Syria and Tunisia, he amassed a large and interesting collection of Roman pottery, sculpture, intaglios, cylinder seals, lamps, and lamp molds. Several of these objects are in the exhibition and, together with related excavated examples, provide clear evidence for trade and other means of cultural interaction in the Roman Empire

(plates 121–22, 165, 167). The intaglios in particular, none of which has been published previously, provide instructive comparisons with excavated examples from Dura-Europos and feature images that are also seen on coins and other works of art from the Roman provinces (see plates 45–58).

Another gift to the Gallery in 2008 from Thomas John Crockett III (1921–2011), consisting primarily of pottery and terracotta oil lamps, significantly increased the Gallery's holdings of objects from Roman North Africa (see plates 163–64). Though an alumnus of Harvard, Mr. Crockett was a native of Unionville, Connecticut, and chose to donate various portions of his private collection to Yale as well as to the Wadsworth Atheneum, the New Britain Museum of American Art, and the Gallery of Art at St. Joseph College in West Hartford. Like William Eagleton, Crockett had served as a diplomat in the US Department of State for 40 years (though not as ambassador), and he had purchased most of the objects in Tunisia while stationed there during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Although none has known excavated context, several of the artifacts had been said by the sellers to have been found in or near the important Roman site of El Djem.

OBJECTS LOANED TO THE EXHIBITION

Supplementing the Gallery's permanent collection in the exhibition are significant, carefully selected objects from the Princeton University Art Museum, the Walters Art Museum, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. This wonderful assortment of objects, several of which have known archaeological provenance, provides a critical complement to the other works of art in the exhibition.

The exhibition features five objects from Princeton's excavations at Antioch-on-the-Orontes (modern Antakya, in Turkey near the Syrian border), including two fragmentary funerary reliefs, both with banquet iconography (plates 179–80), and three portrait heads (two female, one male; plates 82–84). Archaeological investigation of Antioch began in 1932 by the Committee for the Excavation of Antioch and Its Vicinity, a collaborative project involving Princeton University, the *Musées Nationaux de France* (Louvre), the Baltimore Museum of Art, and the Worcester Art Museum. These committee members were joined in 1936 by the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard University and Dumbarton Oaks.¹⁵ The objects from Antioch comprise a vital component of the exhibition, since the site provides a vivid case study alongside Dura-Europos: a large and sophisticated urban metropolis as compared to a remote garrison town.

The exhibition also includes another work of art on loan from Princeton: a high-quality portrait of a man wearing the distinctive crown that identifies him as a priest of the imperial cult (featuring busts of the emperor and his family; plate 79). This object coordinates with other pieces in the exhibition to illustrate the emperor's influence on the identities of newly Roman regions, seen most strongly in public building programs, honorific sculpture, design of coinage, and, as here, imperial cult worship.

The Walters Art Museum loans two objects to the exhibition—a silver pitcher from Gaul decorated with Bacchic imagery and a bone plaque from Alexandria depicting a semi-nude female figure resembling Aphrodite (plates 171, 174). Both of these objects contribute in multiple significant ways toward the themes of the exhibition. The silver pitcher is a high-quality luxury work that would have adorned the household of an upper-class family in Roman Gaul. Such objects were imitated in glass and ceramic, for families who could not afford the originals. Prized possessions like these would have been in high demand, manufactured and traded, and passed down as heirlooms within a family. The bone plaque is not as expensive an object, but it still represents a category of adornment that adopts images seen also in stone sculpture, mosaics, and textiles. As one of the most important and popular divinities in the Greco-Roman world, Aphrodite is found throughout the empire, her

attributes and iconography sometimes combined with those of local goddesses such as Isis, Astarte, or Atargatis. This Alexandrian example of a semi-nude female figure connects visually with images of Aphrodite from Dura-Europos and other sites. Its fourth-century date also illustrates the continued significance of the pagan goddess into the early Christian era.

The Museum of Fine Arts contributes several key objects to the exhibition, including a fragment of a spectacular mosaic floor from a private home in the eastern Mediterranean (plate 182).¹⁶ The fragment includes two figures identified by Greek inscriptions: *Ploutos* (Wealth) and *Apolausis* (Pleasure). The mosaic provides a strong counterpoint and balance to the mosaic from Gerasa. Roughly contemporary, they are however from different contexts (domestic vs. public, religious) and feature very divergent art historical traditions (mythological figural imagery vs. intricate geometric designs). The theme of luxury and adornment represented by the MFA's mosaic is continued in another of their loans: an elegant silver figurine of a dancer, possibly from eastern Greece (plate 172). The two portraits on loan from the museum come from Aphrodisias (plate 80) and from Athens (plate 81), complementing Princeton's portraits from Antioch and providing a varied look at public honorific statuary erected around the Roman Empire over time.

CONCLUSION

Roman in the Provinces draws heavily on the Gallery's permanent collection of ancient art, with the result that there is a strong focus on the eastern Mediterranean, particularly the Roman provinces of Syria, Judaea, and Mesopotamia. North Africa is another featured area, including the provinces of Aegyptus, Africa Proconsularis, Numidia, and Mauretania (see map, p. v). Objects from the excavations at Dura-Europos and Gerasa, as well as from the University of Chicago's excavations at Kurcoğlu (artifacts from which were transferred to the Gallery in 1940), are displayed and interpreted alongside other objects. The strong parallels, for example, between military trappings found at Dura-Europos and those from Germany, Gaul, or Britain, speak clearly to the distinctive "culture" of the Roman military and its influence around the provinces. Loan objects from Antioch, Aphrodisias, and Athens provide glimpses into issues of self-representation at other important locations around the empire. Artifacts of daily use are displayed alongside luxury objects to present a full picture of life in the ancient world. Realities of self-representation and identity are explored among different contexts and geographic regions. How did individuals and cities in the eastern Mediterranean react to the spread of the Roman Empire and army, and how did that compare to the reactions in North Africa, Europe, or Britain? How strong were the preexisting local traditions, in religion, art, language, adornment, and how were these incorporated with or absorbed by Roman modes? Might we expect to find situations where provincials would don the toga and speak Latin in the streets, while maintaining old cults and dining practices in the privacy of their homes? This exhibition and publication aim to address all of these issues, presenting recent classical scholarship on Roman provincial identity and examining works of art within the varied contexts of public civic display, public religious space, and private households.



- 1 <http://www.artstor.org>.
- 2 <http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/research/library-catalogs-databases/guide-yale-papyrus-collection>.
- 3 This project is accessible online at <http://media.artgallery.yale.edu/duraeuropos/>.
- 4 Surface surveys and very small-scale excavations were undertaken in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Continuous interest in the site led to more systematic exploration and conservation of the ruins after World War I, culminating in the expedition begun by Yale University and the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem (1928–30) and continued by Yale and the American Schools of Oriental Research (1930–31, 1933–34). See John Winter Crowfoot, *Churches at Jerash: A Preliminary Report of the Joint Yale-British School Expeditions to Jerash, 1928–1930* (London: Beccles, 1931) and Carl H. Kraeling, *Gerasa: City of the Decapolis* (New Haven: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1938).
- 5 Fawzi Zayadine, ed., *Jerash Archaeological Project*, 2 vols. (Amman: Department of Antiquities of Jordan, 1986–89). See also Antoni Ostrasz, “The Hippodrome of Gerasa: A Report on Excavations and Research 1982–1987,” *Syria* 66 (1989): 51–77; Kristoffer Damgaard and Louise Blanke, “The Islamic Jarash Project: A Preliminary Report on the First Two Seasons of Fieldwork,” *Assemblage* 8 (2004), <http://www.assemblage.group.shef.ac.uk/issue8/damgaardandblanke.html>.
- 6 See Iain Browning, *Jerash and the Decapolis* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1982).
- 7 For discussions of the later history of Gerasa, see Charles March, *Spatial and Religious Transformations in the Late Antique Polis: A Multi-Disciplinary Analysis with a Case-Study of the City of Gerasa* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2009); Annabel Jane Wharton, *Refiguring the Post Classical City: Dura Europos, Jerash, Jerusalem and Ravenna* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
- 8 On the Umayyad mosque discovered at Jerash, see Alan Walmsley, “The Friday Mosque of Early Islamic Jarash in Jordan: The 2002 Field Season of the Danish-Jordanian Islamic Jarash Project,” *Journal of the C. L. David Collection* 1 (2003): 110–31; Walmsley, “The Newly Discovered Congregational Mosque of Jarash in Jordan,” *Al-'Usur al-Wusta* 15, no. 2 (2003): 17–24; Alan Walmsley and Kristoffer Damgaard, “The Umayyad Congregational Mosque of Jarash in Jordan and Its Relationship to Early Mosques,” *Antiquity* 79 (2005): 362–78.
- 9 Helen C. Evans and Brandie Ratliff, eds., *Byzantium and Islam: Age of Transition (7th–9th Century)*, exh. cat. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2012), 12.
- 10 Lisa R. Brody and Carol Snow, “History and Treatment of the Gerasa City Mosaic at the Yale University Art Gallery,” forthcoming.
- 11 Charles Alfred Kennedy, “The Whiting Collection of Palestinian Pottery at Yale” (PhD diss., Yale University, 1961).
- 12 *Ibid.*, xiif, citing a letter from G. Olaf Matsson, July 6, 1960.
- 13 Paul V. C. Baur, *Catalogue of the Rebecca Darlington Stoddard Collection of Greek and Italian Vases in Yale University* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1922).
- 14 Aleksis Rannit, *Coptic Art: Exhibition of Coptic Art by the Olsen Foundation*, exh. cat. (Guilford: Olsen Foundation, 1955).
- 15 Christine Kondoleon, “The City of Antioch: An Introduction,” in *Antioch: The Lost Ancient City*, ed. Christine Kondoleon, exh. cat. (Princeton: Princeton University Press and Worcester Art

Museum, 2000), 5–8.

- 16 Christine Kondoleon, “Celebrating Pleasure and Wealth: A New Mosaic at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston,” in *ANAΘHMATA EOPTIKA: Studies in Honor of Thomas F. Mathews*, ed. Joseph D. Alchermes (Mainz: Von Zabern, 2009), 216–22.



BEING ROMAN IN THE PROVINCES: EXPERIENCES OF EMPIRE AND INVESTIGATIONS OF IDENTITIES

Gail L. Hoffman

The Roman Empire has long fascinated the public and scholars alike. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when some western European countries engaged in their own empire-building or even earlier as Europeans fought to claim parts of the New World, Rome was cited frequently as a model and even as providing justification for these activities of conquest.¹ Aspects of Roman culture (such as Roman law, triumphal arches and amphitheaters, or the imperial symbol of the eagle) have been taken up and adapted as expressions of newly formed political entities eagerly seeking to link themselves with the long lasting power and success of the Roman Empire.² Today as many formerly imperial nations join the European Union, Rome's history and experience still interests us for what it reveals about global economic integration. The Roman Empire, then, has long been studied, analyzed, and interpreted through a lens of modern political and economic concerns. In the popular imagination, Rome and its empire has been seen as glorious though it has also been portrayed as decadent or even brutal; scholarly focus, however, has tenaciously favored a more benign view of Rome's empire.³ What was the Roman Empire actually like and how do scholars approach its study today?

DEFINITIONS AND DESCRIPTIONS OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

One could define the Roman Empire as "a period in history when a mixture of military power, political authority, patronage, fiscal control, mercantile activity, cultural and linguistic hegemony held together a single domain through time and space."⁴ Such a definition encourages a descriptive focus on specific aspects of empire and so can yield a static, monolithic vision of the Roman Empire. Indeed, its size (see further below) and duration (typically dated from 27 BCE to 476 CE with the fall of the western empire)⁵ are just two of the many features which have been found remarkable.⁶ The trajectory of such a monolith was long ago described in terms of growth (or rise), decline, and then fall (as in Gibbon's famous work).⁷

Other descriptive characteristics include the ancient terms applied to the Roman Empire and its leaders. For example, the Latin word *imperium* designated a special kind of power to command that could vary over time and place. Virgil (*Aen.* 1.278–79) famously gave expression to a divinely sanctioned "*imperium sine fine*," with Jupiter prophesying that Roman power or rule would be without physical or temporal constraints and that this was a peculiarly Roman right,

You, Roman, remember by your empire to rule the world's peoples, for these will be your arts, to impose the practice of peace, to be sparing to the subjected, and to beat down the defiant (*Aen.* 6.851–53).⁸

The reign of Augustus (27 BCE–14 CE) marks a watershed both for ancient and modern understanding of the Roman Empire.⁹ Augustus chose as his title of rule *princeps*, which roughly translates as “first citizen.” Other terms were used by or applied to the princeps, including *augustus*, *caesar* (often for a designated heir), and *imperator*. Through the many centuries of the empire different titles were used. Diocletian (r. 285–305 CE), the creator of the tetrarchy (a joint rule of four) who split the empire into eastern and western halves, took the title *dominus* or lord. Later, in the eastern Roman Empire, rulers adopted a Greek title, *basileus* (a type of king). The eastern emperor Justinian (r. 527–565 CE) reconquered much of the territory (Rome, Italy, North Africa) once included in the western empire and some scholars now label the period from about 250 to 750 CE as late antiquity¹⁰ (others would call this early Byzantine). Although the word *imperator*, then, can be found among the titles for the ruler of Rome, extending the term *imperium* to describe the geopolitical entity of Rome as an empire conflates a form of government with the entity being governed.

EXPANSE OF EMPIRE

The territory of the Roman Empire began to grow well before the time of Augustus. Already during the republic (509–27 BCE), Rome was expanding, adding Sicily, Sardinia, and southern Spain during the third century BCE then Greece, Asia Minor, and Gaul (part of France) by the first century BCE. During the early empire the lands controlled reached their greatest extent under the emperor Trajan (r. 98–117 CE). Hadrian (r. 117–138 CE) moved the borders back slightly and marked some of the boundaries more emphatically (i.e., with construction of his wall in Britain).¹¹ It has been estimated that the Roman Empire was over 3.5 million km² in expanse and may have contained 50 million inhabitants or more (see map, p. v).¹² (Today a similar area includes 30 to 40 different nation-states.) The Romans divided their lands into *provinciae* (provinces), assigning them to various magistrates to administer. Most provinces included a mosaic of territories each with a different political status ranging from complete subjection to nominal independence. During the time of Augustus there were about 35 provinces, yet a policy of dividing them into ever smaller units meant that by about 315 CE there were well over 100 provinces.

The degree of connectivity of this massive political and geographical structure, particularly as far as its economy and communications are concerned remains uncertain¹³ as does the meaning for any individual of being a resident or member of this entity.¹⁴ Recent study and reconsideration of the purposes of the walls built on some of the borders (the most famous of course is Hadrian's Wall, but there were also walls of varying length and thickness in North Africa, Germania, and Dacia) suggest that rather than protecting the territory inside, they may have served to monitor interactions in zones extending in both directions from the wall.¹⁵ During the second century CE military legions were stationed strategically throughout the borders zones. The role of the army both as an important driver of the economy and as a potentially distinctive and separate Roman identity is now being explored (see especially James and Greene this volume).¹⁶ Also being explored is the possibility that the movement of soldiers long distances around the empire might provide an important avenue for the transport of objects and so possibly also for the transmission of iconography and technological expertise.

The provinces were also a key ingredient of the Roman economy, providing necessary resources for Rome and its armies.¹⁷ Most scholars imagine the Roman economy not as a single integrated one, but rather as a series of interlocking regional exchange systems

in which market trade operated alongside redistributive systems. Thus, one might find instances of individual gift exchange, elite redistribution, and even barter systems;¹⁸ yet one would also find markets, movement of goods (especially grain, olive oil, wine, fish sauce, textiles) over long distances, and fairly widespread use of coinage.¹⁹ It has been estimated that the cost of running the empire during the mid-second century CE was approaching 1000 million sesterii.²⁰ In addition to these general costs of empire, according to Pliny, between 50 and 100 million sesterii were spent annually by Roman elites in order to satisfy their desire for luxuries imported from outside the empire—mainly China, India, and Arabia.²¹ Some of these imports included silk, precious gems, ivory, spices, and exotic animals. Petronius's *Satyricon*, especially the section called “Trimalchio's Banquet” provides an over-the-top description of a feast given by a wealthy freedman striving to show that he belongs to the uppermost stratum of elite Romans and has access to all the benefits of empire.²²

SCHOLARLY STUDY OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE (ROMANIZATION AND BEYOND)

Undoubtedly, then, the Roman Empire was impressive and noteworthy in many of the features described above, yet to understand this empire more fully modern scholars must move beyond descriptions to deeper analysis and interpretation. This book and the accompanying museum exhibitions attempt to do this. In particular they seek to explore how close study of material culture and its contexts can provide a more nuanced view of what it meant to be Roman in the provinces during the later empire. Through their use of objects, people and communities can express varying identities in public, private, and semi-private contexts. By examining this evidence scholars are trying to move beyond studies focused especially on the elite to consider how the majority (the other 97%) of people lived in the Roman communities of antiquity and also to move beyond a focus on Rome to see how life was experienced on the periphery.

The transition from republic to early empire provides a natural place to start as the rule of Augustus began a long period of relative peace within the empire (often called the *pax Romana* or *pax Augusta*).²³ A Greek inscription with a dedication “for the preservation of the *pax Augusta*” from Gerasa dating to 66–67 CE provides an example of this from the provinces (plate 6).²⁴ This was a time when the benefits of empire were imagined as extending to all.²⁵ And so, scholars, following ideas expressed by Augustus and writers of the early empire, looked for the benefits of Rome as they were extended from the center to the provinces (or periphery). Previous scholars at first imagined such a process as under the control of those at the center, that is, as emanating from Rome and its elite toward the provinces. Ronald Syme observed, “we watch in awe the ripples by which citizenship, membership of the senate, access to imperial power, and domination of the lucrative Mediterranean-wide markets spread to Spain, North Africa, the Illyrian provinces and the East.”²⁶ And it has been observed that, “Augustan ideology and propaganda set models that diffuse spectacularly.”²⁷

Searching for the effects of Rome and its culture on the provinces, scholars envisioned a process termed Romanization and they sought to describe how imperial Roman culture was stamped onto the native cultures of the regions that were brought into the empire.²⁸ Such research tended to create a strong dichotomy between Roman and native cultures (and identities) and generally viewed actions unilaterally, as moving from Rome outward in a process that was orchestrated and controlled from the center. People in the provinces (in particular those described as “native” elites) were believed to desire above all to emulate Rome and so to be accepted fully into the power structures of empire. In studying material remains, then, scholars focused on architectural forms or artistic styles that were thought or claimed to be distinctively Roman (for example, triumphal arches [see Cassibry in this volume], amphitheaters, fora, public baths and aqueducts, the use of architectural brick, or more abstractly, expressions of imperial cult). Also, because cultural and artistic elements

of Rome were generally better known than the local, provincial cultures, it was easier to study and interpret this material against a standard set from Rome.²⁹ How closely did the sculptural style of a statue or relief in the provinces match that of works produced and used in the imperial center?³⁰ Much important work continues along these lines.

Yet, in reality, not everything came from the center out to the provinces and the empire was also not a static entity, rather it was continually changing.³¹ Increasingly scholars are reconsidering and broadening their views of the Roman Empire. Greg Woolf in a recent book describes a shift in the Roman Empire from a “conquest state” to a “tributary empire” around the time of Augustus.³² Literary studies are often turning to consideration of later writers (Statius, Apuleius, Fronto) who experienced and engaged with the empire in different ways than the Augustan authors (Horace, Ovid, Virgil). Scholars studying material culture have noted other shifts; they observe that Roman material culture in its earliest forms was drawn especially from Italian Iron Age roots, but already by the late republic this material culture was becoming Hellenized, drawing ever more widely on Mediterranean sources. In the early empire, Augustus created a material culture of empire using a “distinctive range of images and styles.”³³ Yet scholars have observed, “it is no longer possible to implicitly assume that Rome and Italy were the focal points of a pure and undifferentiated ‘Roman’ culture.”³⁴ Even in Rome what it meant to be Roman changed significantly over time. In other words, the center was changed and changing as a result of participation in the empire and the imperial cultures it helped to create (see Mattingly in this volume).

Also, scholars have noted that local or provincial elites did not passively receive (through acculturation or assimilation) elements of culture emanating out from a center at Rome, but rather any process of Romanization would require their active participation and desire in order to engage with Rome and react to Roman culture.³⁵ In other words, some control of any process of interaction necessarily existed in the provinces with the provincials themselves. In the provinces, too, there was never a static material culture. Indeed, much of what has been labeled Roman culture in the provinces (for example redware pottery or glass) does not come from Italy or Rome but rather from elsewhere across the empire. A sense of this complexity (multi-directionality of exchanges, continuing mutability of forms) appears in modern studies, including those focusing on the republic and early empire, but this becomes ever clearer as study moves into the later empire and on into late antiquity (third–sixth centuries CE, a particular focus of the objects found in the color plates of this book).

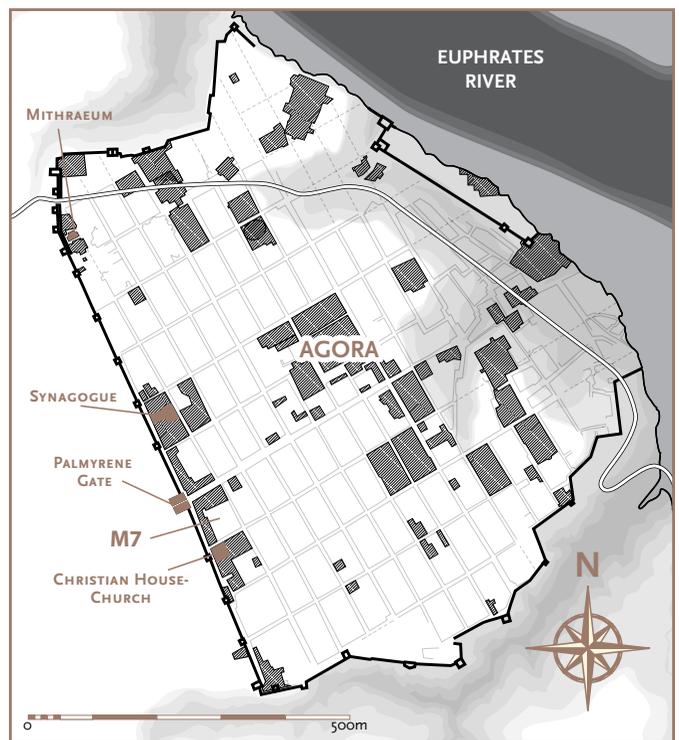
Dissatisfaction has grown with using Romanization as a primary means of analysis and so scholars are seeking to look at other facets of the experience of empire.³⁶ One way this has begun is with studies initiated and centered in the provinces that explore expressions of local identities in these regions and then ask how these areas and their material culture may have been affected by inclusion within the Roman Empire.³⁷ This approach introduces new terms and ideas, such as discrepant experiences and hidden transcripts, creolization, hybridity, middle ground, bricolage, and resistance.³⁸ These terms seek to describe some of the experiences of people in the provinces or on the peripheries and so to help in attempts to explore alternate identities. This approach, however, may risk replacing one kind of “-ization” with another, a concern since terms of this type (Hellenization, Romanization) describe both the process and the outcome (hence they may become their own explanations).³⁹ It is hoped, however, that the end result of such studies will be to view the process of cultural interaction and change as, at the very least, bilateral and maybe even as multi-lateral and multi-directional.⁴⁰ So it would be acknowledged that cultural interactions moved in many different ways: from Rome and the empire to the provinces; from the provinces back to Rome; and indeed all around in the areas of the empire. In addition, those initiating exchanges could be either people within the provinces or people from or in Rome. Finally, this altered perspective could reveal that the same artifact might be valued, used, interpreted in several and possibly differing ways. One goal of newer research, then, is to

study and understand these interactions as encompassing a whole spectrum (from Roman elite, local elite, imperial army, free and freed peoples in the provinces, and slaves) of people with as wide a variety of responses and reactions (from emulation, to a middle ground or hybrid response, to a full and complete resistance). In other words, to begin to look at the material culture from the perspective of local identities rather than to compare it always to a standard set in Rome.

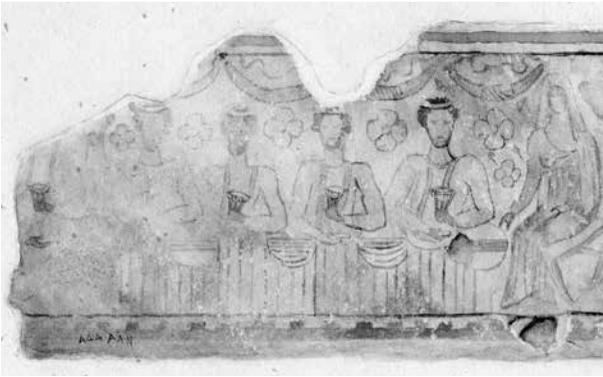
This, too, can have its challenges and limitations. Care must be taken not merely to replace Romanization with another monolithic identity or even several identities. If this were to happen the change might reveal lots of variability in the objects but not necessarily tell us more about the lives and habits of people in the Roman Empire, especially those on the periphery.⁴¹ Labels of specific identities, then, should not be applied directly to material culture without also considering the context and use of an object.⁴² Used appropriately, however, there could be significant benefits. It might help move thinking and writing away from a narrow Roman-native dichotomy. It could focus more attention on regional, sub-ethnic, gender, non-elite aspects of communities and reinforce that culture does not exist as some pure form of material expression. In addition, such an approach can accommodate complex and multi-directional processes and encourage consideration of the continuity of pre-Roman culture within the many areas added to and removed from the empire.

MATERIAL CULTURE, IDENTITIES, AND CHANGING PERSPECTIVES

To be most effective, such approaches need to focus on how objects are used. Sometimes the appearance of single categories of objects (nail clippers, oil lamps, wine vessels) are telling and sometimes a focus on assemblages is more beneficial. In all cases, their archaeological contexts become critical.⁴³ Sometimes, however, materials lacking such use contexts can be brought into discussion through analogies and other forms of comparison; and individual objects can also tell important stories through reconstruction of cultural or social use biographies.⁴⁴ Taking one object in the exhibit (plate 178) as a focus can show how such work might begin. This painting of a banquet scene was excavated at Dura-Europos (fig. 2.1), a site on the Euphrates River in eastern Syria which over its roughly 600-year history (300 BCE–256 CE) belonged successively to the Hellenistic, Parthian, and Roman worlds before the Sasanians besieged and sacked it (see Brody in this volume for Yale's excavations at Dura-Europos). At the time of its destruction, the site was home to numerous Roman soldiers (many from the 20th Palmyrene cohort), who in preparation for the siege buried buildings along the western part of the site in an earthen embankment designed to strengthen the city wall. The longterm effect was to improve the archaeological preservation in this section of the town. Along this



2.1. Plan of Dura-Europos showing excavated areas.



2.2. Watercolor reproduction of banquet wall painting (plate 178) from south wall of House M7-W6 at Dura-Europos.

western wall, for example, an early Christian House-Church, a Synagogue, and a Mithraeum were excavated, all with well-preserved wall paintings (fig. 2.1).⁴⁵ The fragment of a wall painting discussed here (plate 178, fig. 2.2) also benefited from this ancient burial (though the room which it decorated sat at the edge of the embankment and so portions of the paintings are lost).

This painting fragment from the south wall shows (at the right) a woman seated on a folding chair. Her face and torso are frontal, while her lower body turns right toward the men on a banquet couch. She wears a



2.3. Drawing of banquet (left; fig. 2.2 and plate 178) and hunt scene (right; now in the Louvre, AO17310) wall painting from south wall of M7-W6 at Dura-Europos.

red cloak and veil over a black and white tunic; her right hand reaches toward the banquet couch, the left hand is in her lap, both hands have forefinger and little finger extended.⁴⁶ Two four-petaled flowers (one above the other) and a hanging garland appear between the woman and six partially preserved men. The men rest on cushions placed under their left elbows while balancing ribbed bowls filled with liquid on the fingertips of their left hands. In their right hands they may have held an oval pink object (as in a similar banquet scene from the west wall). The men are bearded (but lack mustaches) and wear tunics and cloaks with bands at the neck, cuff, forearm, and two vertical stripes on the chest. They also wear fillets on their heads. Between each figure at the top of the scene hangs a garland and beneath that a flower with four petals fills the space between each man's head.⁴⁷ The couch on which the men recline has sections of vertical lines with scale patterns and alternating background colors of pink and white. Illusionistic rectangles create a dentil-like pattern as a border along the bottom of the scene and below this some of the participants names were painted in Greek.⁴⁸ Only the names of Addodana and O[ub]beos remain at the lower left.⁴⁹ Below the border of this scene (and opposite the doorway into the room) was a painting of the evil eye. A serpent attacks from the left, a bird (perhaps an ibis) attacks from the right while a scorpion in between grabs with its claws and raises its tail to strike. At the far left, a cock only partially preserved also attacks; a sword and two daggers are stuck into the eye from above.⁵⁰

There are other portions of preserved paintings from this room. Immediately adjacent to this painting another section of the scene (now in the Louvre) contained a nude cross-legged figure of a winged Eros (labeled below the border in Greek); he leans on a down-

turned torch and holds a wreath in his left hand (fig. 2.3).⁵¹ Further to the right an archer on horseback (wearing pants and tunic) hunts three onagers, or wild asses (one has been hit and collapses to the ground). The archer's name, painted in Greek and Palmyrene (a dialect of Aramaic) is Bolazeos. There are two Greek graffiti in front of his horse which translate, "Addudanes owed Mokkimos 21 [denarii], the term of payment being the month Daesius" and "May [I]medabous be remembered."⁵² At the corner with the west wall a further painted inscription in Palmyrene reads:

May be remembered and blessed the men who have been painted here,
before Bel and Iarhibol and Aglibol and Arsu; and may be remembered
Elahshamsh, the son of Şelat, and T[aim]a, the son of Iah[iba], who have
painted this painting in [the month] Tebe[th] of the year 505 [194 CE].⁵³

On the west wall were two other banquet scenes, one with women and one with men.⁵⁴ The details of the banquet scenes are similar to those already described. Participants are labeled in both Palmyrene and Greek and the painter asks (in Greek) to be remembered.⁵⁵

The painting discussed here (and the others preserved from the western and southern walls of House M7-W6) attracted immediate attention in the preliminary reports (as did other paintings found at Dura-Europos, see plates 77–78 for paintings from the Roman Bath in Block E3). Many of the paintings were included in subsequent discussions about Parthian art.⁵⁶ Over time attention focused especially on the paintings of the Synagogue (now in Damascus), the Mithraeum, and the Christian House-Church. The origins of the style of the Dura-Europos paintings puzzled nearly all commentators who observed certain shared characteristics—frontality; isocephaly; lack of interest in human form or in rendering three-dimensional space; as well as the stiff postures, lack of movement, and an emotionless quality of many figures. They were often judged against standards of Greek and Roman art and found lacking⁵⁷ or claimed as examples of Mesopotamian or Parthian art.⁵⁸ James Henry Breasted, one of the first to write about them, saw the Dura paintings as important links to later stylistic developments; his book was titled *Oriental Forerunners of Byzantine Painting*.⁵⁹

The combination of banquet and hunt subject found in the south wall painting as well as its location in a building presumed to be a house also caused confusion.⁶⁰ As Rostovtzeff asked:

Was the room the banqueting-room of a Palmyrene *thiasos* (religious association) and did the frieze record outstanding incidents in the life of the deceased and heroized founder of the *thiasos*? The figure of a funeral Eros with a lowered torch...so typical a feature of...funeral *stelae* of Roman times... supports this interpretation. Or should we suppose that the house belonged to Bolazeos and that the paintings represent the funeral banquet held in his memory...such as we find so often in the painted and carved tombs and on funeral monuments of Asia Minor.⁶¹

Rostovtzeff raises many interesting and as yet unresolved questions about the interpretation of the painting, the room, and the house it decorated. His suggestion of a heroized founder for a *thiasos* or a funeral banquet for the house owner Bolazeos both rely on a determination that the Eros figure with downturned torch located between the hunt and banquet scenes has a funerary intent and meaning. In addition to early discussion of the paintings, the texts on the wall (especially the Palmyrene ones) also received attention.⁶² The bilingual text underscores the strong ties between Palmyra and Dura-Europos as does the dedication to the Palmyrene gods Bel, Iarhibol, Aglibol, and Arsu. The names of the participants,

painters, and the parties to the debt contract (the borrower's name is identical to one of the banqueters) all suggest local backgrounds.

As a group the wall paintings of Dura-Europos are fascinating. They were discovered in all the religious buildings (pagan, Christian, and Jewish), in some larger (presumably) residential structures,⁶³ and also in two of the four baths. The paintings from Dura-Europos can be dated approximately (often through dedicatory inscriptions in the buildings or on the paintings themselves) from the second half of the first century CE to about 244/5 CE (near the final destruction of the site). This chronological range would include parts of the Parthian and then the Roman occupation of Dura-Europos to 194 CE. The painting from House M7-W6 dates to 194 CE, which places it during the Roman period of the site. In some of the dedicatory inscriptions, the artists are named. All of the preserved artist names are Semitic and may suggest that these wall paintings (as well as other portable paintings on wood and parchment from the site) were created by local or regional artists working for local patrons.⁶⁴ More recently the paintings have been interpreted as part of a hybrid (or mixed) culture visible at Dura-Europos⁶⁵ and it has been emphasized that the use and function of paintings at Dura-Europos was more than purely decorative.

Maura Heyn, who looked at the contexts of the painting of Terentius (fig. 6.2) within the Temple of the Palmyrene Gods (also called the Temple of Bel), observed that a great variety of scenes were painted in the temple rooms. The creation of the scenes was dynamic as paintings were added one by one over nearly 200 years and she noted that the paintings themselves apparently served as votive offerings. This is not ornamental decoration, then, with an emphasis on aesthetically pleasing forms or a large coherent decorative program designed to tell a story. Painting these scenes was itself part of a ritual act and the images were probably also accompanied by *ex votos* on shelves. Many of the paintings in the Temple of the Palmyrene Gods covered or were themselves covered with graffiti (both scratched inscriptions and drawings).⁶⁶ This dynamic process of creation as well as a function extending beyond simple decoration carries over to the house paintings as well. The south wall scene in House M7-W6 has a painted graffito that records a debt owed by Addudanes to Mokimos and another to remember [I]medabous.⁶⁷ In other houses at the site, for example, the House of the Roman Scribes (L7A) or the House of Nebuchelus (B8H), there were astrological charts, calendars, business records, painted ceiling tiles with images of individuals, animals, and plants, as well as wall paintings of figures like Aphrodite and Eros.⁶⁸

As scholars have continued to study the materials from Dura-Europos, newer approaches to its analysis are taking hold. One example is the work of Jennifer Baird who has reconstructed many of the household assemblages from the site. About House M7-W6 she observes,

Strangely, the unique interest of the paintings from M7W, and particularly their Palmyrene connection, has never provoked a more thorough study of the structure. [...] The nature of the finds combined with the paintings and texts is evocative of *more than a house*; as is the position of the structure immediately inside the main gate of the city.⁶⁹ (italics mine)

Recent archaeological studies of ancient houses have sometimes attempted to write micro-histories of their use, by analyzing all the objects and their find locations. These efforts seek to understand better the activities that took place in the architectural spaces.⁷⁰ Although this sort of analysis was not undertaken at the time of its discovery, the excavators did keep extensive log books. This legacy data permits some reconstruction of the objects found within particular rooms and, thus, further consideration of the building's use.⁷¹

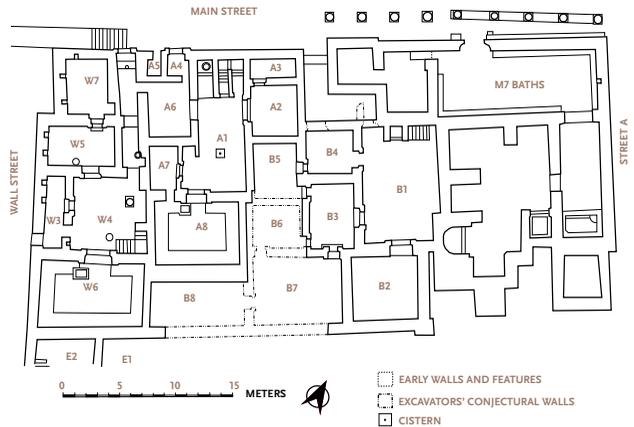
House M7W is part of a block of buildings located between the main (Palmyrene) gate and Bath M7 along a street that continues to one edge of the central market space of the city

(fig. 2.1). This building M7W, also called the “House of the Banquet,”⁷² presented a blank façade to the street (fig. 2.4). (Once the rampart was built against the city wall, a staircase ran in the street along the northern wall of M7W to give access to the upper parts of the rampart.⁷³) The house was entered down a narrow corridor or alleyway which extended to the courtyard (W4) from which there were entrances to the other four rooms (W3, 5/7, 6).⁷⁴ There were stairs in the south-eastern corner of the courtyard probably giving access to a flat roof (or perhaps a second story). One could also enter the building more directly from the west, through Room W3 (tentatively identified as a stable in the excavation reports).⁷⁵ The painted room, W6 (located at the southern end of the building), was reached up two low steps and through an elaborate double-wide central doorway. The door lintel was supported by jambs with decorative plaster capitals. Inside, low plaster platforms (roughly a meter wide) were built along the walls (fig. 2.5). Near the western side of the door an oblong basin preserved with traces of burning served as a brazier for warming the room. The paintings were excavated from parts of the western and southern walls though they probably originally covered all four walls.

This basic plan (fig. 2.4) is quite typical of houses at Dura-Europos, which in Baird’s opinion most resemble other Mesopotamian houses (not Greco-Roman houses to which they are sometimes compared).⁷⁶ Although their main rooms (like W6) tend to be located on the south side of the court and sometimes have platforms (indicating they were probably used for dining and entertaining guests among other household activities), Baird objects to a label either of *andron* or *diwan* for this space; she calls these spaces instead principal rooms. As Baird observes, to use the word *andron* (even though some papyri at Dura-Europos do use this term) might mislead readers into thinking that the house was built in adherence to a Greco-Roman plan or that this was a special dining room space for use by men. The term *diwan* is anachronistic, referring to a private audience room in later Islamic architecture.⁷⁷



2.5. View of M7-W6 showing low platform benches during excavation.



2.4. Plan (block and house detail) of M7W at Dura-Europos (John McCoy from J. A. Baird, after originals by Van W. Knox and A. H. Detweiler, Dura-Europos Collection, Yale University Art Gallery).

Still, although the plan in general resembles other houses at Dura, there are unusual features of this structure and its associated finds, including the paintings (of banqueting and hunting scenes).⁷⁸ These unusual features include: entrances directly from the street (more typically there is an L-shaped entrance into the courtyard); recessed amphorae and other storage vessels found in the long alleyway and courtyard; and an unusually high density of coins from some of the rooms. Room 3 entered from the street

at the west, for example, had around 81 coins recorded during its excavation as well as pottery and lamp fragments, animal figurines, a bone weaving tool, bronze toilet instruments, a fibula, a finger ring, and iron arrowhead (quite a surprising haul for a room described in the preliminary reports as possibly a stable). Elsewhere in the structure many more coins, figurine fragments, stamped pottery, lamps, glass fragments, S-fibulae and other bronze objects were excavated. In the main room (W6), in addition to the paintings described above, there was a gypsum statuette of a goddess seated on a cone (perhaps related to Mesopotamian cone figures);⁷⁹ two plaster blocks with molded boy's heads in relief are mentioned in the preliminary reports;⁸⁰ many coins; parts of clay lamps, vessels, and figurines; and bronze, bone, and glass objects. There are also many niches built into the walls of the various rooms.

The artifact assemblage, some features of the plan, as well as the paintings and bilingual inscriptions in the main room may indicate that this structure was not simply a home. Could this building have served for the meetings of a Palmyrene religious group (as Rostovtzeff proposed)? Could some of the rooms of M7W have been used as a type of commercial establishment (as considered by Baird)? Is it possible that stable space (as suggested in the preliminary excavation reports) was rented to visitors arriving at the nearby Palmyrene Gate? We may never know for sure; but one path forward in the research and analysis would be to explore what this structure and its finds might tell us of the identities of those living in and using it.⁸¹ Details rendered in the paintings or objects found in this building provided opportunities for those living in (or using) this space to display or negotiate various identities (social, religious, gender, cultural). For example, the elements of the banquet (who attends, gender, dress, food, postures, gesture, objects);⁸² the food served and vessels used; the choice of dress and adornment⁸³ (which would include toileting and grooming practices⁸⁴); the languages of the painted inscriptions; and even the presence of numerous coins all could indicate something about the identities of the people who once lived here or used these spaces. Such analysis requires posing a different set of questions about the material remains and also suggests how different approaches to the study of objects and their contexts might prove beneficial.

Returning to the south wall painting from M7-W6 (fig. 2.3), one might begin by questioning Rostovtzeff's claim that the Eros figure with downturned torch should be interpreted as funerary because of its similarity to images on Roman burial stelae. Such an interpretation belongs to approaches based in ideas of Romanization that analyze and interpret elements of artistic images primarily through reference to those found at Rome. Yet there is little evidence that Dura-Europos had strong artistic links with that city. Closer (geographically and chronologically) to the Dura painting, Eros with a downturned torch appears on the reverse of Roman provincial coins (figs. 2.6a-b) from the reigns of Commodus through Caracalla and Geta (the sons of Septimius Severus and his Syrian wife Julia Domna).⁸⁵ Although the meaning of this image on the coins is also uncertain, it seems unlikely that it was funereal. Similarly, suggesting the banquet scene in M7-W6 might be a funeral feast because of the presence of the Eros and by comparison to dining scenes in the funerary art of Asia Minor privileges interpretation of the painting through a Greco-Roman lens.

A closer place to look for comparative material would be at Dura-Europos itself and perhaps its near neighbor Palmyra (as suggested by the inscriptions in Palmyrene). Indeed, banqueting and hunting scenes appear frequently in other buildings at Dura (for example, the Mithraeum contained both types of scenes). Banqueting appears often as part of religious scenes from the site, while paintings of the hunt are also found at Dura in the Temple of Azzanathkona,⁸⁶ in the House of the Frescoes (C7F),⁸⁷ and are frequent also in graffiti.⁸⁸ At Palmyra, banquet scenes are also common particularly in relief sculpture placed in tombs (plate 181); yet these scenes are not interpreted in that context as funerary banquets, but rather as images of Palmyrene religious banquets. This Palmyrene relief sculpture of a male banqueter shows a very similar posture and gesture to the figures in the

Dura-Europos painting (reclining with his left elbow on a cushion and balancing a bowl on his fingertips, his right hand holds an object) (figs. 2.2–3).⁸⁹ In the Palmyrene relief, however, the man wears a different garment, a short tunic with long sleeves and loose pants while in the Dura painting the reclining men all wear long tunics and cloaks.⁹⁰ Recent study of the Palmyrene sculpted reliefs has commented on both the banquet subject (suggesting it identifies the portrayed individual as a priest or ritual host for religious banquets) and on the clothing and gestures of the figures.⁹¹ These would be interesting avenues to pursue for future research on the Dura painting.

Indeed recent work on clothing and attire has begun to explore its significant relationship to expressions of social and cultural identity.⁹² Dress, which has been likened to a non-verbal language, provides an excellent medium in which to observe cultural identity and possible changes to it. On the one hand dress choices are both public and personal permitting an individual to use clothing in reaction to surrounding social and cultural processes. Dress can be used to express complex and multiple identities (e.g., gender, class, age) and yet it can “also reflect a combination of cultural allegiances in the same person when garments are mixed.”⁹³ These qualities as well as the performance aspect of wearing clothing make it an ideal source of information about hybrid identities, yet (as Ursula Rothe observes) “in terms of pursuing cultural identity in the Roman provinces, dress is as yet an underused resource.”⁹⁴

The garments worn by people in the Dura-Europos wall paintings as a whole include a variety from a long loose tunic and cloak (frequent in the Synagogue paintings, images painted in the pagan temples, and the reclining banqueters here in M7-W6) to pants and short tunic with set-in sleeves (garments found in the Mithraeum and Synagogue paintings, and the archer in the hunt scene from M7-W6) to a military tunic and cuirass (for example on the Palmyrene gods represented in the painting of Terentius, fig. 6.2). Although dress can provide a means for expressing cultural identities, no consensus yet exists on its significance in the art of Dura-Europos.⁹⁵

Finally, in building M7W, 153 coins were listed in the inventories from Rooms W3–7 (the main rooms of this structure). Sadly the specific coins found in these rooms can no longer be identified. This information was not kept or published with the coins which were analyzed using the standard methods and procedures of the time. Yet coins and their analysis provide another interesting example of how a change in perspective might expand our understanding and interpretation of material culture and its potential uses in the provinces.⁹⁶ Of all objects, coins perhaps seem most closely linked to Rome and its empire. Fergus Millar describes coins as “the most deliberate of all symbols of public identity” and “the most explicit symbols of a city’s identity and status.”⁹⁷ It has long been suggested that “people learnt about their emperor—who he was, what he looked like, the attributes of his power—through his portrait on coins which circulated on all social levels throughout the empire.”⁹⁸ In addition, coins have traditionally been studied through the lens of Rome, for what they tell us about the Roman economy and its effects in the provinces. Indeed, monetization is sometimes viewed as part of Romanization.⁹⁹ But what other stories might coins be able to tell?



2.6a–b. Reverses of copper coins depicting Eros with downturned torch, early 3rd century CE. Yale University Art Gallery, a: 2004.6.444, Ruth Elizabeth White Fund; b: 2005.6.131, Gift of James H. Schwartz.

A long-term project is underway through the auspices of the British Museum to catalogue coins from the Roman provinces.¹⁰⁰ This provides a crucial beginning (indeed, the fact that imperial coinage has been catalogued first reminds us of the tendency to focus on the imperial center). In this volume Metcalf's essay explores some of the essential information about such provincial coin production (authority, circulation, motives for striking). By looking further at the use of coins within the provinces, other topics might also be explored: what language(s) were used in a region (is there evidence of bilingualism);¹⁰¹ what evidence is there about local cults and monuments; is there evidence for competition and interaction among areas on the periphery? Even these questions, however, emphasize analysis of coins from the perspective of Rome and its reasons for coin production.

Joris Aarts has proposed that Roman coins (of all forms imperial as well as provincial) should be studied in a much broader way by including their possible functions in social or ritual exchange.¹⁰² In other words, coins are not solely indicators of monetization and the spread of a Roman economy or perhaps military. Examining coin use among the Batavians (a people living in the Rhine delta at the edge of the empire), Aarts has shown that the coins reaching this area were placed into hoards, were offered in ritual contexts, and might also have been used in market exchange. Indeed, coins "were being used by the same people [local Batavians] but for different purposes in different contexts."¹⁰³ (For a similar observation about differing uses of Roman pottery in fifth-century Britain, see Fleming's essay in this volume.) The people living in this area knew how to use coins in market exchanges yet they also used them for other purposes (to store as valuables and to make votive offerings). Aarts observes that any difference between Roman and native was non-existent and proposes that "the life of Roman coins can better be described in terms of a social history of a class of object as suggested by Appadurai." Further he emphasizes that "when talking about the function and use of Roman coins, we should look at their role in the whole system of exchange."¹⁰⁴

Returning to Room M7-W6, then, we might wonder about the significance of the many coins discovered there. On the one hand they might suggest commercial or business transactions or perhaps the presence of Roman soldiers, but can we rule out the possibility that these coins were used like tesseræ at Palmyra for ritual banquets? Similarly the image of the Eros with downturned torch at first linked to Roman funerary imagery might instead reference an image found on the reverse of provincial coinage. Similarly looking at textiles and dress in the images and through preserved objects at Dura-Europos or broader consideration of the significances of banqueting and the hunt for the residents of Dura-Europos might provide a fuller understanding of how these people were negotiating various identities, including perhaps, "being Roman" on the periphery of the empire.

CONCLUSION

"'Being Roman' was not a standard process or recipe";¹⁰⁵ neither was choosing not to be Roman. Rather these choices and expressions of identities varied over time, within provinces from place to place and among different groups (e.g., the military, traders and shopkeepers, everyday residents, religious leaders, wealthy administrative personnel, etc.), and across the expanse of the empire. Because what we label Roman culture (itself a problematic term—do we mean any material culture created and used within the borders of the empire?) was dynamic, flexible, geographically widespread, and attainable by different groups of people; it existed on a different level than regional identities and in fact could coexist with them. As a result the empire possessed various mixed or hybrid cultures. Experiences of empire were likely both positive and negative. The responses people had to their conquerors and to the conqueror's language, religion, and material culture no doubt varied widely and so then did what these people brought into the empire. One important step in understanding

this process is to better characterize and understand the local responses and identities in the provinces themselves.¹⁰⁶ It may then be possible to ask other questions about the impacts of the peripheries or provinces on the center, Rome itself. How did the conquest of empire affect and change its material culture? Studies that examine provincial art and material culture more broadly then and so seek to explore and understand the large variety of reactions to empire are just starting to reveal the myriad of ways in which people negotiated and performed the many identities in the Roman provinces.



- 1 Richard Hingley, ed., *Images of Rome: Perceptions of Ancient Rome in Europe and the United States in the Modern Age* (Portsmouth: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2001). For an exception to this see Sabine MacCormack, *On the Wings of Time: Rome, the Incas, Spain, and Peru* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007) which examines a writer (De las Casas) condemning at the time the Spanish conquest of South America.
- 2 Imperial eagles were consistently used as symbols of power. Yet the types of groups using this image varied dramatically from the American Founders to Napoleon as well as the Nazis in Germany and fascists in Italy.
- 3 On the dichotomy between public and scholarly views of empire, see David J. Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power, and Identity: Experiencing the Roman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 3–5.
- 4 John C. Barrett, “Romanization: A Critical Comment,” in *Dialogues in Roman Imperialism: Power, Discourse and Discrepant Experience in the Roman Empire*, ed. David J. Mattingly (Portsmouth: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 1997), 51–64, esp. 52. For other definitions and further references, Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power, and Identity*, 6; Greg Woolf, *Rome: An Empire’s Story* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), xiii–ix.
- 5 Some date the “classical” empire from 27 BCE to 476 CE, while others consider the end of the Roman Empire to be 1453 CE when Constantinople (and so the eastern empire) fell to the Ottomans. For others, the period from 330 CE to 1453 CE is termed the Byzantine Empire (though its own rulers and people called it Roman). More recently, some scholars have labeled the period 250 to 750 CE “late antiquity.” These choices of dates and designations, of course, signal interpretive biases and can lead to separation and division of materials into scholarly silos.
- 6 The Romans themselves counted from the traditional foundation date of Rome in 753 BCE and so celebrated a 900th anniversary in the year 147 CE and a millennium in 247 CE.
- 7 Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 12 vols. (London: J. Murray, 1776–89).
- 8 Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power, and Identity*, 17.
- 9 David J. Mattingly, “Vulgar and Weak ‘Romanization,’ or Time for a Paradigm Shift?,” review of *Italy and the West: Comparative Issues in Romanization*, ed. Simon Keay and Nicola Terrenato, *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 15 (2002): 536–40, esp. 538; Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, trans. Alan Shapiro (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990); Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, “Rome’s Cultural Revolution,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 79 (1989): 157–64; Thomas Habinek and Alessandro Schiesaro, eds., *The Roman Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Greg Woolf, *Becoming Roman: The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 174–75.
- 10 Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity: AD 150–750* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1971) is credited with beginning this process.
- 11 Thorsten Opper, *Hadrian: Empire and Conflict*, exh. cat. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008) for a recent museum exhibition on this emperor. Hadrian traveled through this vast territory visiting many of its regions, issuing sestertius coins in honor of different provinces and creating sculptural images of various provinces. See *ibid.*, 20, fig. 4 for a map; Helmut Halfmann, *Itinera Principum: Geschichte und Typologie der Kaiserreisen im Römischen Reich* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1986). He and his troops spent the winter of 129/30 CE in Gerasa where an arch was built to celebrate his visit. Carl H. Kraeling, *Gerasa: City of the Decapolis* (New Haven: American

- Schools of Oriental Research, 1938), 49–52, 73–83, inscr. 58.
- 12 Population estimates are notoriously difficult and in the ancient world vary widely. David J. Mattingly, “The Imperial Economy,” in *A Companion to the Roman Empire*, ed. David Potter (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 283–97, esp. 285 for these numbers.
 - 13 Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000); Mattingly, “Imperial Economy,” 285.
 - 14 C. R. Whittaker, “Mental Maps and Frontiers: Seeing Like a Roman,” in *Rome and Its Frontiers: The Dynamics of Empire* (London: Routledge, 2004), 63–87. Whereas in the early years of the empire Roman citizenship conferred significant benefits to a select minority, after the *Constitutio Antoniniana* in 212 CE this privilege was extended to all freeborn men within the empire.
 - 15 For the lively scholarly discussion about borders and frontiers, see among others: Rob Collins and Matthew Symonds, eds., *Breaking Down Boundaries: Hadrian’s Wall in the 21st Century* (Portsmouth: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2013); Peter S. Wells, ed., *Rome beyond Its Frontiers: Imports, Attitudes and Practices* (Portsmouth: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2013); Jan W. Drijvers, “Limits of Empire in Ammianus Marcellinus’ *Res Gestae*,” in *Frontiers in the Roman World: Proceedings of the 9th Workshop of the International Network Impact of Empire (Durham, 16–19 April 2009)*, ed. Olivier Hekster and Ted Kaizer (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 13–29, esp. 17, 26; John Richardson, “*Fines provinciae*,” in *Frontiers in the Roman World*, 1–10; and Whittaker, *Rome and Its Frontiers*. Some recent maps rather than using a solid line for the border create a border zone by overlaying two color patterns.
 - 16 Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power, and Identity*, 221: “use of material culture within the army, which...developed a separate version of ‘Roman’ identity”; Simon James, “The Community of the Soldiers: A Major Identity and Centre of Power in the Roman Empire,” in *TRAC 98: Proceedings of the 8th Annual Theoretical Archaeology Conference, Leicester 1998*, ed. Patricia Baker et al. (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1999), 14–25; Simon James, “Soldiers and Civilians: Identity and Interaction in Roman Britain,” in *Britons and Romans: Advancing an Archaeological Agenda*, ed. Simon James and Martin Millett (York: Council for British Archaeology, 2001), 77–89.
 - 17 C. R. Whittaker, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire: A Social and Economic Study* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 98–130.
 - 18 As with frontiers, a lively discussion exists about the nature of the Roman economy. The two poles of discussion are how relatively modern (Michael Rostovtzeff, *Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957]) or how primitive (Moses Finley, *The Ancient Economy* [London: Hogarth Press, 1985]) it was. For more recent views in between the poles: Mattingly, “Imperial Economy,” 283–97; William V. Harris, “Trade,” in *The Cambridge Ancient History 11: The High Empire, AD 70–192*, ed. Alan K. Bowman, Peter Garnsey, and Dominic Rathbone (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 710–40; J. G. Manning and Ian Morris, eds., *The Ancient Economy: Evidence and Models* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005). On the changing economy of the later empire: L. de Blois and J. Rich, eds., *The Transformation of Economic Life under the Roman Empire* (Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben, 2002); Peter Garnsey and C. R. Whittaker, “Trade, Industry, and the Urban Economy,” in *The Cambridge Ancient History 13: The Late Empire, AD 337–425*, ed. Averil Cameron and Peter Garnsey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 312–37.
 - 19 Christopher Howgego, “The Supply and Use of Money in the Roman World 200 BC to AD 300,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 82 (1992): 1–31; David J. Mattingly and John Salmon, eds., *Economies*

- beyond Agriculture in the Classical World* (London: Routledge, 2001).
- 20 Mattingly, "Imperial Economy," 287 gives between 832 and 983 million and cites Richard Duncan-Jones, *Structure and Scale in the Roman Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 187–210; Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power, and Identity*, 132–33; David J. Mattingly, "Supplying Rome and the Empire: Some Conclusions," in *Supplying Rome and the Empire*, ed. Emanuele Papi (Portsmouth: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2007), 219–27. Any modern comparison is difficult; a sestertius could buy two loaves of bread.
 - 21 Pliny, *HN* 6.101; 12.84; Mattingly, "Imperial Economy," 287. See also, Andrew Dalby, *Empire of the Pleasures: Luxury and Indulgence in the Roman World* (London: Routledge, 2000).
 - 22 Jaś Elsner, *Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 48–50.
 - 23 An idea developed by Gibbon, it refers to the roughly two centuries of relative calm/peace in the empire from 27 BCE to about CE 180.
 - 24 Kraeling, *Gerasa: City of the Decapolis*, 396, no. 46. The inscription translates: "To Good Fortune. In the year 129. For the preservation of the Pax Augusta, under the chief magistracy of the president, Apollonius, son of 'Hephaition,' and Malchaios, the dekaprotos of the city, son of Demetrius and Antiochus, one of the magistrates, son of Ariston, and Xerxes, secretary of the senate and the popular assembly, son of Chaireas, this wall was set up at the city's expense by the curators Meliton, also called Nicanor, son of Apollonides, and Timarchus, son of Lysimachus" (R. Boecklin and J. P. Hyatt, "A New Inscription of Jerash," *American Journal of Archaeology* 38, no. 4 [1934]: 511–22, esp. 512).
 - 25 During his reign Augustus closed the gates of the Temple of Janus three times, a signal of peace throughout the empire, while monuments, most importantly the Ara Pacis, gave visible expression to his ideas about the Roman state. See Zanker, *Power of Images* for a discussion of Augustus's use of monuments and images to promote a particular ideology about the empire.
 - 26 Quoted from Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, "The Creation and Expression of Identity: The Roman World," in *Classical Archaeology*, ed. Susan Alcock and Robin Osborne (Malden: Blackwell, 2007), 355–80, esp. 372; Ronald Syme, *Tacitus* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1958).
 - 27 Wallace-Hadrill, "Expression of Identity," 372 referencing Zanker, *Power of Images*. On significant shifts in coinage at this time, Christopher Howgego, "Coinage and Identity in the Roman Provinces," in *Coinage and Identity in the Roman Provinces*, ed. Christopher Howgego, Volker Heuchert, and Andrew Burnett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1–17, esp. 13.
 - 28 Some recent discussion of this issue: Simon Keay and Nicola Terrenato, eds., *Italy and the West: Comparative Issues in Romanization* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2000); Elizabeth Fentress, ed., *Romanization and the City: Creation, Transformations, and Failures* (Portsmouth: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2000). The usefulness of Romanization for understanding the Roman Empire is hotly contested. For reviews of this, Jane Webster, "Creolizing the Roman Provinces," *American Journal of Archaeology* 105, no. 2 (2001): 209–25, esp. 210–17; Louise Revell, *Roman Imperialism and Local Identities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), x; Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power, and Identity*, 38–41.
 - 29 Similar approaches and emphases are found also in museum exhibitions, e.g., Opper, *Hadrian: Empire and Conflict*.
 - 30 For a succinct summary of the study of Roman provincial archaeology from the nineteenth cen-

- ture onward, see Revell, *Roman Imperialism*, 5–10. Natalie Boymel Kampen reviews this trend from an art historical perspective, “On Writing Histories of Roman Art,” *Art Bulletin* 85 (2003): 371–86. She reminds us that what was termed “native” art always looked stylistically like the art of late antiquity, 376.
- 31 A point argued consistently by Mattingly, “Dialogues of Power,” 9; *Imperialism, Power, and Identity*, 6–8.
- 32 Woolf, *Rome: An Empire’s Story*.
- 33 “In evaluating cultural change in Italy after its conquest by Rome, we must recognize that the identities that emerged were in a constant state of flux. [...] For a variety of reasons, there are phases in Roman history when profound redefinition of what it meant to be Roman (or what the empire was about) created cultural pulses that emanated out from the capital. The ripple effects could extend beyond imperial territory. [...] One might think of these large scale cultural shifts as ‘global trends’” (Mattingly, “Vulgar and Weak ‘Romanization,’” 539).
- 34 Simon Keay, “Part 2: The Provinces, Introduction,” in *Italy and the West*, 113–16, esp. 113.
- 35 Particularly noted for this approach is Martin Millett, “Romanization: Historical Issues and Archaeological Interpretation,” in *The Early Roman Empire in the West*, ed. Thomas Blagg and Martin Millett (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1990), 35–41; and Millett, *The Romanization of Britain: An Essay in Archaeological Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
- 36 Woolf, *Becoming Roman*, 5–7; Mattingly, “Vulgar and Weak ‘Romanization,’” 537–38; David J. Mattingly, “Being Roman: Expressing Identity in a Provincial Setting,” *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 17 (2004): 5–25, esp. 5–7; Mattingly, *An Imperial Possession: Britain in the Roman Empire, 54 BC–AD 409* (London: Penguin, 2007), xii, 14–17; Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power, and Identity*, 38–41, 271; Revell, *Roman Imperialism*, 6–10.
- 37 For an example, Mattingly, “Being Roman” (among other works); Revell, *Roman Imperialism*; Tim Whitmarsh, ed., *Local Knowledge and Microidentities in the Imperial Greek World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Susan E. Alcock, *Graecia Capta: The Landscapes of Roman Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
- 38 Mattingly, *Dialogues in Roman Imperialism* (discrepant experience and hidden transcripts); Webster, “Creolizing the Roman Provinces,” 209–25; Mattingly, “Vulgar and Weak ‘Romanization,’” 538; Nicola Terrenato, “The Romanization of Italy: Global Acculturation or Cultural *Bricolage*?” in *TRAC 97: Proceedings of the 7th Annual Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference, Nottingham 1997*, ed. Colin Forcey, John Hawthorne, and Robert Witcher (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1998), 20–27.
- 39 Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power, and Identity*, 207.
- 40 Mattingly, “Dialogues of Power,” 9, who cites Jane Webster, “Roman Imperialism and the ‘Post-Imperial Age,’” in *Roman Imperialism: Post-Colonial Perspectives*, ed. Jane Webster and Nick Cooper (Leicester: School of Archaeological Studies, University of Leicester, 1996), 1–17, esp. 11.
- 41 Ursula Rothe, “Dress and Cultural Identity in the Roman Empire,” in *Dress and Identity*, ed. Mary Harlow (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2012), 59–68, esp. 59.
- 42 As argued by Martin Pitts, “The Emperor’s New Clothes? The Utility of Identity in Roman Archaeology,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 111, no. 4 (2007): 693–713.
- 43 Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power, and Identity*, 235.

- 44 Jody Joy, “Reinvigorating Object Biography: Reproducing the Drama of Object Lives,” *World Archaeology* 41, no. 4 (2009): 540–56; Chris Gosden and Yvonne Marshall, “The Cultural Biography of Objects,” *World Archaeology* 31, no. 2 (1999): 169–78; Igor Kopytoff, “The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process,” in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 64–94.
- 45 For discussion and bibliography see Lisa R. Brody and Gail L. Hoffman, eds., *Dura-Europos: Crossroads of Antiquity*, exh. cat. (Chestnut Hill: McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, 2011).
- 46 Michael Rostovtzeff et al., eds., *The Excavations at Dura-Europos: Preliminary Report of the 6th Season of Work, 1932–1933* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1936), 154–55 for a detailed description.
- 47 This four-petaled flower appears in other paintings from Dura-Europos, most noticeably between the two Tychai in the painting of Terentius dating to 239 CE from the Temple of Bel or the Palmyrene Gods (fig. 6.2), but also on painted ceiling tiles, on the camel rider relief, and on preserved textiles (YUAG 1933.276, 1935.44, 1933.487). Perhaps in this painting it indicates tapestries or textiles hanging from the wall?
- 48 This border is best preserved in photographs of the hunt side of the painting now in the Louvre, AO17310, http://cartelfr.louvre.fr/cartelfr/visite?srv=car_not_frame&idNotice=21170.
- 49 Rostovtzeff et al., *Preliminary Report 6*, 172.
- 50 Ibid., 155 for a description. For an image, J. A. Baird, “Housing and Households at Dura-Europos: A Study in Identity on Rome’s Eastern Frontier” (PhD diss., University of Leicester, 2006), fig. 380.
- 51 For discussion of the Eros figure and its possible funerary connections L. Kahil et al., eds., *Lexikon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae (LIMC)* 3 (Zurich: Artemis, 1986), 1:939; Rostovtzeff et al., *Preliminary Report 6*, 153–54.
- 52 Lucinda Dirven, *The Palmyrenes of Dura-Europos* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 285–86. *Infra* note 88 for references to graffiti at Dura-Europos.
- 53 Ibid., 282; Rostovtzeff et al., *Preliminary Report 6*, 151, 167–69.
- 54 Rostovtzeff et al., *Preliminary Report 6*, 147–51. For images, YUAG 1938.5999.1144 and 1148.
- 55 Ibid., 169–72.
- 56 Ann Perkins, *The Art of Dura-Europos* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973), 65–68; Rostovtzeff et al., *Preliminary Report 6*, 146–167; Rostovtzeff, “Dura and the Problem of Parthian Art,” *Yale Classical Studies* 5 (1935): 155–304, esp. 273–79; J. B. Ward-Perkins, “The Roman West and the Parthian East,” *Proceedings of the British Academy* (1965): 175–99, esp. 187n2.
- 57 Perkins, *Art of Dura-Europos*, 33. “As is to be expected in a garrison town located on a frontier, the paintings show both an eclecticism of subject and style, and a provincialism manifested in the generally mediocre level of execution.”
- 58 Michael Rostovtzeff, *Dura-Europos and Its Art* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1938), 95; Rostovtzeff et al., *Preliminary Report 6*, 166–67.
- 59 James Henry Breasted, *Oriental Forerunners of Byzantine Painting: First-Century Wall Paintings from the Fortress of Dura on the Middle Euphrates* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1924).
- 60 Perkins, *Art of Dura-Europos*, 66–67.

- 61 Rostovtzeff, *Dura-Europos and Its Art*, 94; Rostovtzeff et al., *Preliminary Report 6*, 158–59 (possible funerary banquet).
- 62 Dirven, *Palmyrenes of Dura-Europos*, 281–93.
- 63 J. A. Baird, “The Houses of Dura-Europos: Archaeology, Archive, and Assemblage,” in *Crossroads of Antiquity*, 241 discussing the House of the Frescoes.
- 64 A wooden panel forming the door of a shrine carried a painted winged Nike (YUAG 1929.288). There were also preserved five painted oval wooden shields (YUAG 1935.551 with Iliad scenes; YUAG 1935.552 an amazonomachy; YUAG 1935.553 an image of a military god; and YUAG 1938.5999.1120 and YUAG 1938.5999.1123) and the rectangular scutum (YUAG 1933.715).
- 65 Baird, “Houses of Dura-Europos,” 235–50, esp. 241.
- 66 Maura K. Heyn, “The Terentius Frieze in Context,” in *Crossroads of Antiquity*, 228 referencing Annabel Jane Wharton, *Refiguring the Post Classical City: Dura Europos, Jerash, Jerusalem and Ravenna* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 61, “The frescoes of the naos are not *ornamental* as in the triclinium of a Roman house, but *active*.”
- 67 Dirven, *Palmyrenes of Dura-Europos*, 286.
- 68 Paul Baur, Michael Rostovtzeff, and Alfred Bellinger, eds., *The Excavations at Dura-Europos: Preliminary Report of the 4th Season of Work, 1930–1931* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1933), 39, 79–145, 222; Michael Rostovtzeff, ed., *The Excavations at Dura-Europos: Preliminary Report of the 5th Season of Work, 1931–1932* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934), 47–49, 90–97; Kai Ruffing, “Die Geschäfte des Aurelios Nebuchelos,” *Laverna* 11 (2000): 71–105 (House of Nebuchelus); Rostovtzeff et al., *Preliminary Report 6*, 265–308 (House of the Roman Scribes).
- 69 Baird, “Housing and Households,” 83.
- 70 Baird, “Housing and Households” reconstructs these assemblages for many of the houses at Dura-Europos. On the Dura-Europos houses in general, see also, Baird “Houses of Dura-Europos”; J. A. Baird, *The Inner Lives of Ancient Houses: An Archaeology of Dura-Europos* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); and Anny Allara and Catherine Saliou, “Constitution d’un répertoire de l’architecture domestique à Doura-Europos,” in *Doura-Europos Études 4, 1991–1993*, ed. Pierre Leriche and Mathilde Gelin (Beirut: Bibliothèque archéologique et historique, 1997), 145–54. For a recent example of a micro-history for two ancient Egyptian houses (one elite, the other non-elite) see Anna L. Boozer, “Housing Empire: The Archaeology of Daily Life in Roman Amheida, Egypt” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2007).
- 71 See Baird, “Housing and Households” and *Inner Lives of Ancient Houses* with references for much of this work.
- 72 Rostovtzeff et al., *Preliminary Report 6*, 140–72; Baird, “Housing and Households,” 483–89; Baird, *Inner Lives of Ancient Houses*.
- 73 Rostovtzeff et al., *Preliminary Report 6*, 142.
- 74 There are some problems reconciling the room numbers on the published plans with the room numbers for finds listed in the register. Rooms W1, 2, 10, 11 appear in the register but not on the final plans (Baird, “Housing and Households,” 472).
- 75 Rostovtzeff et al., *Preliminary Report 6*, 141.
- 76 Baird, “Houses of Dura-Europos,” 238.
- 77 *Ibid.*, 239, 239n25; J. A. Baird, “The Bizarre Bazaar: Early Excavations in the Roman East and

- Problems of Nomenclature,” in *TRAC 2006: Proceedings of the 16th Annual Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference, Cambridge 2006*, ed. Ben Croxford et al. (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2007), 34–42, esp. 37.
- 78 Baird, “Housing and Households,” 483.
- 79 Susan B. Downey, *Excavations at Dura-Europos 1928–1937: Final Report 3, Part 1, Fasc. 2; The Stone and Plaster Sculpture* (Los Angeles: University of California, 1977), no. 90; F322; Rostovtzeff et al., *Preliminary Report 6*, 144–45, plate 27.2.
- 80 Rostovtzeff et al., *Preliminary Report 6*, 144; Baird, “Housing and Households,” 485 says painted ceiling tiles. Artstor Digital Library image dura-fc35~01 shows a carved relief head during excavation.
- 81 Baird, *Inner Lives of Ancient Houses*.
- 82 Nicholas F. Hudson, “Changing Places: The Archaeology of the Roman *Convivium*,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 114, no. 4 (2010): 663–95; Katherine M. D. Dunbabin, *The Roman Banquet: Images of Conviviality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
- 83 Wallace-Hadrill, “Expression of Identity,” 356 observes, “Clothes are the material correlate to language, an expression of identity that depends on choice: you speak Latin or Greek, you wear the toga or the pallium.”
- 84 Nina Crummy and Hella Eckardt, “Regional Identities and Technologies of the Self: Nail-Cleaners in Roman Britain,” *Archaeological Journal* 160 (2003): 44–69; Crummy and Eckardt, *Styling the Body in Late Iron Age and Roman Britain: A Contextual Approach to Toilet Instruments* (Montagnac: Éditions Monique Mergoïl, 2008); Eckardt, “Heating and Lighting,” in *Artefacts in Roman Britain: Their Purpose and Use*, ed. Lindsay Allason-Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 180–93.
- 85 *LIMC* 3, 1:931, nos. 986–87. A similar image (identified as Amor, Cupid) appears on a gem in Hamburg, *LIMC* 3, 1:977, no. 170 and on a Roman sarcophagus in the Sirmium museum, *LIMC* 3, 1:690, no. 169.
- 86 Ward-Perkins, “The Roman West,” 186n2 and Rostovtzeff, *Preliminary Report 5*, 157 plate 35, 3–4.
- 87 Baird, “Housing and Households”; *Inner Lives of Ancient Houses*.
- 88 Bernard Goldman, “Foreigners at Dura-Europos: Pictorial Graffiti and History,” *Le Muséon* 103 (1990): 5–25; also J. A. Baird, “The Graffiti of Dura-Europos: A Contextual Approach,” in *Ancient Graffiti in Context*, ed. J. A. Baird and Claire Taylor (New York: Routledge, 2011), 49–68.
- 89 Rostovtzeff et al., *Preliminary Report 6*, 147 observed this as a common posture for banqueting figures on Palmyrene tesserae.
- 90 An interesting study of a Roman gravestone for a British woman at Arbeia (South Shields in England, fig. 3.2) shows how analyses of garments may be significant, Maureen Carroll, “‘The Insignia of Women’: Dress, Gender and Identity on the Roman Funerary Monument of Regina from Arbeia,” *Archaeological Journal* 169 (2012): 281–311.
- 91 Maura K. Heyn, “Sacerdotal Activities and Parthian Dress in Roman Palmyra,” in *Reading a Dynamic Canvas: Adornment in the Ancient Mediterranean World*, ed. Cynthia S. Colburn and Maura K. Heyn (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2008), 181; Heyn, “Gesture and Identity in the Funerary Art of Palmyra,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 114, no. 4 (2010): 631–61 has

- explored the significance of gesture in funerary sculpture at Palmyra.
- 92 Rothe, “Dress and Cultural Identity,” 59–68; Liza Cleland, Mary Harlow, and Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones, eds., *The Clothed Body in the Ancient World* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2005); Jonathan Edmondson and Alison Keith, eds., *Roman Dress and the Fabrics of Roman Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008); Kelly Olson, *Dress and the Roman Woman: Self-Presentation and Society* (New York: Routledge, 2008).
- 93 Rothe, “Dress and Cultural Identity,” 61.
- 94 *Ibid.*, 60.
- 95 Efforts to link these forms of dress to particular groups of people, special identities, or to dress for specific activities in the scenes have not yet proven successful. For some of this discussion: Rostovtzeff et al., *Preliminary Report* 6, 161; J. A. Baird, “Everyday Life in Roman Dura-Europos: The Evidence of Dress Practices,” in *Religion, Society and Culture at Dura-Europos*, ed. Ted Kaizer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming) where she notes that dress in art may be different than dress in day-to-day practice; Bernard Goldman, “The Dura Synagogue Costumes and Parthian Art,” in *The Dura-Europos Synagogue: A Re-evaluation, 1932–1992*, ed. Joseph Gutmann (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 52–77; Goldman, “Graeco-Roman Dress in Syro-Mesopotamia,” in *The World of Roman Costume*, ed. Judith Lynn Sebesta and Larissa Bonfante (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), 163–81; Simon James on military dress in this volume. Heyn, “Terentius Frieze in Context,” 221–33. For discussion of dress at its possible significance at nearby Palmyra: Heyn, “Gesture and Identity”; “Sacerdotal Activities,” 170–93.
- 96 Sebastian Heath, “Trading at the Edge: Pottery, Coins, and Household Objects at Dura-Europos,” in *Edge of Empires: Pagans, Jews, and Christians at Roman Dura-Europos*, ed. Jennifer Y. Chi and Sebastian Heath, exh. cat. (New York: Institute for the Study of the Ancient World; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 63–73; Kevin Butcher, *Coinage in Roman Syria: Northern Syria, 64 BC–AD 253* (London: Royal Numismatic Society, 2004).
- 97 Fergus Millar, *The Roman Near East, 31 BC–AD 337* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 230, 257.
- 98 Elsner, *Imperial Rome*, 12.
- 99 Joris Aarts, “Coins, Money and Exchange in the Roman World: A Cultural-Economic Perspective,” *Archaeological Dialogues* 12, no. 1 (2005): 1–44, esp. 8 citing Hopkins for this view.
- 100 Print volumes have begun to appear. *Roman Provincial Coinage* is under the general editorship of Andrew Burnett and Michel Amandry of the British Museum and the Bibliothèque nationale de France respectively. The Antonine coins are available online, <http://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/>.
- 101 Howgego, “Coinage and Identity,” 13–14.
- 102 Aarts, “Coins, Money and Exchange,” 9. Another important examination of coins in the provinces is: Howgego, “Coinage and Identity,” 17n147 for brief consideration of use. Also, George Williamson, “Aspects of Identity,” in *Coinage and Identity*, 19–27.
- 103 Aarts, “Coins, Money and Exchange,” 12.
- 104 *Ibid.*
- 105 Mattingly, “Being Roman,” 22.
- 106 Revell, introduction to *Roman Imperialism* and Mattingly, “Being Roman.” See also note 37 above for additional bibliography.



IDENTITIES IN THE ROMAN WORLD: DISCREPANCY, HETEROGENEITY, HYBRIDITY, AND PLURALITY

David J. Mattingly

INTRODUCTION: WAYS OF SEEING AND WAYS OF BEING IN THE ROMAN WORLD

The rise of the nation state and the triumph of the great monotheisms have helped shape a modern world in which our identity affiliations are often founded on one or other of these primary cultural bases. Yet the world has not been ever thus, and plural identities and multiple cultural associations have generally been much more common in human societies than singular affiliations.¹ A prime argument of this essay is that this natural tendency toward plural expressions of identity in human society was further amplified in the Roman Empire by the operation of colonial power networks.² This approach produces a different picture and new understanding of Roman provincial societies from the conventional one that focuses predominantly on the degree of Romanness and the elite end of society. In place of an agenda that has prioritized the commonalities and similar cultural practices across this vast empire under the paradigm of Romanization, I argue instead that the study of the heterogeneity and hybridity present in Roman provincial societies offers a complementary and potentially more interesting perspective on the Roman world.

My sub-heading, “Ways of Seeing and Ways of Being,” draws attention to the fact that I suspect many classicists still subconsciously assume that people in antiquity generally perceived their world through the colonizer’s eyes and desired to be Roman to the best of their abilities or means. We have thus been accustomed to giving Roman identity priority, leading us to emphasize a process of “becoming Roman.”³ However, a fundamental point about identity in the past is that such high level group denominators were not necessarily as self-evident or appropriate then as they seem to us today. It is pertinent to question the size, coherence, and ubiquity of a pan-empire group of people who identified themselves as “Romans.” I recall the consternation in a packed room at the first Roman Archaeology Conference in Reading in 1995, when the prehistorian John Barrett had the temerity to ask, “Upon what grounds do we believe something called the Roman Empire actually existed?”⁴ Barrett went on to say, “To regard the Empire as the product of discourse is not to question its existence... what it does is lead us to doubt that the Empire was ever a single reality, a totality whose truth can be reduced to a basic set of organising principles of coercive forces. [...] The Roman Empire as some reified totality is the historian’s construct.”⁵ His point was that the Roman Empire was the product of a range of historical forces interacting across time and space with many different

peoples, whose experience and knowledge of the empire varied enormously. The historical model of the Roman Empire embeds knowledge into a discourse that smooths off the rough edges and idealizes its structures in an essentialist fashion.

Despite the massive erosion of knowledge about the Roman Empire through loss of documentary records and destruction of sites and material culture over time, the reality is that ancient historians today know far more about the history, geography, and functioning of the empire than the average subject would have in antiquity. However, the opposite is true of the *individual* experience of empire, which was highly personal. A similar argument can surely also be extended to the idea of what it meant to be Roman. Modern scholarship has reified its understanding based on a mass of fragmentary information to project an image of average Romans. These are the people we tend to encounter in museum pictorial displays and popular books: dining on couches, walking on mosaic floors, wearing togas or Mediterranean-style stolas, erecting statues to the living, tombstones to the deceased, and dedications to Latinized gods, or being stereotypical soldiers and gladiators. Yet how close were these imagined Romans to the everyday realities of provincial life?

My sense is that there were many types of Roman lived experience. Nor should this be difficult for us to countenance. We live in a postcolonial age, increasingly in polyglot, multicultural, and multi-ethnic communities, practicing a wide array of religions. My home city of Leicester in the UK has a minority white Anglo-Saxon population living alongside large groups of people whose families originated in parts of South or East Asia, in Africa, and in the West Indies, to consider just the major groups. The religious landscape there comprises not only a wide variety of buildings relating to Christian denominations (Catholic, Anglican, non-conformist, Quaker, etc.), but also many temples of Hindus, Sikhs, and Jains, Islamic mosques, and Jewish synagogues.⁶ The experience of and participation in British society varies dramatically for locational and generational reasons. Children in schools readily cross boundaries of race and religion and indulge in common interests and activities, but at home or after school they may speak different languages and participate in activities that closely bond them to distinctive sub-communities (attending Koranic school at the mosque and so on). In some respects, this sort of code switching in twenty-first-century Leicester has more in common with Roman antecedents, in that the Roman period was characterized by enhanced migration and social diversity and plural identities. Insoll explicitly identifies the city of Rome as “an earlier experiment in multiculturalism.”⁷ Although comparative historical studies will always be difficult across ages with radically different sources of information available, the well-established discipline of postcolonial studies can assist classical scholarship by demonstrating a different model of the dynamics of colonialism to that prevailing in Roman studies.⁸

“OMNES ROMANI FACTI SUNT ET OMNES ROMANI DICUNTUR”

Groupness can be constructed in many different ways in human societies, including ethnicity, language, religion, communities (real and imagined), gender, age, and so on.⁹ Ethnicity was weakly evolved in the ancient Mediterranean,¹⁰ with political boundaries even in pre-Roman times often cutting across ethnic or linguistic groupings. This lack of a strong correlation of ethnic identity with political units—such as in Egypt, the Hellenistic Kingdoms, or Italy itself—is often assumed to have fostered the emergence of a cross-provincial “Roman” identity. This idea is strongly evoked by the comment from St. Augustine that provides the sub-title of this section: “Who now knows which nations in the Roman Empire were what, when all have become Romans, and are called Romans?”¹¹ While this might at first glance seem conclusive evidence of a uniform sense of Roman identity, we should be cautious. For one thing, Augustine was writing about the early fifth-century position, when it is indeed logical to assume that pre-Roman ethnic identities had been diluted after many centuries of imperial rule. But we

should be careful how far we retroject the idea of a commonly perceived Roman identity that was more or less ubiquitous across the empire.

In any case, Roman identity was more a matter of law than of culture. Roman citizenship was part of a package of status and privileges that might have facilitated such a development, but its cultural significance is easily exaggerated. In the western provinces, enfranchisement of the Italian peoples, and later elite members of the conquered communities, auxiliary veterans, manumitted slaves of citizens, and even some entire (particularly compliant and merit-worthy) communities added significant numbers to the body of Roman citizens; similar processes operated to a lesser extent in the eastern provinces too. However, before the *Constitutio Antoniniana* in 212 CE, Roman citizens remained an influential and privileged minority within the empire's overall population. The Roman citizen body comprised people of radically different status groups—at one extreme aristocratic oligarchs, at the other ex-slaves, along with soldiers, veterans, and families who had enjoyed close relations with the empire, or communities fortunate to live in the favored Italian heartlands. Legal status and tax breaks were important perks of citizen rank, but there were many more factors that divided the ranks of Roman citizens into regional or social groups than there were reasons to promote their Roman identity as uniquely important to them as a monolithic group.

Even with the eventual wide spread of Latinity and Roman citizenship after 212 (and we should remember that Latin was always a language spoken by a tiny minority in the East), centrifugal forces remained as strong as centripetal ones among the polyglot and regionally diverse peoples assimilated within the imperial structures of Rome. Bilingualism was common across the empire, and linguistic mixes and competences were key elements in defining regional and social differences.¹² Groupness was more commonly associated with lower order political units—city states and towns, clans, tribes and petty kingdoms, military units, and so on. There is no evidence that people in the British archipelago thought of themselves as Britons or that the diverse inhabitants of North Africa had a common sense of African identity in opposition to Rome. The Roman sources sometimes referred to provincial populations in these broad terms, but these were surely externally observed groupings, imposed as a shorthand way to characterize peoples encountered by Rome. The territories annexed to Rome were in general a patchwork—racially, linguistically, and culturally. The Germans beyond the Rhine remained a multiplicity of regional peoples; Germania was a Roman construct and to some extent an ideological fiction.¹³ While it is true that enfranchisement as Roman citizens did create a legal identity that over time came to rival local political affiliations, it is striking that Roman provinces were little used as a marker of an individual's identity, notwithstanding Modéran's recent attempt to identify provincial identity as the "troisième patrie."¹⁴ There is little evidence that people badged themselves as say Tripolitani or Byzaceni, to use two African provinces as examples. Where a geographically related identity was expressed it continued to be most commonly the town or place of birth or a regionally defined entity (native *civitas* or pre-existing ethnic name).

COMMONALITIES: THE ROMANIZATION APPROACH

The Romanization paradigm has had its problems dissected, to the point of dismemberment, by British Romanists across the last 20 years.¹⁵ There have been several announcements of the demise of Romanization, yet it continues to display some signs of vital functions, especially in Roman scholarship emanating from other European and North American countries. The journey I took from initial acceptance of Romanization as a key construct of the discipline, to something that needed special nuancing to be useful, to outright rejection of the paradigm can easily be traced in my published work.¹⁶ I do not propose to go over the argument in detail here. It will suffice to summarize my main objections to Romanization and to explain why I have decided to abandon it as an explanatory device.

Romanization places emphasis above all on elite sites, Roman state structures, monumental public buildings, and elite culture, and universalizes the experience of this culture and the valuing of it across Roman society, whereas there are good reasons to see access to these Roman markers as being much more restricted in Roman society.

The preceding point shows how Romanization has led us to take a fundamentally pro-Roman and top-down view of the empire. This is also partly affected by the choice of monuments to excavate and display for public consumption—which reflect the elite and state-focused agenda (public monuments in towns, villas, and urban *domus* associated with artworks, forts, etc.).

Meanwhile, field survey and rescue archaeology in many countries, especially in Europe, but also in other parts of the empire, have started to publicize a more random cross-section of archaeology, including lesser rural settlements and lower order urban habitation. The new data produced by this sort of work stretches the Romanization paradigm to the limit.

Romanization can also be said to focus to a greater extent on the degree of sameness within and across provinces, rather than on the degree of difference or divergence. As we shall see, when we seek to examine identity, it is the diversity of culture and behavior that is potentially most revealing about social attitudes across the full spectrum of society.

Romanization also suffers from being an intellectually lazy shortcut in that it is commonly used to describe both the process and the result of cultural change, introducing a strong element of circularity to the argument.

It is an unhelpful term in that it implies that cultural change was unilateral and unilinear, prioritizing the Roman aspect of complex cultural interactions and encouraging the use of binary oppositions such as Roman : native.

It is part of a modern colonial discourse on the nature of empire, being formulated in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century heyday of modern European and American empires. Quite apart from the issue of whether the term has continuing practical utility is the issue of whether the modern colonial associations render it unsuited (and potentially damaging to our subject) in a postcolonial age.¹⁷ It is worth reflecting on the differing fate of the study of eugenics in the twentieth century.

Through long and varied use in different scholarly traditions, Romanization has multiple meanings and understandings, making it a flawed paradigm.

A final point about Romanization is that it has generally been more central to studies of western than eastern provinces. Its application to the cultural complexity of Egypt or the Asian territories of the empire, for instance, has always been unconvincing lip service to a dogma developed in the European lands.¹⁸ Seen from Yale, the incongruity of the concept of the Roman East has long been evident. Dura-Europos is a classic instance, in fact, of a city that pushed cultural boundaries in different directions, spatially and chronologically.¹⁹

There has been a trend in the last years to repackage Romanization through the use of terms like *Romanitas* or Romanness.²⁰ I am not sure this solves the problem entirely as it still places the main emphasis on measuring the degree of adherence to supposed Roman cultural norms. I think a more radical approach to the issue is desirable, though I need to be clear that I am not advocating that Romanists abandon the study of the phenomenon formerly referred to as Romanization. Rather I am suggesting that we approach the issue of cultural change from other directions, allowing us to reach new understandings of the mass of data already accumulated and informing the agenda of future study.

DIVERSITY AND DIFFERENCE: THE POTENTIAL OF IDENTITIES

Identity is very much the zeitgeist of archaeology²¹ and classical studies at present.²² While some of the recent work invoking identity reveals the strong imprint of works by Bourdieu (on praxis), Foucault (on power, sexuality), and Giddens (on structuration), much of it

is theoretically unsophisticated.²³ The transference from Romanization to identity can be graphically illustrated by the UK Roman Archaeology Conference, where the numbers of papers and sessions mentioning Romanization and identity have moved in inverse directions over the last 20 years.²⁴ While there has been evident enthusiasm for the concept, there have also been doubts and questions about its application. Indeed there is a possibility that classics has arrived at the party late, when other guests have departed the scene. In the social sciences, some serious concerns have been raised about the continuing utility of “identity” as an underlying concept of those disciplines. The arguments overlap in several respects with the critique I have just advanced of Romanization: 1) “Identity” is so broadly defined and applied as a concept that it loses “analytical purchase”; 2) “Identity” is an essentialist construct that reifies understanding by giving solidity to what is actually fluid and ill-defined; 3) “Identity” is both a category of practice and a category of analysis; and 4) “Identity” is increasingly put in inverted commas or qualified by strings of adjectives in attempts to disguise its analytical shortcomings. No doubt some of the difficulties relate to the semantic looseness with which the term is employed.²⁵

The uses of identity cover a wide range of social situations. Following Brubaker and Cooper, identity can be defined as: 1) The basis of social or political action; 2) A collective phenomenon, relating to the sense of sameness within groups or categories; 3) A core element of individual or collective “selfhood”; 4) The product of social or political action (where it relates to the processual development of groupness); and 5) The product of multiple and competing discourses, highlighting the dynamic, fragmented, and plural nature of sense of self.²⁶

Part of the problem is that use of the term “identity” in academic publications often elides these distinct categories or leaves undefined the precise sense in which it is intended. The analytical value of the concept is much reduced when its meaning is so ambiguous or when the interpretational emphasis is focused on the essentialist construction of a primary affiliation for an individual or group. Such criticisms do not to my mind invalidate the analytical potential of “identity” provided that the manner in which it is to be employed is clearly defined and that the concept is used in an analytical manner, rather than as a mere tool of description.²⁷ My own approach combines aspects of points 4) and 5) in the above list, with the emphasis on the fluid and shape-shifting nature of multiple identity formulations operating within society. Clearly there is a need for other practitioners in classical studies also to be explicit in their theoretical and methodological approaches to identity, to minimize ambiguity in the employment of the term. Despite the criticisms of “identity” in the social sciences, from the evidence of the last decades of Roman research, I believe the advantages of studying cultural change via the identity agenda outweigh the negatives, at least in contrast to Romanization. In this light, we can see that Romanization has tended to produce a reified view of a Roman identity, which is smoothed and averaged across chronological, spatial, and social boundaries to the point where it in fact does not correspond to the precise evidence on the ground at any particular place or moment.

My approach to the use of identity in relation to the Roman Empire can be summarized in a few brief points. A key theme of my work is to explore evidence for different broad identity groups in provinces under Roman rule. In a world of potentially infinite identity presentations, it is preferable to seek to delineate some broad communities rather than atomization to the level of individuals. My initial work has focused on detecting gross differences between these groups in terms of material culture and behavior patterns. For instance, in studies of Britain and Africa, I have delineated large differences between the identity markers of urban, rural, and military communities.

There were evidently many ways of constructing a “Roman” identity (and by “Roman” identity I mean a presentation of self that reflected the place of an individual within the power structures of the Roman world). Identity studies also allow us to access and assess differing levels of social conformity in Roman society. It is increasingly clear that identity strategies

were not simply about emulation (as Romanization has tended to suggest). Rather the desire to create a sense of differentiation and distance from other groups in society often seems to have been a crucial factor in material and behavioral choices. Identity lends itself to exploration of both inter- and intra-communal difference. It has also become apparent that within the broad communities I defined there was lots of internal variability in the use of material culture and that there was dynamic change across time (leading to a plurality of identities).

IDENTITY AND MATERIAL CULTURE

A major problem in the archaeological application of identity studies concerns the use of material culture as evidence.²⁸ There are, of course, also problems in utilizing textual evidence, since written testimony is not immune to bias and misdirection. However, at least the study of texts can be regulated by the rigor of “source criticism.” Artifacts have rarely been considered as active agents of culture, as opposed to passive objects.²⁹ When artifacts are identified as having been imbued with special value as identity markers, not much thought is given to the way in which they were used in society or consideration of the fact that the same artifacts could have varied uses and diverse significance to different groups.

Some artifacts convey clear information about associated behaviors. For example, the distribution of amphorae and the incidence of graffiti on pots at sites in Britain illustrate different consumption behaviors among the military community in comparison to urban and rural communities.³⁰ The military diet in Britain favored wine/oil over the north European norm of beer/butter, despite the inconvenience and expense of shipping Mediterranean amphora commodities across vast distances. Graffiti on pots also speaks to us of the emphasis on literate behaviors in the military. While the adoption of shiny red pottery fine wares has sometimes rather simplistically been equated with Romanization, the spread of similar styles of pottery in many areas was more likely a consequence of the globalization of the Roman world (such as the vessels from Gaul and Tunisia in the present exhibition, plates 161, 166).³¹ Close analysis again reveals different patterns of consumption among the three broad communities. Identity patterns are more concealed and pertain to different usage made of pottery by various groups in society, by the emergence of different types of vessels at a regional level, or the preference for certain vessel types by different sectors of the provincial community.³² When historical archaeologists of the Americas recognized the potential of material culture to play a larger role in the tracing of lifeways and social identity, this led to the development of artifactual studies covering a wide range of mundane artifacts.³³

One of the problems impeding studies of Roman material culture is that the recording of artifacts is often highly selective and favors the more “Roman” or “elite” classes. In North Africa, for instance, there are comparatively few excavated sites with comprehensive publications of all classes of pottery and small finds, whereas in Britain not only are excavated assemblages published in detail (backed up by grey literature reports in other cases),³⁴ but there is also a major national cataloguing and mapping program related to surface and metal-detected finds (the Portable Antiquities Scheme).³⁵ The full potential of finds is revealed in cases not only where they have been well catalogued but also where the depositional context has been carefully recorded, allowing a proper assessment of the use behavior to be assessed.³⁶ From such bodies of data new types of analysis are becoming possible. Hella Eckardt’s work has revealed very different levels of engagement with a range of artifact types across my three communities (military, urban, and rural). Lamps (and by implication artificial light) were overwhelmingly connected with the military community and the largest cities, while a range of toilet implements reveal a distribution much more focused on smaller urban centers and rural communities.³⁷ The remarkable dossier of artifacts, paintings, relief carvings, and inscriptions relating to the Roman army at Dura-Europos (see for example the painting of Terentius, fig. 6.2; and bronze artifacts in the present catalogue, plates 60, 62–65)

provides remarkable insights into the creation of a package of material and behavioral markers of a Roman military identity that was widely diffused within the empire.³⁸

It is also important to remember that Roman culture spread far beyond the frontier.³⁹ The possession of artifacts from the Roman world in Germany, Scandinavia, Ireland, India, or the central Sahara did not mean that people in these remote regions were perceived or saw themselves as “becoming Roman.” The adoption of some of the material trappings of a powerful neighboring civilization was potentially a strategy to reinforce or to transform local power structures. What is clear is that the associated behaviors and use context of material culture beyond the frontiers often followed unusual patterns, creating distinctive expressions of indigenous identity, not pale imitations of Rome. Why might this not also apply to some instances of uptake of Roman material culture within the provinces?

Artifacts that are perceived as artworks are a particularly well studied subset of Roman material culture, though the tendency is often to correlate discoveries within an established canon of classical art, with less attention paid to regional peculiarities and distinctiveness or to pre-existing traditions of art.⁴⁰ There is also sometimes a tendency to elide the stylistic and iconographic characteristics of a huge range of material, which reflects pre-Roman traditions, cosmopolitan art of the Roman Empire, and distinctive regional provincial art forms as though this vast corpus was part of a single continuum. The art of the Roman Empire was a product of the colonial environment in which it was created and more work is needed to draw this out.⁴¹ Dura-Europos is an exceptional example of this, but detailed regional studies of almost any corner of the empire will produce surprising patterns. To cite one example on which I have worked, the funerary iconography of tombs at Ghirza in the Libyan desert can be linked in part to “Roman” norms, but are more appropriately seen as a localized response to new ways of expressing Libyan cultural ideas about power, ancestor worship, fertility, and so on.⁴²

I want to end this section with a few general reflections on how archaeologists use material culture to define identity. In part because artifacts, especially art objects and precious items, are divorced from their use context, some of our interpretations are a bit relativist. In fact, Romanization theory has encouraged us to sum and amplify the main material culture markers and draw conclusions about the degree of Romanness present. I have encapsulated this approach in an imagined equation (perhaps devised by Einsteinorix as his Theory of Social Relativity):

$$I = mc^2$$

(I = Identity, mc = material culture)

Put crudely, Romanness has tended to be determined by the amount of Roman “stuff” that people had, with its importance multiplied and other material cultures present ignored.

As I have been arguing, however, a fundamental point about the analysis of artifacts is that it was not generally the artifacts that defined identity; rather it was the specific associated behaviors and contexts of use. I argue that identity is the product of a complex set of interactions involving structure and agency, material culture and behavior. These relationships can be imagined as an alternative equation to the one above:

$$I = Ss/Sa + B(mc)$$

(I = Identity, Ss = Social structures, Sa = Social agency, B = Behaviors, mc = material culture)

I am not suggesting that either equation is of *any* practical value in exploring identity, and I present them simply as a heuristic device to illustrate the over-simplifying emphasis of the Romanization approach when compared with the complexity I believe we need to introduce to discussions of the linkage between material culture and identity. What I am trying to

convey here is the complex interplay between artifacts, behaviors, and aspects of individual agency and social structure that should be considered in defining identity. While it may not always be possible to delineate all these factors in full from the archaeological material available, we should at least attempt to keep all these in mind.

DISCREPANT IDENTITY

A further key ingredient of my approach to identity is the recognition that the social behaviors witnessed across Roman society were to some extent contingent on the colonial context.⁴³ It is for this reason that I favor the use of the word “discrepant” in relation to the range of identities that I have delineated, as this term conveys more effectively than “different” or “plural” or “hybrid” that such outcomes were achieved in a world of colonial power networks.⁴⁴ Identity has a harder edge in such drastically unequal societies and many behaviors are constrained or distorted by the realities of where political, social, or economic power resided. In the early days of Romanization theory there was a common assumption that Rome had a deliberate and evolved cultural program, designed to make the provinces more Roman and thus easier to govern. In more recent times, the emphasis has shifted to native agency as an explanation for the patterns of adoption of Roman identity.⁴⁵ My preference is to see the complex cultural combinations as the result of highly varied colonial situations in which key intentional acts of the state (such as imposing garrisons, raising taxes, redistributing land, and exploiting resources) elicited a range of responses from subject peoples, which were also affected in repeated feedback cycles by the systemic effects of empire (fig. 3.1).⁴⁶ This relates to the generally unintended consequences of imperial power imbalances. These create conditions in which individuals charged with delivering elements of imperial rule (from governors, to soldiers, to councilors, to tax collectors) had the opportunity, or the latent potential at least, to exceed their brief. The perception of how power operated or could operate was thus a factor in guiding behavioral choices and further consequential acts.

Intentional acts (structure)	Systemic effects (unforeseen consequences)	Consequential acts (native agency)
Garrison deployments	Brutality	Behavior modifications
Census taking	Surveillance and intrusion	Resistance (economic)
Tax settlements	Abuses/corruption/extortion	Tax payment/avoidance
Legal frameworks	Legal inequalities	Reinforced social hierarchy
Urban promotions and encouragement of monumentalization	Fiscal over-commitments of towns	Elite competition for imperial favor
Land confiscation, survey, and reassignment	Incentives and penalties	Emergence of greater regional and community differences
Creation of imperial estates and exploitation of natural resources	Conflicts of interest between locals and officials/chief tenants	Loss of valuable resources to community
Language of government	Exclusive nature	Linguistic choices
Enslavement	Individual exploitation	Increase in slave ownership
Recruitment	Loss of men to community	Recruits absorbed into military community
Operation of imperial economy	Unequal economic opportunities and consequences	Investment in province from outside and inside

3.1. Chart illustrating effects of imperial power structures.

It is commonly stated in Roman studies that the empire was an overall good thing for its subject peoples and that incorporation into the provincial structure brought tangible

improvements in the lives of millions.⁴⁷ The Roman conquest was a short-lived unpleasantness, before subjected peoples were able to settle down to “sensible” life in cities and enjoy the benefits of membership of the Roman club.⁴⁸ The parallelism between this and both what Roman writers said of their imperial destiny to rule benevolently and the “white man’s burden” argument elaborated in the late nineteenth century to justify the activities of European empires is striking.⁴⁹ All are part of separate imperial discourses intended to provide the ideological backbone for colonial rule. The Roman world was a drastically unequal society and it is worth reflecting on the characteristics of such societies before we conclude that Rome was uniquely accommodating and inclusive among empires and that her subject peoples were uncommonly consensual. One of the most interesting books of recent years on the formation of complex societies and the emergence of kingdoms and empires has focused on the way in which such societies are built on progressively more dramatic exploitation of underprivileged members, through the emergence of hierarchies of inequality.⁵⁰

Are unequal societies consensual and happy ones? Detailed statistical analysis of Wilkinson and Pickett on modern societies has demonstrated the opposite may be the case. They have assessed the levels of equality of modern countries in terms of the relationship between the wealth of the richest 20% and the poorest 20%. Across a huge range of social markers, what they have found is that the performance of unequal societies significantly lags behind that of more equal ones. This effect shows up not only in things like life expectancy, violence, and social mobility, but also in health and mental illness, educational attainment, social problems and anti-social behavior, happiness, and other measures of human well-being.⁵¹ There are serious obstacles to demonstrating if this holds true for the Roman world, most obviously we lack the sort of statistical data that Wilkinson and Pickett have used. But the strong modern correlation between inequality in societies and a range of negative social markers should surely give us pause for thought about our default view of the Roman world. To play a thought game for a moment, if we did have unlimited access to Roman census data from a range of provinces (and their predecessors) would those data actually uphold the assumed picture of a benevolent and beneficent empire raising the standard of living of the vast majority? Just as the great colonial era buildings of London and Paris do not represent a time of universally improved living conditions, life-expectancy, incomes, and social cohesion in those cities, so we should avoid the temptation to equate the monumental achievements of Roman architecture with the greater good in provincial societies.⁵² This highlights for me why the conventional focus in Romanization studies on elite groups in society creates a false image of the generality of social wellbeing under Roman rule.

There is in fact some archaeological evidence from human skeletal analysis to suggest that life expectancy in some areas of the Roman Empire was lower than in pre-Roman times. The work of Rebecca Redfern has been particularly impressive in this regard, as she has been able to work with groups of both late Iron Age and Roman inhumations from southern England and thus to compare data on human stature, longevity, disease, and a range of health markers.⁵³ Interestingly, the results suggest, just like the Wilkinson and Pickett analysis, that children, adult men, and the elderly faced an increased risk of mortality and a number of adverse health markers (including enamel hypoplasia related to malnutrition) under Roman rule. The assumed universal benefits of membership in the Roman Empire were thus in all probability far less apparent to the majority of its inhabitants than they have been to generations of modern scholars.⁵⁴ These issues remind us of the non-consensual nature of imperial power and the inherent probability that alongside the participation and collaboration, there was always resistance—albeit primarily cultural or passive.⁵⁵

Religion and funerary practices are areas of life where the underlying behaviors can be studied as well as the material culture in use and are thus particularly fruitful ones for the exploration of identity. Funerary practices are one of the most useful ways to expose



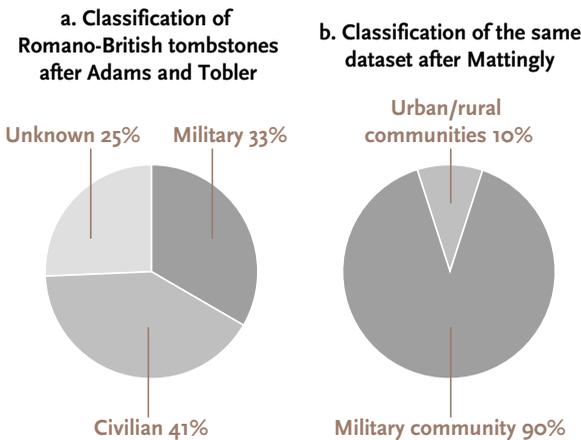
3.2. Tombstone of Regina from South Shields Roman fort near Hadrian's Wall. Arbeia Roman Fort and Museum, Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums, T765.

such variations and local/social patterning in identity.⁵⁶ This is also one of the most obvious points of departure from the (incorrectly) assumed norms of the Roman Empire. The idea that funerary practices were characterized by cremation burial in the early Principate, with this being increasingly replaced by inhumation in mid-late imperial times is at best a partial truth even in the western provinces where the pattern is most commonly encountered. For the East, Egypt, and Africa the patterns were much more varied.

The first stage of my analysis of discrepant identity has been to explore the distinctiveness in material culture and behaviors of the military community, town dwellers, and rural populations in two provinces, Britain and Africa. Here I have expanded on the work of specialists on the Roman army, such as Simon James, who have constructed an impressive picture of the army as a distinctive community, with organizational structures, dress, linguistic practices, and an array of distinctive behaviors that set soldiers apart from the majority of civilians in the provinces.⁵⁷ What is interesting is that there are perceptible differences in a range of key social behaviors that also effectively discriminate between urban and rural communities. A good example concerns the incidence of Latin tombstones in Britain (fig. 3.2). This has generally been assumed a normative Roman practice that was widely adopted across Britain, among soldiers and civilians

alike. Adams and Tobler, for instance, assumed an even split between military and civilian use of tombstones (fig. 3.3a).⁵⁸ However, the location map of tombstone findspots shows that the vast majority come from the militarized part of the province; further analysis leads to the suggestion that erecting tombstones was primarily a social practice of the military community, extending to the special categories of civilians closely connected with them (families, veterans, merchants, and craftspeople living alongside garrison settlements, other imperial officials, including imperial slaves and freedmen) (fig. 3.3b). At the same time,

tombstones from rural districts are extremely rare and the exceptions appear to be associated with extraordinary circumstances (suspected imperial estates, the territories of veteran *coloniae*, and so on), while finds from towns for the most part can be attributed to the military community (soldiers on secondment or in transit, imperial officials, veterans and their families) or to foreigners (i.e., non-Britons who went to the trouble of stating this fact on the stone). The British *civitas* center towns are notable for the absolute paucity of tombstones recovered (other than those relating to these exceptional and external groups). Most of these towns have produced either one or zero tombstones. This surely reflects a non-participatory cultural choice on the part of the vast majority of native Britons.⁵⁹



3.3. Alternative classifications of the corpus of Romano-British tombstones: a) Adams and Tobler separated women and children at known military sites from soldiers, boosting the numbers of "civilians"; b) my reworking of the dataset, assigning men, women, and children at known garrison sites entirely to the military community.

HETEROGENEITY, HYBRIDITY, AND PLURALITY

I have argued that a prime reason to abandon the concept of Romanization is that it allows us to shift attention away from issues of cultural commonality and homogeneity toward heterogeneity and hybridity. That is not to imply that the issues of commonality lack continuing relevance, but merely to reflect that after more than a century of the Romanization agenda those aspects of cultural change are quite well exposed. Colonial “soft power” and the creation of a globalized socio-economic zone can help account for much of the similar patterning we trace across the empire. There is a further impact of the neglect or de-emphasis of evidence of heterogeneity and long-continued pre-Roman traditions in that such evidence sits uncomfortably with conventional notions of an inclusive and consensual Roman Empire. A growing interest in postcolonial approaches to imperialism among some archaeologists⁶⁰ has been opposed by others with entrenched interests in the model of a benevolent Roman Empire.⁶¹ I would counter that we may be in a better position to judge the distinctiveness of the Roman Empire in comparison with more recent imperialisms once we have subjected the ancient evidence to the same sort of critical analyses that have been applied to the modern case studies. It is precisely in this light that the exploration of the underlying factors that explain the hybrid and diverse culture and cultural practices of the Roman Empire in its entirety is such a pressing need. It does not matter much to me whether people call this “discrepant identity,” hybridity, or some other term, as long as the phenomenon is explored—with Scholars’ Day,⁶² the exhibition, and this book a promising start. When engaging in colonial comparisons it seems to me that we need to focus on underlying processes rather than the specific mechanics of colonial systems, as Stark and Chance have done recently in exploring the strategies adopted by provincials in empires. The detail varies, but the behaviors can generally be equated with a range of options: bolstering, emulation, resistance, exodus, information control, appropriation, complicity, assimilation (fig. 3.4).⁶³

Strategies

Bolstering: E.g., elites seek collaboration with imperial agents to guarantee position within empire

Emulation: E.g., elites (and others) take on styles and practices of imperial elites

Resistance: Provincials seek to reduce or overturn imperial controls

Exodus: Move to escape imperial boundaries or power

Information control: Attempts to conceal or restrict information that was demanded by the imperial power

Appropriation: Selective adoption of imperial procedures and institutions

Complicity: Individuals pursue own interests (often economic) via collaboration with imperial regime

Assimilation: Elites and some commoners seek varied degree of social and identity integration with dominant imperial society

3.4. Strategies of provincials in imperial societies (after Stark and Chance 2012, 193).

PLURALITY VERSUS SINGULAR AFFILIATIONS

In his book *Identity and Violence* Amartya Sen eloquently makes the case for why we need to give more attention to multiple affiliations in social analysis, instead of over-emphasizing singular affiliations, like nation-state or religion.⁶⁴ This seems to be one of the key safeguards against the reifying power of identity studies when narrowly focused. The moment we prioritize one or a few identity markers we are heading toward essentialist and often

predictable conclusions. Brubaker, while voicing semantic concerns about the use of the term identity, has highlighted in his other work the importance of multiple ways of defining groupness. Both writers stress that factors that help define groups may be either specific to the individual or influenced by external factors (such as the structure and agency relationship). As Sen observes, “The freedom of choosing our identity in the eyes of others can sometimes be extraordinarily limited.”⁶⁵ Some cultural behaviors thus represent “reactive identity” as a response to socio-political impositions—here I think in particular about the sorts of colonial humiliation or the dramatic inequalities inherent in a colonial society that are implied in Figure 3.1.

One of the key questions to ask about political changes is the extent to which they were transformative of the lived experience of people. This is well illustrated by a story told by Hugo Gryn in his memoir of growing up in what is now southeast Slovakia. A man from the town of Berehovo has arrived at the gates of heaven and before admittance is told by an angel that he must tell the story of his life:

“I was born in the Austro-Hungarian Empire...received my education in Czechoslovakia, and started to work as an apprentice in Hungary. For a time I also worked in Germany, but I raised my own family and did most of my life’s work in the Soviet Union.” The angel was impressed. “You certainly travelled and moved about a great deal.” “Oh no,” the man protested, “I never left Berehovo!”⁶⁶

While those political transitions of the early twentieth century were particularly dramatic and had a major impact on the lives of many inhabitants, they were not historically unique—one can imagine ancient equivalents. In the course of the second century BCE, for example, the North African coastal city of Lepcis Magna moved from being a Carthaginian dependency, to a territory of the Numidian Kingdom, to a self-governing Libyphoenician community, to an ally of Rome, to an effective part of the Roman Empire. Each of those political changes will have involved cultural realignments.

Plural identities need to be investigated at a number of different levels, not simply in terms of ethnic, linguistic, or political units—which tend to dominate identity politics. In my recent work, I have suggested that identity in the Roman provinces may have been defined by (in no particular order): status, wealth, location, employment, religion, place of origin, family or ethnicity, proximity of engagement with the Roman imperial project, legal condition, language, literacy, gender, and age. It is unlikely that there was a predominant factor that consistently outranked others. Scholars of early Christianity recognize that religious identity did not serve as a primary affiliation until long after Christianity was established as the dominant religion.⁶⁷ Individuals may have belonged to multiple identity groups at any time, or indeed have acted in socially contingent ways depending on locale, fellow actors, audience, and so on. In this example I present the complex identity markers that can be deduced about Regina, a British slave who was freed by and married to Barates, a Syrian with a connection to the Roman army in northern Britain. The iconography of the tombstone (fig. 3.2) is that of a respectable Roman matron and the image is regularly used in books and museum displays to illustrate the archetype of a Roman woman in Britain, once again exposing the essentialism of the Romanization model. The true story of Regina shows that her identity and her life were far less straightforward and typical, with a sinister shadow cast by her enslavement.⁶⁸

My next example is drawn from Lepcis Magna in Libya. This Libyphoenician city was transformed from the reign of Augustus into one of the most recognizable Roman centers in North Africa, boasting early examples of Italian-style theaters, market buildings, and pedimental temples. The people who effected the transformation were not Roman colonists, but local Liby-

phoenician notables—men like Annobal Tapapius Rufus, who donated the funds for the market (11 BCE) and theater (1–2 CE). These early adopters also embraced Latin epigraphy for public inscriptions (initially as part of handsome bilingual texts), togate statues, and, increasingly as the first century CE progressed, Roman naming practices and the other perks of citizenship. At one level this is the classic Romanization success story. But there are indications that more complex identity games were being played out here, even among the aristocratic order that was most visibly “becoming Roman.” Annobal Tapapius might define his identity in a number of different ways, in part dependent on social context and the maintenance of such plural identities; this is strongly supported by the evidence of funerary practices in first- and second-century CE Lepcis.⁶⁹

The pre-Roman tradition in Tripolitania included the use of subterranean hypogea for multiple burials and freestanding tower and obelisk mausolea, in the Punic tradition. Excavations at Lepcis have shown a diversity of Roman burial and commemorative practices. Initially, many burials continued to be made in specially constructed hypogea of Libyphoenician type. The hypogea type of burial at Lepcis is well illustrated by a double-chambered example at Gelda, c. 2.5 km southwest of Lepcis. The two funerary chambers were each constructed with 10 niches for cinerary urns, with a wide bench running around the walls in front of the niches for the placement of other grave goods. One of the chambers had been completely cleared in antiquity, but the other contained 11 cremations and three inhumations, evidently deposited between the Flavian period and the mid-second century. The burial rite employed, the tomb contents, and the epigraphic indications on the cinerary urns provide a remarkable record of a society in cultural transition. The family seems to have been from the very top level of Lepcitanian society, as indicated by the quality of the burial monument, the best of the ash urns and associated grave goods, including fragments of two folding stools. Two types of cinerary urn were used: the earlier form was a gabled stone chest; the later type a stone vase, some plain, some with elaborate vegetal decoration. Most of the urns carried engraved inscriptions, the earlier examples in Neo-Punic script, the later ones in Latin characters.

Considerable interest lies in the naming practices observed on the ash chests and urns. Two of the ash chests had Neo-Punic inscriptions, but evidently related to individuals who already at that time possessed Roman citizenship, Publius Flavius Proculus Iaton and [Publius Flavius] Iustus Iaton. The final element is evidently a peregrine name added to the *tria nomina*. The third ash chest bore the name Flavia Amothmic Nysfur in Latin. The vase urns all had inscriptions in Latin letters, but though (seemingly) dealing with Roman citizens the form of names did not generally respect the expected form of presentation of *tria nomina* (see fig. 3.5). The vase urns represented an innovation of the Flavian period and probably derived from Roman models, though several were of clear local manufacture. Overall, this fascinating assemblage shows a family of early adopters at work, taking on Roman citizenship and Roman names, but maintaining onomastic practices in the tomb that evoked earlier identity markers in Punic and Libyan society. This family was also quick to switch to coffined inhumation and plaster portrait busts in the mid-second century.

Other Lepcitanian hypogea have revealed a similar pattern of non-synchronicity between the forms of names on public inscriptions or on funerary inscriptions outside the tomb and the use of Neo-Punic or abbreviated Latin names on the cinerary urns. Of approximately 200 inscribed urns known from burials near Lepcis only about 10% used the Latin naming system properly.⁷⁰ The majority of these hypogeal burials evidently related to the elite class and this shows that even among the Lepcitanian elite, who were at the forefront of “becoming Roman,” families often retained Libyan or Punic cognomina in the domestic and funerary contexts, whereas public identity emphasized the purely Latin aspects of the individual’s identity. There is a mix of Latin, Punic, and Libyan names among the inscriptions, and even the Latin names sometimes reflect the Libyan heritage of an individual, as in the case

Urn no.	Form on urn	Reconstructed name?
1 (Neo-Punic)	PWBLY PL'WY PRQL YT/NN/T	Publius Flavius Proculus Iaton
2 (Neo-Punic)	YHST' YT/NN/T	(Publius Flavius) Iustus Iaton
3	FLAVIA AMOTH/MIC NYSFUR	Flavia Amothmic Nysfur
4	No inscribed name—perhaps originally painted	
5	C. FLAVI PROCULI	C. Flavius Proculus
6	NAMGYDDE	(?) Namgyddus
7	C. F. PROCUIL BYDBA/LIS F	C. Flavius Proculus, son of Bydbal
8	PROCUL	(C. Flavius?) Proculus
9	CANDIDE	(?) Candidus (or Candida?)
10	M. F. IUSTI	M. Flavius Iustus
11	FLAMINIAE GAETULIAE	Flaminia Gaetulia

3.5. Names on funerary urns in the Qasr Gelda hypogeum at Lepcis Magna (after Di Vita-Évrard et al. 1996).

of Flaminia Gaetulia mentioned in Figure 3.5. There are few young children represented in the hundreds of cremations from Lepcis, and on the ash chests female names are much less common than male ones (33 : 67). Both of these anomalies may reflect continuation of pre-Roman cultural traits. A final point about the hypogeal burials is that they continued in use even after the switch to inhumation and the fact that the inhumations were inserted into the hypogea alongside the existing ash urns that were moved to one side but not cleared out completely, suggests continuity of family use.

The contrast between building dedications from within the city where *tria nomina* were generally used by prominent Lepcitanians from the late first century CE and funerary texts on mausolea, evidently for people of the same sort of elevated social status, is striking. The man commemorated on the Qasr Duirat mausoleum near Lepcis, C. Marius Boccius Zurgem, has a distinctly Libyan extra cognomen and this pattern echoes other examples.⁷¹ These Libyan or Libyphoenician lineage groups seem to have remained of high significance for the first generation or so after acquisition of Roman citizen status.

The first use of Latin varied across different types of inscriptional contexts (with its use initially overlapping with Neo-Punic): public inscriptions were the first to change, followed by funerary inscriptions, and finally by names inscribed on the urns within tombs. Nor was there a synchronous cutoff point across these different types of inscriptions when Neo-Punic gave way finally to Latin. In other words, the Libyphoenician elite adopted Latin much sooner and more completely in the public sphere than in the domestic sphere. Punic remained the key spoken language at Lepcis, and its use in funerary inscriptions long outlasted its disappearance in public inscriptions. The funerary landscape at Lepcis thus reveals a rather different pattern of identity presentation to the monumental urban core and the world of public inscriptions, statues, and mosaics.

In my work on Britain and Africa, I have dealt with very different types of data. Britain is rich in published artifact assemblages covering a wide range of materials but is comparatively weak in epigraphic and literary data. Africa has a disproportionate volume of inscriptions and literary texts, notably from the Christian period, whereas the artifactual record is heavily slanted toward elite artworks, with few sites for which the mundane culture of daily life has been well published. Nonetheless, I have found in both cases that the approach of discrepant identity has yielded interesting and valid results.⁷² That gives me hope that the approach will have utility elsewhere too, notwithstanding the fact that our datasets are so varied and incomplete. New approaches to data collection can enhance the

datasets available, as in the outstanding work on household assemblages carried out by Anna Boozer in the Dakhla oasis town of Amheida.⁷³ Dura-Europos seems to me to be another ideal site to apply discrepant identity analysis to, with its plural and highly differentiated expressions of groupness and individual personhood.⁷⁴ However, rather than seeing sites like Dura-Europos as exceptional, we need to recognize the likelihood that this sort of hybrid cultural plurality was probably much closer to the norm at many sites in the Roman Empire. Nor do we need the extraordinary preservation conditions of sites like Dura-Europos, Amheida, or Pompeii to engage in the sort of analysis of identities that I am advocating. All that is required is a change of mindset and asking different questions of the available evidence.

CULTURAL BACKWATERS AND CULTURAL BACKWASH

In 2012–13 there was a major exhibition in central Rome, spread across the Colosseum and several monuments in the Roman Forum. *Roma Caput Mundi...tra dominio e integrazione* explored traditional themes in Roman studies. It posed the old question: How was it that the Roman Empire enjoyed such success in unifying the ancient Mediterranean and lands beyond for so long? The theme of domination, though given equal billing in the title, was much less prominent in the displays, which strongly emphasized integration as the key aspect of Roman imperialism. Perhaps inevitably, Romanization still looms large in the model proposed:

The Romanisation of Italy and the provinces was not like a blanket spread over cities and countryside with the intention of eliminating diversity and turning the infinitely varied colours of local culture into a monochrome fabric. Roman identity was never forced on Rome's conquered subjects, cancelling pre-existing identities as punishment for defeat. Rebellions were put down ruthlessly, but the Romans did not force their culture on submissive former enemies...Romanisation was the highest privilege they could offer, and since they were convinced that their culture was superior, they thought it natural that foreigners should make it their own. Individuals chose to become Romanised because they were attracted to Roman culture, because it raised their social status, because it allowed them access to local and public offices. [...] Fusion of the dominant culture and indigenous cultures could lead to diverse and novel ways of life. Romanisation was like a unique tree that spread the same branches everywhere, but produced fruits of different flavours.⁷⁵

Leaving aside the florid and mixed metaphors and the emphasis on false negatives here, this passage is interesting for the way it still presents cultural change as something that was initiated by Romans and that took place in the provinces. However, the Rome exhibition in fact illustrated a very different pattern of cultural interaction. Since virtually all the material presented in the exhibition came from Rome or Italy, the real subject was the transformation of the metropolitan heartland of the Roman Empire and the integration of an extraordinary diversity of new cultural markers, religions, and ethnic groups within Roman society. The catalogue is filled with images of these cultural innovations often culturally incongruous in the context of republican Italy, with much epigraphic testimony of migration of people from all corners of the empire, some voluntarily, some forced. Here we encounter one of the great paradoxes of imperialism: the more wide-flung and diverse the cultural territories incorporated, the greater the long-term transformation of the metropolitan core, with cultural change at the center generally running at a faster pace and exceeding the transformation in the provinces. The reason is self-evident when one considers the operation of an empire

like Rome—the individual provinces were opened up to new cultural ideas from Rome and to potentially enhanced regional contacts and migration flows, but the effects often appear to be focused at certain key sites, or on particular social groups (mainly elites) and representative of only a subset of the totality of the material culture of the Roman Empire. On the other hand, the metropolitan center was open to reciprocal cultural flows and migration with all the provinces. The scale and pace of cultural change was thus much more dramatic and multi-dimensional than what we encounter in the provinces. Many provincial territories remained relative cultural backwaters, where pre-Roman traditions and practices were long maintained, while we might characterize what we witness at Rome as the cultural backwash of empire.

The cultural changes were not always welcome in conservative Rome—as the section in the *Roma Caput Mundi* exhibition on the attempted repression of the Bacchanalia in 186 BCE illustrates. But it is equally apparent from the sequel to the ultimately unsuccessful action against the Bacchic cult that the Roman state had limited ability to constrain or control the multilateral process of cultural exchanges that imperial conquest had unleashed. Like the tide coming in, cultural backwash is an unavoidable side effect of empire.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, I have advanced eight key arguments.

In the first place, I challenge the common assumption that there was a clear-cut Roman identity that was widely adopted across the Roman world. This has implications for the way in which we approach the material culture and behaviors of people living in the Roman provinces. Linked to this first proposition, I also think it mistaken to prioritize a singular non-Roman alternative identity. Thirdly, this Roman : non-Roman binary opposition is embedded in Romanization theory and is a further reason we need to replace the Romanization discourse with new approaches linked to identity.

The fourth issue raised relates to the emergence of “identity” in the last decades as a serious alternative to Romanization, and the fact that the application of identity studies in archaeology also has problematic aspects and theoretical and methodological processes that need to be clearly defined.

My fifth point relates to my own approach to identity, which takes as its starting points the inherent diversity of material culture in the Roman world and the fact that imperial systems elicit discrepant behavioral responses covering a broad spectrum from resistance to consensual participation.

The next point acknowledges that while there is value in looking for variance in identity markers and behaviors at the level of broad groups—the army, townspeople, rural communities—it is evident that there was huge variance within these groups as well as between them and a plurality of identities resulted which were dynamic rather than static.

My seventh point recognizes that the ultimate goal of studying identity in the Roman world is not simply to categorize specific examples (the stamp collecting approach), but to use such studies to arrive at a deeper understanding of how the impact of the Roman Empire operated at the social level, revealing the varied choices and priorities of the millions of subjects, not simply the culture and aspirations of the ruling elite who have predominated in the Romanization view.

Finally, I have suggested that the cultural flows between metropolitan center and provinces, between province and province, and between provinces and center are highly variable. Paradoxically, especially in relation to the assumptions underlying a model like Romanization, the greatest net cultural change in an imperial system is often located at its metropolitan center due to the focusing there of the diverse cultural influences of all the provinces. This is what Edwards and Woolf encapsulated in *Rome the Cosmopolis*, but we

might equally think of Rome as one of the first multicultural cities, characterized not by its sense of unchanging *Romanitas* so much as myriad plural identities.⁷⁶



- 1 Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (New York: Norton, 2006).
- 2 The chapter summarizes and takes further work on identity that I have been engaged with over the last decade, see “Vulgar and Weak ‘Romanization,’ or Time for a Paradigm Shift?,” review of *Italy and the West: Comparative Issues in Romanization*, ed. Simon Keay and Nicola Terrenato, *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 15 (2002): 536–40; “Being Roman: Expressing Identity in a Provincial Setting,” *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 17 (2004): 5–25; *An Imperial Possession: Britain in the Roman Empire, 54 BC–AD 409* (London: Penguin, 2007); “Cultural Crossovers: Global and Local Identities in the Classical World,” in *Material Culture and Social Identities in the Roman World*, ed. Shelley Hales and Tamar Hodos (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 283–95; *Imperialism, Power, and Identity: Experiencing the Roman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).
- 3 Greg Woolf, *Becoming Roman: The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); but cf. his earlier article, “Becoming Roman, Staying Greek: Culture, Identity and the Civilizing Process in the Roman East,” *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 40 (1994): 116–43.
- 4 The paper is published as John C. Barrett, “Romanization: A Critical Comment,” in *Dialogues in Roman Imperialism: Power, Discourse and Discrepant Experience in the Roman Empire*, ed. David J. Mattingly (Portsmouth: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 1997), 51–64 (quote from 52).
- 5 *Ibid.*, 59.
- 6 Leicester Faith Trail, see <http://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/archaeology/research/projects/mapping-faith/faith-trail>.
- 7 See Timothy Insoll, “Configuring Identities in Archaeology,” in *The Archaeology of Identities: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 2007), 1–18, see 11–13 for the comparison of modern multicultural societies with the Roman Empire.
- 8 Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 1995); Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* (London: Routledge, 1998); Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray, eds., *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).
- 9 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983); Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
- 10 Ton Derks and Nico Roymans, eds., *Ethnic Constructs in Antiquity: The Role of Power and Tradition* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009); Jonathan Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Benjamin Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Siân Jones, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity: Constructing Identities in the Past and Present* (London: Routledge, 1997).
- 11 Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 58.1.21 cited by Jonathan Conant, *Staying Roman: Conquest and Identity in Africa and the Mediterranean, 439–700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1.
- 12 J. N. Adams, *Bilingualism and the Latin Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
- 13 Tacitus, *Germania*, trans. J. B. Rives (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
- 14 Yves Modéran, “La province, troisième patrie,” in *Provinces et identités provinciales dans l’Afrique romaine*, ed. Claude Briand-Ponsart and Yves Modéran (Caen: CRAHM, 2011), 9–40.

- 15 Richard Hingley, *Globalizing Roman Culture: Unity, Diversity and Empire* (London: Routledge 2005); Simon James, "'Romanization' and the Peoples of Britain," in *Italy and the West: Comparative Issues in Romanization*, ed. Simon Keay and Nicola Terrenato (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2001), 187–209; Mattingly, *Dialogues in Roman Imperialism*; Jane Webster, "Creolizing the Roman Provinces," *American Journal of Archaeology* 105, no. 2 (2001): 209–25; Jane Webster and Nick Cooper, eds., *Roman Imperialism: Post-Colonial Perspectives* (Leicester: School of Archaeological Studies, University of Leicester, 1996).
- 16 See *inter alia*, Barri Jones and David J. Mattingly, *An Atlas of Roman Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990); Mattingly, *Tripolitania* (London: Batsford, 1995); Mattingly "Being Roman"; Mattingly, *Imperial Possession*; and Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power, and Identity*.
- 17 Jane Webster, "Roman Imperialism and the 'Post-Imperial Age,'" in *Roman Imperialism*, 1–17; Webster, "Ethnographic Barbarity: Colonial Discourse and 'Celtic Warrior Societies,'" in *ibid.*, 111–23; Webster, "Necessary Comparisons: A Post-Colonial Approach to Religious Syncretism in the Roman Provinces," *World Archaeology* 28, no. 3 (1997): 324–38.
- 18 Warwick Ball, *Rome in the East: The Transformation of an Empire* (London: Routledge, 2000); Alan Bowman, *Egypt after the Pharaohs, 332 BC–AD 642* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Fergus Millar, *The Roman Near East, 31 BC–AD 337* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); Miguel Versluys, "Exploring Identities in the Phoenician, Hellenistic and Roman East," *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 65, nos. 3–4 (2008): 341–56. Cf. also, Woolf, "Becoming Roman, Staying Greek."
- 19 See most notably, Gail L. Hoffman, "Theory and Methodology: Study of Identities Using Archaeological Evidence from Dura-Europos," in *Dura-Europos: Crossroads of Antiquity*, ed. Lisa R. Brody and Gail L. Hoffman, exh. cat. (Chestnut Hill: McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, 2011), 45–69; Nigel Pollard, "Colonial and Cultural Identities in Parthian and Roman Dura-Europos," in *Aspects of the Roman East: Papers in Honour of Professor Fergus Millar FBA*, ed. Richard Alston and Samuel N. C. Lieu (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 81–102. Cf. J. A. Baird, "The Graffiti of Dura-Europos: A Contextual Approach," in *Ancient Graffiti in Context*, ed. J. A. Baird and Claire Taylor (New York: Routledge, 2011), 49–68, for an attempt to show how different communities within the town employed graffiti in varied ways and to different degrees.
- 20 Conant, *Staying Roman*, 3–9, for an insightful analysis of Romanness.
- 21 For a representative range of recent studies, Margarita Díaz-Andreu et al., *The Archaeology of Identity: Approaches to Gender, Age, Status, Ethnicity and Religion* (London: Routledge, 2005); Andrew Gardner, "Social Identity and the Duality of Structure in Late Roman-Period Britain," *Journal of Social Archaeology* 2, no. 3 (2002); Gardner, ed., *Agency Uncovered: Archaeological Perspectives on Social Agency, Power, and Being Human* (London: University College London Press, 2004); Melanie Giles, *A Forged Glamour: Landscape, Identity and Material Culture in the Iron Age* (Oxford: Windgather, 2012); Margarita Gleba and Helle W. Horsnaes, eds., *Communicating Identity in Italic Iron Age Communities* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2011); Hales and Hodos, *Material Culture*; Edward Herring and Kathryn Lomas, *Gender Identities in Italy in the First Millennium BC* (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 2009); Timothy Insoll, ed., *The Archaeology of Identities: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 2007); Lynn Meskell, "Archaeologies of Identity," in *Archaeological Theory Today*, ed. Ian Hodder (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), 187–213; Louise Revell, *Roman Imperialism and Local Identities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Ursula Rothe, *Dress and Cultural Identity in the Rhine-Moselle Region of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2009); Peter van Dommelen and Nicola Terrenato, eds., *Articulating Local*

- Cultures: Power and Identity under the Expanding Roman Republic* (Portsmouth: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2007).
- 22 See *inter alia*, Ray Laurence and Joanne Berry, eds., *Cultural Identity in the Roman Empire* (London: Routledge, 1998); Claude Briand-Ponsart, ed., *Identités et cultures dans l'Algérie antique* (Rouen: Publications de l'Université de Rouen, 2005); Claude Briand-Ponsart and Sylvie Crogiez, eds., *L'Afrique du nord antique et médiévale: Mémoire, identité et imaginaire* (Rouen: Publications de l'Université de Rouen, 2002); Emma Dench, *Romulus' Asylum: Roman Identities from the Age of Alexander to the Age of Hadrian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Monique Dondin-Payre and Marie-Thérèse Raepsaet-Charlier, *Noms, identités culturelles et Romanisation sous le Haut-Empire* (Brussels: Timperman, 2001); Janet Huskinson, ed., *Experiencing Empire: Culture, Identity and Power in the Roman Empire* (London: Routledge, 2000); Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, *Rome's Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Tim Whitmarsh, ed., *Local Knowledge and Microidentities in the Imperial Greek World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
- 23 Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980); Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of a Theory of Structuration* (Cambridge: Polity, 1984).
- 24 Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power, and Identity*, 208–9.
- 25 Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity,’” *Theory and Society* 29 (2000): 1–47, see 5: “What is problematic is not that a particular term is used, but how it is used.” For an insightful discussion on the potential and problems of the use of identity in Roman archaeology, see Martin Pitts, “The Emperor’s New Clothes? The Utility of Identity in Roman Archaeology,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 111, no. 4 (2007): 693–713.
- 26 Brubaker and Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity,’” 6–8.
- 27 It also remains the case that Brubaker and Cooper’s rejection of the term “identity” is far from accepted within the social sciences in general, see *inter alia* Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2008).
- 28 Here I must acknowledge that other contributors to this volume are far more expert than I in researching material culture across a wide range of artifact types. My analysis of the shortcomings of some of the traditional approaches to artifactual studies is not intended as a criticism of their work, but rather an observation on a lack of critical rigor in the field more generally. As is apparent from the papers presented in this volume, there is a commendable engagement with new agendas among the contributors.
- 29 Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Chris Gosden, *Archaeology of Colonialism: Cultural Contact from 5000 BC to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Chris Gosden and Yvonne Marshall, “The Cultural Biography of Objects,” *World Archaeology* 31, no. 2 (1999): 169–78.
- 30 Jeremy Evans, “Material Approaches to the Identification of Different Romano-British Site Types,” in *Britons and Romans: Advancing an Archaeological Agenda*, ed. Simon James and Martin Millet (York: Council for British Archaeology, 2001), 26–35. See also Robin Fleming, “Struggling to be Roman in a Former Roman Province,” in this volume.
- 31 R. Bruce Hitchner, “Globalization Avant la Lettre: Globalization and the History of the Roman

- Empire,” *New Global Studies* 2, no. 2 (2008), doi:10.2202/1940-0004.1034; Tamar Hodos, “Local and Global Perspectives in the Study of Social and Cultural Identities,” in *Material Culture*, esp. 23–27; Martin Pitts, “Globalizing the Local in Roman Britain: An Anthropological Approach to Social Change,” *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 27 (2008): 493–506; Robert Witcher, “Globalisation and Roman Imperialism: Perspectives on Identities in Roman Italy,” in *The Emergence of State Identities in Italy in the First Millennium BC*, ed. Edward Herring and Kathryn Lomas (London: Accordia Research Institute, University of London, 2000), 213–25.
- 32 Martin Pitts, “Regional Identities and the Social Use of Ceramics,” in *TRAC 2004: Proceedings of the 14th Annual Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference, Durham 2004*, ed. James Bruhn, Ben Croxford, and Dimitris Grigoropoulos (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2005), 50–64; Pitts, “Pots and Pits: Drinking and Deposition in Late Iron Age South-East Britain,” *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 24, no. 2 (2005): 143–61; Pitts, “Consumption, Deposition and Social Practice: A Ceramic Approach to Intra-Site Analysis in Late Iron Age to Roman Britain,” *Internet Archaeology* 21 (2007), doi:10.11141/ia.21.2; Pitts, “Artefact Suites and Social Practice: An Integrated Approach to Roman Provincial Finds Assemblages,” *Facta: A Journal of Roman Material Culture Studies* 4 (2010): 125–52; Steven Willis, “Samian Pottery: A Resource for the Study of Roman Britain and Beyond; The Results of the English Heritage Funded Samian Project,” *Internet Archaeology* 17 (2005), doi:10.11141/ia.21.2.
- 33 The seminal text remains James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten: An Archaeology of Early American Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1977).
- 34 “Grey literature” is the term used for archived reports, whether held in hard copy or in digital format. The Archaeological Data Service (ADS) is a common repository for digital files (<http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/greylit/>). These resources are increasingly being exploited by national research programs, as in the case of a current project on Roman rural settlement (<http://www.reading.ac.uk/archaeology/research/roman-rural-settlement/>).
- 35 Lindsay Allason-Jones, ed., *Artefacts in Roman Britain: Their Purpose and Use* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). For PAS, see <http://finds.org.uk>.
- 36 Hilary Cool, “An Overview of the Small Finds from Catterick,” in *Cataractonium: Roman Catterick and Its Hinterland; Excavations and Research, 1958–1997*, ed. Peter Wilson (York: Council for British Archaeology, 2002), 24–43; Cool, *The Roman Cemetery at Brougham, Cumbria: Excavations 1966–67* (London: Roman Society, 2004); Cool, *Eating and Drinking in Roman Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Hilary Cool and M. J. Baxter, “Exploring Romano-British Finds Assemblages,” *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 21, no. 4 (2002): 363–80; Hilary Cool and Chris Philo, eds., *Roman Castleford Excavations 1974–85: Volume 1, The Small Finds* (Wakefield: West Yorkshire Archaeological Services, 1998); Nina Crummy, *Colchester Archaeological Report 2: The Roman Small Finds from Excavations in Colchester 1971–9* (Colchester: Colchester Archaeological Trust, 1983).
- 37 Hella Eckardt, “The Social Distribution of Roman Artefacts: The Case of Nail-Cleaners and Brooches in Britain,” *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 18 (2005): 139–60; Hella Eckardt and Nina Crummy, *Styling the Body in Late Iron Age and Roman Britain: A Contextual Approach to Toilet Instruments* (Montagnac: Éditions Monique Mergoïl, 2008), 36.
- 38 Simon James, *Excavations at Dura-Europos 1928–1937: Final Report 7; The Arms and Armour and Other Military Equipment* (London: British Museum, 2004). Also see James, “The ‘Roman-ness of the Soldiers’: Barbarized Periphery or Imperial Core?,” in this volume.

- 39 Thomas Grane, ed., *Beyond the Roman Frontier: Roman Influences on the Northern Barbaricum* (Rome: Quasar, 2007); David J. Mattingly, ed., *The Archaeology of Fazzan: Volume 1, Synthesis* (London: Society for Libyan Studies, 2003).
- 40 Duncan Garrow and Chris Gosden, *Technologies of Enchantment? Exploring Celtic Art: 400 BC to AD 100* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Duncan Garrow, Chris Gosden, and J. D. Hill, eds., *Rethinking Celtic Art* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2008); Peter Wells, *Image and Response in Early Europe* (London: Duckworth, 2008).
- 41 Sarah Scott and Jane Webster, eds., *Roman Imperialism and Provincial Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). See also Johnston in this volume.
- 42 David J. Mattingly, "The Art of the Unexpected: Ghirza in the Libyan Pre-Desert," in *Numismatique, langues, écriture et arts du livre, spécificité des arts figures Afrique du Nord antique et médiévale*, ed. Serge Lancel (Paris: CTHS, 1999), 383–405; Mattingly, "Family Values: Art and Power at Ghirza in the Libyan Pre-Desert," in *Roman Imperialism and Provincial Art*, 153–70. Cf. Paul Zanker, "Selbstdarstellung am Rand der libyschen Wüste: Die Reliefs an den Häuflings-Mausoleen in der Nordnekropole von Ghirza," in *Austausch und Inspiration: Kulturkontakt als Impuls architektonischer Innovation*, ed. Felix Pirson (Mainz: Von Zabern, 2004), 214–26.
- 43 Like identity, ancient colonialism has attracted increased interest from classical scholars in recent years, informed by postcolonial theory, leading to new perspectives: Michael Dietler, *Archaeologies of Colonialism: Consumption, Entanglement, and Violence in Ancient Mediterranean France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010); Michael Given, *The Archaeology of the Colonized* (London: Routledge, 2004); Andrew Gardner, "Thinking about Roman Imperialism: Postcolonialism, Globalization and Beyond?," *Britannia* 44 (2013): 1–25; Gosden, *Archaeology and Colonialism*; Tamar Hodos, *Local Responses to Colonization in the Iron Age Mediterranean* (London: Routledge, 2006); Henry Hurst and Sara Owen, eds., *Ancient Colonizations: Analogy, Similarity and Difference* (London: Duckworth, 2005); Claire L. Lyons and John K. Papadopoulos, eds., *The Archaeology of Colonialism* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2002); Gil Stein, ed., *The Archaeology of Colonial Encounters: Comparative Perspectives* (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 2005); Peter van Dommelen, *On Colonial Grounds: A Comparative Study of Colonialism and Rural Settlement in First Millennium BC West Central Sardinia* (Leiden: University of Leiden, 1998).
- 44 The term "discrepant identity" is my elaboration on what Said called "discrepant experience," see Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1992). See also, David J. Mattingly, "Dialogues of Power and Experience in the Roman Empire," in *Dialogues in Roman Imperialism*, 1–16 and *Imperialism, Power, and Identity*, 213–45.
- 45 Keay and Terrenato, *Italy and the West*; Martin Millett, *The Romanization of Britain: An Essay in Archaeological Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Peter Wells, *The Barbarians Speak: How the Conquered Peoples Shaped Roman Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); Wells, *How Ancient Europeans Saw the World: Vision, Patterns, and the Shaping of the Mind in Prehistoric Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).
- 46 The table is a development from an idea initially explored in *Imperialism, Power, and Identity*, 16.
- 47 For a review of some of the evidence for the benign assumptions about Roman imperialism, see Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power, and Identity*, 13–22; Phiroze Vasunia, *The Classics and Colonial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 22, 150–55.
- 48 A few examples from many, Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman*

- Empire*, vol. 1 (1776; London: J. Murray, 1896), 78: “If a man were called upon to fix the period in the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would, without hesitation name that which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus.” Theodor Mommsen, *Provinces of the Roman Empire: The European Provinces* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 4: “Seldom has the government of the world been conducted for so long in an orderly sequence. [...] In its sphere, which those who belonged to it were not far wrong in regarding as the world, it fostered the peace and prosperity of the many nations united under its sway longer and more completely than any other leading power has ever done.” Francis Haverfield, *The Romanization of Roman Britain*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1915), 10: “The men of the Empire wrought for the betterment and the happiness of the world.” Albert Rivet, *Town and Country in Roman Britain* (London: Hutchinson’s University Library, 1958), 78: “For success was only achieved when the garrisons could be withdrawn, the forts dismantled and the local inhabitants be left to settle down to sensible Roman life in towns.” John Wachter, ed., *The Roman World*, 2 vols. (London: Routledge, 1987), 1:12: “The endurance of the Roman Empire is one of the success stories of history. That it survived so long is a sign of its principal achievement, whereby a heterogeneous mixture of races and creeds were induced to settle down together in a more or less peaceful way under the *Pax Romana*.”
- 49 Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power, and Identity*, 18–20.
- 50 Kent Flannery and Joyce Marcus, *The Creation of Inequality: How Our Prehistoric Ancestors Set the Stage for Monarchy, Slavery, and Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), especially 341–544 on kingdoms and empires.
- 51 Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, *The Spirit Level: Why Equality is Better for Everyone* (London: Penguin, 2010).
- 52 See for example, Vasunia, *Classics and Colonial India*, 157–91 on the employment of classical architecture in India; James Morris, *Pax Britannica* (London: Penguin, 1968), 177–213 on architecture in London and India. See also Richard Hingley, ed., *Images of Rome: Perceptions of Ancient Rome in Europe and the United States in the Modern Age* (Portsmouth: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2001); Hingley, *Roman Officers and English Gentlemen: The Imperial Origins of Roman Archaeology* (London: Routledge, 2000).
- 53 Rebecca Redfern, “A Bioarchaeological Investigation of Cultural Change in Dorset, England (Mid-to-Late Fourth Century BC to the End of the Fourth Century AD),” *Britannia* 39 (2008): 161–91. Rebecca Redfern and Sharon DeWitte, “A New Approach to the Study of Romanization in Britain: A Regional Perspective of Cultural Change in Late Iron Age and Roman Dorset Using the Siler and Gompertz–Makeham Models of Mortality,” *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 144, no. 2 (2011): 269–85.
- 54 Redfern and DeWitte, “A New Approach,” 278–79: “The age patterns of mortality within the late Iron Age and Romano-British samples, as revealed by the Siler model parameter estimates, suggest that Romanization had deleterious effects on the age groups that are typically the most vulnerable, i.e., very young children and the elderly. [...] Following the Roman conquest, men were apparently at significantly higher risks of dying than women. This finding questions many traditional and often implicit assumptions about Romanization and life in the Roman Empire, fundamentally that this cultural change and social environment would be more advantageous for men.”
- 55 We are just returning to such issues, despite interest in these themes 40 years ago, Marcel Bénabou, *La résistance africaine à la romanisation* (Paris: Maspero, 1976), D. M. Pippidi, ed., *Assimilation et résistance à la culture Gréco-romaine dans le monde ancien* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1976).

- 56 On Roman funerary practices see *inter alia*, Maureen Carroll, *Spirits of the Dead: Roman Funerary Commemoration in Western Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Richard Jones, "Burial Customs of Rome and the Provinces," in *The Roman World*, 2:812–37; Ian Morris, *Death-Ritual and Social Structure in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Jocelyn Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971). The regional complexity and the use of funerary ritual to express aspects of identity is more evident in Valerie Hope, *Constructing Identity: The Roman Funerary Monuments of Aquileia, Mainz and Nimes* (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 2001); John Pearce, Martin Millett, and Manuela Struck, eds., *Burial, Society and Context in the Roman World* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2000); Lea Stirling and David Stone, eds., *Mortuary Landscapes of North Africa* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).
- 57 Adrian Goldsworthy and Ian Haynes, eds., *The Roman Army as a Community* (Portsmouth: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 1999); Simon James, "Soldiers and Civilians: Identity and Interaction in Roman Britain," in *Britons and Romans: Advancing an Archaeological Agenda*, ed. Simon James and Martin Millett (York: Council for British Archaeology, 2001), 77–89. Cf. Mattingly, *Imperial Possession*, 16–224; *Imperialism, Power, and Identity*, 220–36. See also James, "The 'Romanness of the Soldiers,'" in this volume. Interestingly, the distinctive package of material culture associated with the army is extraordinarily widespread in the Roman world—indeed it is one of the factors underlying the evolution of the idea of a Romanization process, though we now recognize it as something much more focused on a specific minority group within imperial society, rather than a sign of a general pattern of cultural change.
- 58 Geoff W. Adams and Rebecca Tobler, *Romano-British Tombstones between the 1st and 3rd Centuries AD: Epigraphy, Gender and Familial Relations* (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 2007).
- 59 David J. Mattingly, "Urbanism, Epigraphy and Identity in the Towns of Britain under Roman Rule," in *A Roman Miscellany: Essays in Honour of Anthony R. Birley on His 70th Birthday*, ed. H. M. Schellenberg, V. E. Hirschmann, and A. Kriekhaus (Gdansk: Department of Archaeology, Gdansk University, 2008), 53–71.
- 60 Peter van Dommelen, "Colonial Constructs: Colonialism and Archaeology in the Mediterranean," *World Archaeology* 28, no. 3 (1997): 305–23; Van Dommelen, "Ambiguous Matters: Colonialism and Local Identities in Punic Sardinia," in *The Archaeology of Colonialism*, 121–47; Van Dommelen, "Colonial Interactions and Hybrid Practices: Phoenician and Carthaginian Settlement in the Ancient Mediterranean," in *Archaeology of Colonial Encounters*, 109–41.
- 61 Terrenato highlights what he sees as modernizing tendencies of those who would like to compare the Roman Empire with other empires, whether this comparison was done in the nineteenth century or in the postcolonial age, arguing for the uniqueness of the Roman Empire. Terrenato, "The Deceptive Archetype: Roman Colonialism in Italy and Postcolonial Thought," in *Ancient Colonizations*, 59–72; cf. also his "The Cultural Implications of the Roman Conquest," in *Roman Europe*, ed. Edward Bispham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 234–64. But attempting to disallow comparative study of empire informed by postcolonial approaches, while effectively ignoring the extent to which the conceptual framing of classical studies was and still is influenced by nineteenth- and early twentieth-century comparative study is surely disingenuous. See further Peter van Dommelen and Nicola Terrenato, "Introduction: Local Cultures and the Expanding Roman Republic," in *Articulating Local Cultures*, 7–12.
- 62 Held at Yale University on September 20–21, 2013, Scholars' Day gathered the curators of *Roman*

- in the Provinces* and contributors to this book to discuss and develop themes for the exhibition and publication.
- 63 Barbara L. Stark and John K. Chance, “The Strategies of Provincials in Empires,” in *The Comparative Archaeology of Complex Societies*, ed. Michael E. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 192–237. Cf. also, Jane Webster, “Archaeologies of Slavery and Servitude: Bringing ‘New World’ Perspectives to Roman Britain,” *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 18 (2005): 161–79.
- 64 Sen, *Identity and Violence*, esp. 20–28.
- 65 *Ibid.*, 30.
- 66 Hugo Gryn, *Chasing Shadows: Memories of a Vanished World* (London: Viking, 2000), 6.
- 67 Éric Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity: North Africa 200–450 CE* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012); Conant, *Staying Roman*.
- 68 For a recent new study of this fascinating tombstone, see Maureen Carroll, “‘The Insignia of Women’: Dress, Gender and Identity on the Roman Funerary Monument of Regina from Arabia,” *Archaeological Journal* 169 (2012): 281–311.
- 69 Ginette Di Vita-Évrard, Sergio Fontana, and Luisa Musso, “Leptis Magna: Une tombe exemplaire du haut-empire,” in *Monuments funéraires, institutions autochtones en Afrique du nord antique et médiévale*, ed. Pol Troussset (Paris: CTHS, 1995), 153–78; Di Vita-Évrard et al., “L’ipogeo dei Flavi a Leptis Magna presso Gasr Gelda,” *Libya Antiqua*, n.s., 2 (1996): 85–133; Sergio Fontana, “Lepcis Magna: The Romanization of a Major African City through Burial Evidence,” in *Italy and the West*, 161–72.
- 70 Fontana, “Lepcis Magna,” 167.
- 71 Joyce M. Reynolds and John B. Ward-Perkins, eds., *The Inscriptions of Roman Tripolitania (IRT)* (Rome: British School at Rome, 1952), *IRT* 729 (Qasr Duirat); Fontana, “Lepcis Magna,” 168–69 citing Q. Domitius Camillus Nysim (*IRT* 692); Q. Caecilius Cerialis Phiscon (*IRT* 673); C. Calpurnius Tracachalus Dosiedes (*IRT* 677).
- 72 For Britain, see in particular, Mattingly, *Imperial Possession*; for Africa, see some preliminary thoughts in my *Imperialism, Power, and Identity*. The African case study was the subject of my 2013 Jerome Lectures and will be prepared in due course for publication.
- 73 Anna L. Boozer, *Housing Empire: The Archaeology of Daily Life in Roman Amheida, Egypt* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).
- 74 Indeed, there are already a number of excellent studies that pick up on the plural identities expressed through the site’s remarkable material record, see *inter alia* Patricia DeLeeuw, “A Peaceful Pluralism: The Durene Mithraeum, Synagogue, and Christian Building”; Lucinda Dirven, “Strangers and Sojourners: The Religious Behavior of Palmyrenes and Other Foreigners in Dura-Europos,” both in *Crossroads of Antiquity*, 189–99 and 201–20.
- 75 Andrea Giardina and Fabrizio Pesando, eds., *Roma Caput Mundi: Una città tra dominio e integrazione*, exh. cat. (Milan: Electa, 2012), 33–34; see also Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, “Romanizzazione,” in *ibid.*, 111–16.
- 76 Cf. Catharine Edwards and Greg Woolf, *Rome the Cosmopolis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).



HOUSEHOLD OBJECTS AND SOCIAL MEMORIES IN ROMAN SPAIN AND GAUL

Andrew C. Johnston

One finds it often asserted in modern scholarship that in their effacement of identity and the erasure of their traditions, the inhabitants of the western provinces of the empire “were distinctive among the emperors’ subjects in being only Roman.”¹ This essay endeavors to problematize this idea, and to show, on the contrary, that in the provinces, becoming or “being Roman”—whether by this we mean the acquisition of citizenship or the participation in certain cultural practices—did not preclude the felt sense of being something quite different, of belonging to other and more subjectively meaningful local communities. This analysis of the negotiation of local identities within the western Roman imperial world seeks to move the discussion beyond an outmoded emphasis on processes of “Romanization” and “resistance” or on quantifications of “Romanness,” a cultural monolith that is in itself an illusory and anachronistic concept. I will focus on a handful of fascinating, underappreciated small finds from across Roman Spain and Gaul, remarkable but representative household objects that afford a window into how the inhabitants of these provinces situated and remembered themselves in an imperial world. By “household” objects, I here mean portable, non-monumental works in metal—bronze or silver—that would have been kept, displayed, and interacted with primarily in private, domestic contexts rather than in public. Through these five case studies, which place these artifacts in their cultural historical contexts, this essay offers a new approach to understanding local identities in the Roman West and the importance of social memory—an expression of collective experience that identifies a group, giving it a sense of its past and helping to define its aspirations for the future—in the construction and expression thereof.²

SUCELLUS

Our first case study takes us to the city of Vienna (Vienne, France) in the province of Gallia Narbonensis (see map, p. v). Originally a settlement of the people of the Allobroges, its advantageous situation on the Rhône at the confluence with the Gère made it a gateway to northern Gaul, and attracted Roman merchants in great numbers already in the first half of the first century BCE. Economic, social, and cultural anxieties seem to have resulted in the expulsion of Romans from Vienna in 61 BCE during the brief uprising of the Allobroges, led by their chieftain Catugnatus. But tensions soon subsided; by the Augustan period, the city had been granted the honorific status of a *colonia*, and by the middle of the first century CE

the emperor Claudius could cite Vienna as an *exemplum* of a once-foreign place that now admirably participated in the rights and responsibilities of Roman citizenship.³ Vienna is thus representative of the compelling complexities that characterized many provincial communities of the empire: it was increasingly integrated in political and economic networks that connected it with Rome and the wider Mediterranean, while retaining an appreciation of distinctiveness and local identity informed by memories of its Roman and pre-Roman pasts.

It was here that, in 1866, a construction project near the ancient site of the Roman theater fortuitously uncovered a cache of artifacts from the mid-imperial period, the most important of which were two bronze statuettes of a male divinity.⁴ One was ultimately acquired by the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore (fig. 4.1), the other by the British Museum.⁵ The former—a bearded, well-muscled figure—strikes a pose recognizably influenced by Greek artistic traditions, with a hipshot, almost Polykleitan, stance. He is nude but for a wolf skin wrapped around his shoulders, its forepaws tied at his sternum; the pelt covers his head, leaving visible only a few locks of hair that frame his Zeus-like face, and falls across the upper part of his outstretched left arm, its hind legs and tail dangling behind his back. His left hand gripped the haft of a long mallet, now lost, while in his extended right hand he holds an *olla* (small jar). But the most remarkable element of this statuette is the object that rises up from behind the figure: a huge mallet, with five smaller mallets radiating out from the head. Although this figure of the “mallet god” has been subject to a series of “Romanizing” (mis) identifications since its discovery—Hercules, Jupiter, Dispat, Silvanus—the scholarly consensus is now that the statue represents the divinity Sucellus, whose name in the Gaulish language means—fittingly, given that his conventional primary attribute is the oversized mallet—“the Good Striker.”⁶ The case for this identification is strengthened by, among other evidence, votive altars from Gaul, on which a god of similar iconography is explicitly named in the inscription as Sucellus.⁷



4.1. Bronze statuette of Sucellus, 1st–2nd century CE, Vienne. Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 54.998.

The other Sucellus from the Vienna hoard, which now resides in the collection of the British Museum (fig. 4.2), is represented with many of the same attributes as the first: an *olla* in the outstretched right hand, and a long-hafted mallet (now lost) gripped in the left; a full beard and long hair with articulated locks, again partly cloaked by a wolf skin, a feature which clearly evokes the lion skin of Hercules. There are, however, significant differences between the two bronzes. This second figure is not in the style of a heroic nude, but rather is clothed in the traditional local costume, consisting of a tight-fitting, thigh-length check-patterned tunic with sleeves, worn over similarly-patterned pantaloons, topped off by what appears to be a *sagum*, a typical cloak of the peoples of Gaul. Moreover, the detail and proportions of this Sucellus, whose classical stance recalls that of his larger counterpart, are somewhat less masterfully executed. On stylistic grounds, both figures probably date to the late first or early second century CE. Given that the indigenous Sucellus was almost certainly not the subject of figural representation until after the Roman conquest, these images partake of the invention of tradition, capitalizing on a shared consciousness of and desired continuity with a collective past, and imbuing this past with a ritual and symbolic function in the present.⁸

Although it has been frequently repeated in scholarship that the trove of objects to which these statuettes belonged was found in the *lararium* of a Roman house, the original

archaeological context is, in fact, uncertain, in light of the circumstances of its incidental discovery.⁹ But it is a plausible hypothesis that these bronzes had at one time in the second century CE belonged to the shrine of a household, or perhaps of a professional corporation, at Vienna; comparanda for the presence of such figurines in domestic ritual contexts are known from various parts of early imperial Gaul.¹⁰ Thus it seems that a member—or members, across multiple generations—of the municipal elite of Vienna commissioned these works in bronze from two different artists for the purpose of private display and devotion, and that the two versions of the god may have been intended to complement one another. Other residents of Vienna of a lower social status expressed their veneration of the god in different ways, but with a similarly local audience in mind: a stone stela, probably intended for use as a funerary monument, was found near the so-called “House of Sucellus” in the residential quarter on the right bank of the Rhône (Saint-Romain-en-Gal) with a comparatively crude but recognizable representation of Sucellus, dedicated by a small-time tradesman (*sarcitor*) called Atticus.¹¹ While the devotees who commissioned the bronzes chose to align themselves with “classical” modes of viewing and particular patterns of conspicuous consumption shared by a larger Roman imperial cultural *koine*, these Sucellus statues nevertheless reflect the construction and performance of a distinctly local identity, aspects of which would have been unintelligible to those outsiders at Vienna who were not conversant in the local cultural vocabulary.

A contemporary literary source may illuminate, or at least approximate, the texture of some of these Narbonensian conversations. In his “introductory discourse” *Hercules*, the second-century CE Greek writer Lucian relates an anecdote in which he, while sojourning in Gaul, found himself pondering a strange painting of what appeared to him to be Hercules, whom he claims the locals call in their native language “Ogmios.” Although some superficial elements of the iconography of this “Hercules” are intelligible to Lucian, like his club and lion-skin, the hero is otherwise unrecognizable:

he is old and dark-skinned, with only wisps of white hair left on his balding head, and, most surprising of all, he drags behind him a great throng of men whose ears are chained to his own tongue and who seemingly follow him with great eagerness. As Lucian stands at a loss as to how to interpret the scene, a local wise man approaches him and, in remarkably good Greek, explicates its meaning: his people connect eloquence not with Hermes, as the Greeks do, but with this Hercules-Ogmios. As “eloquence personified,” the god is depicted as an old man because this is the age where the art of speaking reaches its perfection, and the chains that bind the ears of the men to the tongue of the god thus represent a visual metaphor of the power of persuasion.¹²

It has been suggested recently that we are to identify Lucian’s philosophizing interlocutor as none other than his sophistic counterpart from Arelate (Arles), Favorinus, with whom he may actually have conversed during a visit to Gallia Narbonensis, or, more likely, whose writings were reworked by Lucian in order to stage a fictive and allusive literary encounter.¹³ But regardless of the exact inspiration for the conversation related in this text, it possesses a certain verisimilitude, allowing us to “eavesdrop” on discourses of identity that are otherwise difficult to discern, given the nature of our evidence. Particularly important about the story told by Lucian is that behind the superficial syncretism of Ogmios with Hercules actu-



4.2. Bronze statuette of Sucellus, 1st–2nd century CE, Vienna. British Museum, London, 1894.0507.

ally lies a meaningful and deep-seated rhetoric of difference, an act of remembering rather than forgetting. Ogmios carries a couple of Hercules's token items, but for local viewers he is unequivocally *not* the Greek hero, in the same way that, although a casual glance at the attributes or countenance or posture of Sucellus might suggest to an outsider's eye Hercules or Zeus or Silvanus, on closer inspection the god ultimately frustrates all of these interpretations. As responses to Roman power, these kinds of images—and the irrecoverable narratives and mythologies that were presumably constructed about their subjects—were discursive statements that engaged with imperial artistic and religious grammars in order, ultimately, to display a highly negotiated localism.¹⁴

Sucellus was prominent throughout southern Gaul, and though sometimes conflated on Narbonensian monuments with the Roman Silvanus, he maintained a distinctive personality.¹⁵ He is implicitly invoked through his repertoire of symbols (usually *olla* and mallet, often together with trees and a dog) on anepigraphic altars lacking anthropomorphic representations, and explicitly represented in stone and bronze both at the other major urban centers near Vienna like Glanum (Saint-Remy-de-Provence), Nemausus (Nîmes), Vasio (Vaison-la-Romaine), and Arelate, and in the hinterland at sites like Orpierre (fig. 4.3).¹⁶



4.3. Bronze statuette of Sucellus, 1st–2nd century CE, Orpierre (Haute-Alpes). Musée d'Archéologie nationale, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, 58257.

The iconography of Sucellus as well as the diverse style and medium of his representation suggest room for significant local innovation and variation even within this region, as seems to have been the case further north and west of the Rhône valley among the Aedui, Lingones, and Arverni, where attributes relating to viticulture and wine consumption frequently occur alongside the typical mallet. But it was in and around Vienna where his cult seems to have had perhaps the most vibrancy and longevity.¹⁷ A votive altar dedicated to *deus Sucellus* by a woman with a Roman name, Gellia Iucunda, has been dated as late as the fourth century CE,¹⁸ and the image of Sucellus is found on a series of decorative ceramic medallions, a genre popular in the valley of the Rhône, including Vienna, during the late second and early third centuries CE. Herein he is depicted with the iconography characteristic of the bronze statuettes or stone reliefs—bearded,

with the *olla* in his outstretched right hand and the mallet in his left, flanked by a small tree and accompanied by a dog—and is explicitly identified by an exclamatory, wishful legend: *Sucellum propitium nobis* (“Sucellus, be gracious unto us!”).¹⁹ Sucellus is, in fact, the only indigenous divinity to be included on these medallions, the mythological scenes of which are predominantly Greek; this suggests the continually renegotiated importance of Sucellus to the local elite of Vienna and its territory, even as they came increasingly to participate in the cultural inheritance of the imperial center. The ultimate motivations behind these kinds of cultural choices and the exact valences of the god Sucellus for the people of Vienna, either individually in the expressions of their personal devotion or as a collective in the construction of a community identity, remain obscure. But it is remarkable that the cult of this divinity continued to compete successfully in the pluralistic “religious marketplace” of the Roman world long into the imperial period.²⁰

The bronze statuettes of Sucellus that we have examined embody the complexities of local social memories among the Allobroges of Vienna, the importance of which ought

not to be understated. Pliny the Elder, the Roman encyclopedist of the mid-first century CE, claimed that, already in his day, Narbonensis was “in the cultivation of its fields, in the reputation of its men and manners, in the abundance of its resources...more truly Italy than a province.”²¹ Modern appropriation of this contemporary Roman mentality, which is informed by a problematic set of imperial rhetorical tropes, has contributed in large part to the prevailing thread in scholarship that has tended to emphasize the “Romanization” of Narbonensis and the provincials’ “forgetfulness,” at the expense of telling other tales about local communities and identities.²² But Succellus at Vienna is a salutary reminder of the limits of these kinds of historical models and narratives.

GENIUS CUCULLATUS

We are confronted with similar challenges in a bronze figurine in the collection of the Yale University Art Gallery (plate 175), which probably also belonged to a domestic cult. This is one of the most extraordinary images of the enigmatic divinity conventionally known by the Latin name *genius cucullatus* (“hooded spirit”), an appellation attested in antiquity only on a pair of votive altars found at Wabelsdorf, Austria, in the Roman province of Noricum.²³ The god, whose defining iconographic features are, in general, his small stature and the pointed cowl (*cucullus*) and cloak, is otherwise vexingly anonymous, although diverse representations of him—sometimes with the additional attributes of a phallus, egg, or scroll—are found throughout the Roman provinces of Britain, Gaul, and Germany.²⁴ This particular statuette, the exact provenance of which is unknown, had been, until recently, variously interpreted as a work of early classical or late Hellenistic Greece; but it has now been convincingly argued on stylistic and technical grounds that it ought rather to be placed in the context of the western Roman provinces of the second century CE.²⁵ It represents a squat, bearded male figure, enveloped by a long cloak—inlaid with copper to suggest a pattern—that culminates in an exaggeratedly tall, pointed hood; underneath are visible the contours of his arms, one of which holds the cloak together at his chest, while the other nestles horizontally at his waist. Their shape gives the vague suggestion that his hands, especially the left, may grasp unknown objects—possibly the characteristic scroll or egg—hidden under his overgarment. He wears a pair of leather boots, his only other discernible attribute.

One of the earliest and most instructive parallels for this figure appears on several issues of silver coinage dated to the period immediately following the Roman conquest (around the third quarter of the first century BCE), minted by the *civitas* of the Segusiavi, whose territory was situated in central Gaul just northwest of that of the Allobroges (fig. 4.4).²⁶ On the reverse of this series is depicted, standing at left, a nude, muscular, bearded male figure holding a club in his right hand with an animal skin draped over his left arm; under his right arm is the legend *ARVS*, probably the name of a local dynast responsible for this coinage. At right, on a pedestal or altar, stands a shorter male figure—sometimes identified as a wooden idol—wrapped in a patterned ankle-length cloak that conceals his entire body, with a hood gathered around his neck; he wears boots underneath the cloak. This image thus seems to show the *genius cucullatus* as an object of cult, and the apparent relationship with the other figure—possibly



4.4. Silver coin (reverse) of the *civitas* of the Segusiavi, c. 50–25 BCE. British Museum, London, 1901,0503.235.



4.5. Silver denarius (reverse) of C. Antius Resto, 47 BCE, Rome. British Museum, London, R.8904.



4.6. Limestone statuette of a *genius cucullatus*, 1st century BCE–1st century CE, Moulézan (Gard). Musée Archéologique de Nîmes.

Hercules or a local divinity with similar attributes—hints at an underlying but obscure mythology. We are afforded a rare glimpse into dynamics surrounding the creation of this scene by the fact that it was demonstrably adapted from a Roman silver denarius of 47 BCE (fig. 4.5).²⁷ Significant alterations were made for the local audience of the Segusiavi, most notably the removal of visual references to Roman victory from the original and the inclusion of the *genius cucullatus*. The prominence given to this divinity, presumably chosen from a wide array of available cultural symbols, seems almost programmatic, especially on coinage that is a direct reaction to Rome, both chronologically and iconographically, and suggests its importance to the self-representation of the *civitas* of the Segusiavi, or at least to members of the elite. This kind of response—the articulation and assertion of community memory through a new visual medium—was more common in the western provinces than is sometimes realized; it is broadly similar, for example, to the reaffirmation of local identity and cosmologies in the strikingly independent iconography of post-conquest pottery at the Celtiberian city of Numantia in the province of Nearer Spain.²⁸

In comparison to the other known representations of the *genius cucullatus* from Gaul and Britain, the Yale bronze figurine is remarkably classicizing (so much so that it was commonly misidentified as a work of fifth-century Greece), rivaled in this respect by only a very small number of other Gallic bronzes of the early imperial period, such as those known from the territory of the Ambiani or Treveri.²⁹ Most *cucullati*—stone reliefs or sculptures in the round—demonstrate a greater degree of independence from Mediterranean artistic ideals: they tend to be highly

schematic and minimalist, with little attention to the kind of realism and detail that we find in this work.³⁰ Indeed, one of the most telling foils for this piece is another *cucullatus* found in Narbonensis at Moulézan, near Nemausus in the country of the Volcae Arecomici (fig. 4.6): apart from the shared identifying attributes of the full-length cloak and cowl, this stone figurine bears little resemblance to its bronze cousin.³¹ Like the statues of Sucellus, then, our finely executed representation of the *genius cucullatus* is a fascinating hybrid of the local and the imperial. Its subject hearkens back to a pre-conquest past, activating a nexus of memories, meanings, and associations of the kind projected some two centuries earlier on non-Roman coinage of central Gaul, while its form usurps classicizing elements, a choice—a statement within a field of positions—likely driven by competition between elites or cultic communities. The simple but significant fact that modern scholars have long struggled to make sense of even the basic identity and function of the divinity demonstrates the degree to which the *genius cucullatus* was part of a quintessentially local discourse, an insiders’ conversation conducted in terms self-consciously left untranslated. In the end, the cloak of the figurine is an apt metaphor for the interpretive difficulties that it presents: local viewers must have “remembered” what was concealed underneath, while it remains impenetrable to our inquiring gaze.

BANDUA ARAUGELENSIS

Let us turn our attention now from Gaul to the Iberian Peninsula, and to a remarkable silver *patera* (shallow bowl for pouring libations), dated to the late second or early third century CE and probably originating from the settlement of Castellum Araocelum (São Cosmado, Portugal) in the north-central region of the province of Lusitania (fig. 4.7).³² On the base of the bowl is an engraved scene, at the center of which stands an impressionistically rendered female fig-

ure, wearing a turreted crown and clothed in a flowing garment that drapes over her left arm. In her left hand she holds a cornucopia, and in her right she extends a *patera* over a pair of burning altars; two other altars are shown in the landscape behind her, along with a rocky outcropping and the gnarled trunk of a tree. The figure thus appears to be in the act of performing a ritual at an open-air sanctuary. Around this circular scene is inscribed, as a kind of label, the legend *BAND • ARAVG*, which is to be interpreted as a reference to the Lusitanian goddess Bandua, in her specific manifestation as tutelary divinity of Araocelum (Bandua Araugelensis).³³ Bandua is attested in inscriptions throughout this region in her capacity as the divine embodiment or protectress of various ethnic communities, her name always being followed either by an adjectival epithet (e.g., Bandua Ituciensis), as on this *patera* from Araocelum, or by a local genitive plural ethnonym (e.g., Bandua Roudeacom, Vordeacom, Oilineacom, Veigebraegom, Cadogom).³⁴ This goddess is thus rather unique in her essential, inextricable connection to the identity of these communities. There are no dedications simply to “Bandua.” Each invocation of her divinity by the dedicants, whose inscriptions reflect a heterogeneous mix of social and civic statuses, inevitably implicates a competitive differentiation from other groups of worshippers, a flaunting of an almost hyper-localism.



4.7. Silver bowl for Band(ua) Araugel(ensis). Museo Arqueológico Provincial de Badajoz.

At the same time, this kind of strategic claim to localism, several centuries after the Roman conquest, clearly does not amount to “primitivism,” nor does it imply “resistance” to the cultural influences of the wider Roman world.³⁵ Performances of local community or ethnic identities—“being Araugelensis,” in this case—were not incongruous or incompatible with an emulous appropriation and rearticulation of imperial symbols. Despite the decidedly Lusitanian inspiration and orientation of this vessel’s message, the iconography of the goddess Bandua—particularly the mural crown, *patera*, and cornucopia—assimilates her visually to conventional Hellenistic representations of Tyche, and to those Roman images which had, in turn, been derived therefrom, especially of Fortuna and of the (albeit male) *genius populi Romani* or *genius coloniae*.³⁶ One would not normally speak in the same breath of the minor hillfort of Araocelum and great cosmopolitan city of Antioch, situated at opposite ends of the Mediterranean and products of widely discrepant experiences of Roman imperialism. But empire has here brought their cultural trajectories to a point of convergence where their patron goddesses—Greek Tyche and Lusitanian Bandua—might be, in some sense, mutually intelligible.

TESSERA HOSPITALIS

To complicate further this picture of Roman Spain, on a zoomorphic bronze plaque discovered at Herrera de Pisuergra, in the remote mountainous region of ancient Cantabria, we find evidence of regional social networks operating independently of Roman power, rather than of interconnectedness across the vast expanse of the empire (fig. 4.8). On both sides of this boar-shaped token was inscribed, in Latin, a local treaty of friendship, dated precisely to August 1, 14 CE. Judging from the nail-holes driven through it, this *tessera hospitalis*



4.8. Bronze *tessera hospitalis* in the shape of a boar, 14 CE, Herrera de Pisuerga. Castillo de Ampudia, Palencia.

(“token of guest-friendship”) was displayed on a wall, presumably in the home of one of the parties, so as to be readily legible. The text of the obverse runs as follows:

On the first day of August, in the year when Sex. Pompeius and Sex. Appuleius are consuls. The magistrates Caraegius and Aburnus and Caelio and the senate of the Maggavienses grant honorary citizenship to Amparamus, of [the clan of] the Nemaioqum of the town of Cusabura, so that his children and descendants might enjoy all of the same rights in the territory of the Maggavienses as a citizen of the Maggavienses.³⁷

The reverse reiterates the terms, from the point of view of the second party, Amparamus. Formal guest-friendship as a cultural practice was deeply embedded in the societies of the Iberian Peninsula, and proof of its continued, if renegotiated, importance under Roman rule is widespread: over 20 of these documents with inscriptions in Latin are known from the early imperial period (the latest is dated to 185 CE), while many others, written in local Iberian languages, probably date to the late second and early first centuries BCE.³⁸ The earlier

examples often take the form of animals, as here, which seem traditionally to have had a totemic significance for the community, based in part on the correspondence in several cases between the iconography of *tesserae hospitales* and of pre-Roman coinage. Many of these documents of the Roman period record the renewal of ancestral friendships, in one case between two “clans” (*gentilitates*) reaching back well over a century, and illuminate the workings of social memory across several generations of a family or community.³⁹

Apart from the consular dating formula and the use of Latin, with the translation of some indigenous terms into approximate Roman equivalents (*senatus* for the local aristocracy and *magistratus* for its leaders), the social and cultural landscape revealed in this bronze from Herrera de Pisuerga, like many of the comparanda, is preponderantly local. The names borne, the territories circumscribed, the ethnic and kinship group memberships asserted, even the citizenship to which contemporary and future prestige is attached are non-Roman. From these exchanges of symbolic capital between Cantabrian elites, Rome is noticeably absent. One must wonder what “being Roman” might have meant for Amparamus, member of the Nemaioqum clan, resident of Cusabura, native of the Cantabri, now honorary citizen among the Maggavienses, how Rome might have been integrated into his complex network of identities. As other *tesserae* of northern Spain suggest, this bronze boar would have preserved the memory of this complexity for his descendants whose rights are guaranteed in the text, maybe including even the same “Doviderus, son of Amparamus” who calls himself “chief of the Cantabri” (*princeps Cantabrorum*) in an inscription recently discovered in the region.⁴⁰

SOSTOMAGUS *RHETOR*

The final object that I would like to examine by way of conclusion transmits a memory of a markedly different variety. It is a small ornamental bronze, 14 cm in height, of a somewhat crudely-wrought togate male figure, seated on a stool in the traditional posture of a Roman schoolmaster (*rhetor*); the figure rests upon a cube-shaped base (fig. 4.9). This object was uncovered in excavations of an apsidal domestic building on a rural villa site at Fendeille, near the ancient town of Sostomagus (Castelnaudary), which lay on the important route through southwestern Gaul between Tolosa (Toulouse) and Narbo (Narbonne).⁴¹ The piece can be dated roughly to late third century CE.⁴² In his right hand the *rhetor* holds a small vessel, while in his left he displays an open book, on which the Latin words *quis primus* (“who first...”) can be discerned. Although imprecise, the phrase may be a reference to the widely read *Naturalis Historia* of Pliny the Elder, an encyclopedic work much concerned with the documentation of historical “firsts.”⁴³ There is a second inscription on the front face of the base of the statuette, more immediately recognizable: “The words of Cicero: How long will you take advantage of our patience, Catiline...” This famous line comprises the opening of Cicero’s first oration against the conspirator Lucius Sergius Catilina, delivered in early November of the tumultuous year in which Cicero was consul, 63 BCE.⁴⁴

From the time when the Romans first came into close contact with them in Transpadane Italy, oratory had been associated with the Gauls, whose supposedly changeable and volatile natures—from the ethnographic point of view of Greek and Roman observers—rendered them particularly susceptible to its power. Under the early empire, Gallic orators flourished in their adoptive Latin tongue; public speaking was reclaimed as a site of competition between elites, and skill therein became a prominent part of their self-fashioning. After the turmoil of the mid-third century, during which the long-established Maenian school of rhetoric at Augustodunum (Autun), capital of the Aedui, had been temporarily closed, there was a revival of oratorical education in Gaul. Orators trained at Augusta Treverorum (Trier) and Burdigala (Bordeaux) now vied with those from Augustodunum for imperial favor and social prestige.⁴⁵ Situated in this context, the bronze statuette of the schoolmaster displayed in a rural Gallic villa, holding a Latin “textbook” and poised atop the iconic words of Rome’s most eloquent speaker, makes an intriguingly polyvocal statement. This appropriation of memories of the Roman Republic blurs the boundaries between the imperial and the local, similarly to the writings of contemporary Gallic orators like the anonymous panegyrist of the Aedui or, later, the important *rhetor* Ausonius. Whoever the resident of this rather modest and ordinary villa was, he typifies the complex negotiations of identity that went on in households throughout Roman Spain and Gaul, only dimly illuminated by our evidence. Confidently deploying the Latin literary canon in a local self-representation, he reflects—like the individuals who commissioned the bronzes of Sucellus at Vienna, or worshipped the classicizing *genius cucullatus*, or poured libations to Bandua at Araocelum, or remembered pacts of friendship among the Cantabri—the multiplicity of meanings of “being Roman,” and of being different, in the provinces.



4.9. Bronze statuette of a *rhetor*, with Latin inscriptions, late 3rd century CE, Fendeille (Aude).



- 1 Greg Woolf, “The Uses of Forgetfulness in Roman Gaul,” in *Vergangenheit und Lebenswelt: Soziale Kommunikation, Traditionsbildung und historisches Bewußtsein*, ed. Hans-Joachim Gehrke and Astrid Möller (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 1996), 361; cf. Simon Price, “Memory and Ancient Greece,” in *Historical and Religious Memory in the Ancient World*, ed. Beate Dignas and R. R. R. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 28–29.
- 2 See James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 25.
- 3 On the expulsion of Roman merchants from Vienna by the Allobroges under Catugnatus, see Cass. Dio 37.47–48 and 46.50, with Amable Audin, *Lyon, miroir de Rome dans les Gaules* (Paris: Fayard, 1965), 25. For Vienna’s honorific title of *colonia Iulia Augusta Florentia Viennensium*, see *CIL* 12.2327, the epitaph of a local magistrate. The fragmentary text of the emperor Claudius’s speech, in which he mentions Vienna, is preserved on a bronze tablet from Lugdunum (Lyon), *CIL* 13.1668.
- 4 See the original report of the finds to the Société des Antiquaires in the summer of 1866 by Allmer and De Witte in the *Bulletin de la Société Impériale des Antiquaires de France* (1866): 99–104, 108–10.
- 5 On these two statues, see most recently Annemarie Kaufmann-Heinimann, “Ikonographie und Stil: Zu Tracht und Ausstattung einheimischer Gottheiten in den Nordwestprovinzen,” in *Bronzes grecs et romains, recherches récentes*, ed. Martine Denoyelle et al. (Paris: INHA, 2012); still fundamentally important for the Walters Art Museum Sucellus are Dorothy Kent Hill, “Dispatier of Gaul,” *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 10 (1947): 84–89, 100; and Hill, “Le Dieu au maillet de Vienne à la Walters Art Gallery de Baltimore,” *Gallia* 11 (1953): 205–24.
- 6 From **su-*, meaning “good; well,” and **cell-*-, “mallet; striker”; see Xavier Delamarre, *Dictionnaire de la Langue Gauloise* (Paris: Éditions Errance, 2001), s.v. “Sucellus.”
- 7 See e.g., *CIL* 13.4542, an altar set up to Sucellus and his female consort Nantosuelta by “Bellausus, son of Massa” at Pons Saravi (Sarrebouurg) in the province of Gallia Belgica.
- 8 On invented traditions, see Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence O. Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1–14.
- 9 This group—included in which were also two other bronze statuettes said to be of “Mercury,” the whereabouts of which are now unknown—seems to have been buried in a wooden container, suggesting an intentional deposition, possibly at a different location than that in which they were used; cf. Kaufmann-Heinimann, “Ikonographie und Stil.”
- 10 See, for example, Gérard Coulon, “Découverte d’un autel domestique gallo-romaine,” *Archéologia* 218 (1986): 6–8 for an altar discovered at Argentomagus (Argenton-sur-Creuse) with statuettes in situ. For a study of domestic altars and bronze figurines at the Roman colony of Augusta Rauricum (Augst), northeast of Vienna, see Annemarie Kaufmann-Heinimann, *Götter und Lararien aus Augusta Raurica: Herstellung, Fundzusammenhänge und sakrale Funktion figürlicher Bronzen in einer römischen Stadt* (Augst: Römermuseum, 1998).
- 11 See *CAG* 69.1, 467–68. The god is depicted as a bearded, older man, clothed in a Gallic *sagum* and holding the *olla* and mallet, with his canine companion lying at his feet.
- 12 Lucian, *Heracles* 1–5.
- 13 This argument, made by Eugenio Amato, “Luciano e l’anonimo filosofo celta di *Hercules* 4: Proposta di identificazione,” *Symbolae Osloenses* 79 (2004): 128–49, has been taken up by An-

- dreas Hofeneder, "Favorinus von Arleate und die keltische Religion," *Keltische Forschungen* 1 (2006): 29–58.
- 14 On the discursive function of such images in the western Roman provinces, see Miranda Aldhouse-Green, "Alternative Iconographies: Metaphors of Resistance in Romano-British Cult-Imagery," in *Romanisation und Resistenz in Plastik, Architektur und Inschriften der Provinzen des Imperium Romanum: Neue Funde und Forschungen*, ed. Peter Noelke et al. (Mainz: Von Zabern, 2003), 39–48. For a recent discussion of localism in the Greek East as a response to Roman imperialism and its attendant "globalization," see Tim Whitmarsh, "Thinking Local," in *Local Knowledge and Microidentities in the Imperial Greek World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1–16.
 - 15 See Stéphanie Boucher, *Recherches sur les bronzes figurés de Gaule pré-romaine et romaine* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1976), 169; Boucher, "L'image et fonctions du dieu Sucellus," *Caesariodunum* 23 (1988): 77–85; Miranda Green, *Symbol and Image in Celtic Religious Art* (London: Routledge, 1989), 75–86. For Sucellus in the guise of the Roman Silvanus, see e.g., *CIL* 12.4173 (Espérandieu 497), where the inscription is to *deus Silvanus*, but the iconography carved in relief on either side of the monument—*olla* and mallet, with three smaller mallets emanating from its head not entirely dissimilarly to the arrangement in the Vienna bronze—is that typical of Sucellus. For Silvanus in Narbonensis and the problems of interpretation, see Peter F. Dorcey, *The Cult of Silvanus: A Study in Roman Folk Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 56–59.
 - 16 For references and bibliography, see Green, *Symbol and Image*, 80. On the Orpierre bronze, see H. Hubert, "Une nouvelle figure du dieu au maillet, provenant de Orpierre," *Revue Archéologique*, 5th ser., 1 (1915): 26–39.
 - 17 For Sucellus at Vienna, see André Pelletier, *Vienne Antique* (Roanne: Horvath, 1982), 389–92, although his binary division of the archaeological evidence between a "Roman" Silvanus and a "Gallic" Sucellus is misleading.
 - 18 *CIL* 12.1836.
 - 19 See Pierre Wuilleumier and Amable Audin, *Les médaillons d'applique gallo-romains de la vallée du Rhône* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1952), 74–77, no. 104.
 - 20 On trends toward the individualization of religious expression in Gaul, especially in Narbonensis, see Ralph Häussler, "Beyond 'Polis Religion' and *Sacerdotes Publici* in Southern Gaul," in *Priests and State in the Roman World*, ed. James H. Richardson and Federico Santangelo (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2011), 391–428.
 - 21 Pliny, *HN* 3.31.
 - 22 Cf. Henri Lavagne, "Les dieux de la Gaule Narbonnaise: 'Romanité' et romanisation," *Journal des Savants*, no. 3 (1979): 156–57.
 - 23 See Paul Siegfried Leber, *Die in Kärnten seit 1902 gefundenen römischen Steininschriften* (Klagenfurt: Johannes Heyn, 1972), nos. 202–3.
 - 24 This divinity is sometimes speciously thought to be the Greek Telesphorus. On the *genius cucullatus*, see, *inter alios*, Robert Egger, "Genius cucullatus," *Wiener Praehistorische Zeitschrift* 19 (1932): 311–23; J. M. C. Toynbee, "Genii cucullati in Roman Britain," in *Hommages à Waldemar Deonna* (Brussels: Latomus, 1957), 456–69; Waldemar Deonna, "Télesphore et le 'genius cucullatus' celtique," *Latomus* 14, no. 1 (1959): 43–74.
 - 25 By Matthew M. McCarty, in *Art for Yale: Collecting for a New Century* (New Haven: Yale Uni-

- versity Art Gallery, 2007), 388, plate 189. For previous views, see “Acquisitions: 2002,” *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin* (2003): 132–33 (early fifth century BCE); David Gordon Mitten and Suzannah F. Doeringer, *Master Bronzes from the Classical World* (Mainz: Von Zabern, 1967), 137 (second or first century BCE).
- 26 See Derek F. Allen, *The Coins of the Ancient Celts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1980), 93–94, nos. 335–36.
- 27 *RRC* 455/1a.
- 28 See Francisco Marco Simón, “A Lost Identity: Celtiberian Iconography after the Roman Conquest,” in *Continuity and Innovation in Religion in the Roman West*, ed. Ralph Häussler and Anthony C. King, 2 vols. (Portsmouth: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2008), 2:103–15. Incidentally, figures in pointed hoods—perhaps priests—feature prominently in ritual scenes depicted on these vessels.
- 29 Now housed in the Musée de Picardie at Amiens and the Rheinisches Landesmuseum at Trier, respectively. The latter, unbearded, is sometimes identified as a peasant or plowman, rather than a divinity. They both wear much shorter hooded cloaks, which stop at the waist and leave visible a tunic, trousers, and boots underneath. On these, see F. M. Heichelheim, “Genii Cucullati,” *Archaeologia Aeliana*, 4th ser., 12 (1935): 187–94, and Heinz Menzel, *Die Römischen Bronzen aus Deutschland II: Trier* (Mainz: Von Zabern, 1966), no. 86.
- 30 See Aldhouse-Green, “Alternative Iconographies,” 41–45.
- 31 Espérandieu 5806.
- 32 The piece, of uncertain provenance, was acquired by the Collection Calzadilla of Badajoz and first published by A. Blanco Freijeiro, “Pátera argétea com representação de uma divindade lusitana,” *Revista de Guimarães* 59 (1959): 453–57. It measures 21 cm in diameter, and weighs just under half a kilogram. The settlement of Castellum Araocelum (or Araocelensium) is otherwise known only from a single votive inscription, *AE* 1954, 93.
- 33 On Bandua, see, *inter alios*, Javier de Hoz Bravo and F. Fernández Palacios, “Band-,” in *Religiões da Lusitânia: Loquuntur saxa*, ed. Luis Raposo (Lisbon: Museu Nacional de Arqueologia, 2002), 45–52, and Rosa Pedrero Sancho, “Aproximación lingüística al teónimo lusitano-gallego Bandue/Bandi,” in *Pueblos, lenguas y escrituras de la Hispania prerromana*, ed. Francisco Villar and F. Beltrán (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 1999), 535–43.
- 34 For these attestations of Bandua, see respectively *Hispania Epigraphica (HE)* 17.150; *AE* 1977, 430; *AE* 1991, 1039; *HE* 11.713; *AE* 1968, 237; *HE* 2.596. Although there has been some scholarly debate as to the correct interpretation of these epithets ending in -co(m) or -go/u(m), I here follow the argument of Patricia de Bernardo Stempel, “Los formularios teonimicos, Bandus con su pareja Bandua y unas isoglosas célticas,” *Conimbriga* 42 (2003): 197–212, in understanding them as names of communities in the genitive plural, rather than as adjectives in the masculine dative singular.
- 35 On this point in relation to a comparable case study, see Greg Woolf, “Local Cult in Imperial Context: The *Matronae* Revisited,” in *Romanisation und Resistenz*, 137–38.
- 36 Cf. Francisco Marco Simón, “Imagen divina y transformación de las ideas religiosas en el ámbito Hispano-Galo,” in *Religión, lengua y cultura prerromanas de Hispania*, ed. Francisco Villar and M. P. Fernández Álvarez (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 2001), 213–26.
- 37 *AE* 1967, 239; on this document, see Emilio Illarregui, “Tessera Hospitalis de Herrera de Pi-

- suerga (Palencia-España),” *Revista Internacional d’Humanitats* 20 (2010): 15–28, and Antonio García y Bellido, “Tessera Hospitalis del año 14 de la era hallada en Herrera de Pisuerga,” *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia* 159 (1966): 149–67.
- 38 On *tesserae hospitales* from Spain, see, in general, Leonard Curchin, *The Romanization of Central Spain: Complexity, Diversity, and Change in a Provincial Hinterland* (London: Routledge, 2004), 140–43; John Nicols, “Hospitality among the Romans,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Social Relations in the Roman World*, ed. Michael Peachin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 422–37; Robert Étienne, Patrick Le Roux, and Alain Tranoy, “La tessera hospitalis, instrument de sociabilité et de romanisation dans la péninsule ibérique,” in *Sociabilité, pouvoirs et société*, ed. Françoise Thelamon (Rouen: Université de Rouen, 1987), 323–36. For a detailed study of one of the more important Celtiberian texts, the Luzaga bronze, see Wolfgang Meid, *Celtiberian Inscriptions* (Budapest: Archaeolingua, 1994), 38–44.
- 39 For the renewal of *hospitium*, see *CIL* 2.2633 (an agreement of 27 CE renewed in 152 CE); *CIL* 2.2958 (57 CE); *AE* 1985, 581 (134 CE); *AE* 2009, 607 (27 CE).
- 40 *AE* 1997, 875.
- 41 For the site and the route, see the *Itinerarium Burdigalense* 551–52.
- 42 This villa went out of use and was partially destroyed by the middle of the fourth century CE, which furnishes a *terminus ante quem* for this bronze; on stylistic grounds as well, it would seem to belong to the late third or early fourth century. For the archaeological context, see *CAG* 11.2, 289–90. The find, discovered in 1969, was originally published by Guy Barruol, “Circonscription de Languedoc-Roussillon,” *Gallia* 29 (1971): 372–73.
- 43 The phrase *quis primus* occurs 40 times in the extant corpus of classical Latin literature; 31 of these occurrences are in the work the *Naturalis Historia* of the elder Pliny, two-thirds in the subject headings of the table of contents in book one. For example, “Who first had columns made of foreign marble at Rome?” (1.36.3).
- 44 Cic., *Cat.* 1.1.
- 45 For the reputation of the Gauls already in the second century BCE, see Cato fr. 34 in Hermann Peter, *Historicorum Romanorum Reliquiae* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1870), 61. On the relationship between this reputation and the prominence of orators from Gaul in the early Roman imperial period, see Ronald Syme, *Tacitus* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1958), 614–18. For the third and fourth centuries, see Charles E. V. Nixon and Barbara Saylor Rodgers, *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors: The Panegyrici Latini* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 3–10.



HONORING THE EMPRESS JULIA DOMNA ON ARCH MONUMENTS IN ROME AND NORTH AFRICA

Kimberly Cassibry

This essay reconsiders provincial responses to a prominent empress (Julia Domna, c. 170–217 CE) and a pervasive monument (the commemorative, freestanding arch, 196 BCE–408 CE). Although prior empresses had rarely appeared on Roman arches, Julia Domna was thus honored at least 11 times. Never dedicated to her alone, however, the monuments simultaneously recognized her reigning husband and son(s). Individual patrons as well as civic and commercial collectives thought to include Julia Domna on arches in Rome, Greece, and (primarily) North Africa. The monuments record diverse aspects of the empress's public persona, while also preserving a rich cross-section of localized architectural and sculptural design. They reveal how the malleable identities of two Roman institutions—the empress and the arch—were defined not by the court and the Senate alone, but in dialogue with communities empire-wide.

Although the first freestanding arches arose in Rome, most were eventually created elsewhere.¹ The earliest known iterations, now lost, were set up in 196 BCE by a general who had not earned a triumph, at least according to Livy.² Lucius Stertinius, returning victorious from Spain, erected two arches in front of temples in Rome's Forum Boarium and one at the nearby Circus Maximus, a site of religious festival games. Stertinius used the arches to elevate statue groups, likely votive in nature. Three other generals followed suit by erecting arches in Rome in honor of gods and/or ancestors.³ In the late first century BCE, during the transition from republic to empire, the Senate began commissioning arches in honor of the emperor and his family. The Senate publicized its arches with widely circulating decrees and coins, which disseminated knowledge of the monument throughout the empire.⁴ Provincial patronage by individuals and collectives thereafter increased dramatically and soon outpaced that in Rome. By 408 CE, when the Senate made a final commission, at least 56 arches had been erected in the imperial capital, by the Senate and other parties. In the provinces, patrons had set up well over 500.

In a parallel transition away from the imperial capital, the first emperor (Augustus) and empress (Livia) began their lives in Rome (in 63 BCE and 58 BCE, respectively), but increasing numbers of their successors were province-born. Claudius, for instance, drew his first breath in Lugdunum (Lyon) in 10 BCE and his wife Agrippina in what would become Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensium (Cologne) in 15 CE, while their Roman fathers led military campaigns in Gaul and Germany. Trajan (53–117 CE), though he hailed from Ital-

ica (Santiponce) in Baetica (southwestern Spain), could claim descent from elite Italian emigrants; his wife Plotina may have come from Nemausus (Nîmes) in Gallia Narbonensis (southern France). Though not born into the reigning dynasty, Trajan assumed supreme power after a lengthy career in imperial administration had equipped him with not only direct knowledge of many provinces, but also the skills necessary to govern them. Julia Domna's husband Septimius Severus, himself a native of Lepcis Magna in Africa Proconsularis, followed a similar path. A member of an elite family of senators from Libya, Severus spoke fluent Punic and Greek, as well as Latin.⁵ His reign (193–211 CE) marked a turning point; few succeeding dynasties had any roots at all in Rome.



5.1. Tondo painting of Septimius Severus, Julia Domna, Caracalla, and Geta (effaced), c. 200 CE, Egypt. Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen, Berlin, 31.329.

JULIA DOMNA

Even by the standards of the Roman court, Julia Domna led an eventful and cosmopolitan life.⁶ Born into a Syrian family well connected in politics and priesthoods, she spoke Greek and Aramaic. Her exposure to Latin increased after marrying, in 187, the future emperor Septimius Severus. Together, the couple traveled widely as he pursued a career in imperial administration. He was governing the province Gallia Lugdunensis from its capital Lugdunum when she gave birth to their first son, Caracalla, in 188. By the time their second son Geta arrived a year later, they had moved to Rome to await Severus's next assignment. The family's journeys continued even after a crisis of succession (192–193 CE) gave Severus the opportunity to seize supreme power and establish a new dynasty. Of the many trips that followed, one took them back to Lepcis Magna, Severus's birthplace; the town's magnificently sculpted arch may have marked the occasion.

A subsequent military campaign took the family to Britannia, where the ailing emperor died in early 211. The two sons, then bitter rivals, ruled briefly together. By year's end, Caracalla had murdered his brother, although he claimed he had acted in self-defense. Julia Domna supposedly tried to shield Geta from the sword attack. For the rest of Caracalla's reign—and in the absence of the wife he had denounced, divorced, and executed—Julia Domna helped govern as dowager empress.⁷ She notably supervised imperial correspondence in both Greek and Latin, which would have put her in the powerful role of intercessor for provincial petitions.⁸ Based in Antioch while Caracalla campaigned in Mesopotamia, she responded to his assassination in 217 by starving herself to death.

Throughout the empire, hundreds of marble and bronze portrait statues conveyed Julia Domna's striking beauty (plate 88).⁹ An elaborate hairstyle, possibly augmented by a wig, remains the portraits' most distinctive feature: from an emphatic central part, crimped and sometimes braided strands fall almost to her shoulders, then fold back to be gathered in a chignon at or above her nape.¹⁰ Small curls escape to curve around her cheekbones. A broad forehead, beaked nose, and delicate chin complete the physiognomic formula regularly tweaked by the court and replicated by sculptors empire-wide according to their own abilities, materials, and regional training. Tinting would have enhanced verisimilitude of portraits in marble. A tondo painting of the family (now sans Geta) suggests the coloring: dark brown for her hair, eyebrows, and eyes (fig. 5.1). In addition to locally commissioned statues, coin issues circulated representations of the empress in frontal and profile views (plates 31, 86, 89, 93, 98). The wide dissemination of her image impacted portrayals of women during her reign: even dolls share her hairstyle and facial features (plate 87).

Scholars have attributed Julia Domna's unusual prominence in official coinage and state relief sculptures to propaganda formulated by the dynasty. Natalie Kampen has argued that Domna, like other empresses, became more visible when "family fictions" were needed to mask dynastic breaks and forecast smooth transfers of power.¹¹ Susann Lusnia too has focused on Julia Domna's usefulness in emphasizing the existence of heirs and future dynastic stability.¹² Most recently, Julie Langford has coined the phrase "maternal megalomania" to describe Domna's ubiquity.¹³ While extremely valuable, such analyses of official propaganda often prioritize the desires of the court over those of the empire's diverse communities, even when local contexts and adverse responses are acknowledged.

This essay focuses instead on discrepant perceptions of the empress recorded on arches in several provinces, as well as in Rome. Systems of honorific and votive exchange governed their creation and allowed patrons to advance their own interests while rendering homage to those in power. The local perspectives thus preserved bring Julia Domna's multiple imperial personas into sharper focus.

HONORIFIC AND VOTIVE EXCHANGE

In the civic realm, the protocols of honorific exchange structured the flow of political power.¹⁴ Although emperors inherited (or seized) individual authority, they governed in concert with the Senate in Rome and elected magistrates and city councils elsewhere. For all of these leaders, good deeds could be courted, obliged, and recompensed through inscribed monuments ranging from plaques and statues to major buildings. Because soft power flowed through such dedications, they had to involve at least two parties. No one was supposed to set up a monument in his or her own honor. In a parallel system, desired outcomes could be sought by propitiating deities with sacrifices (of animals, liquids, or incense) and offerings (metalwork, statues, buildings, etc.). The imperial family enjoyed distinct connections to the divine sphere, not least because the emperor served as the state's chief priest (*Pontifex Maximus*). Moreover, polytheism permitted the apotheosis of deceased emperors, empresses, and their kin. While successors gained authority by becoming sons, daughters, and siblings of gods, the support of deified rulers could be maintained by cult practice and votive gifts. Much of the Roman Empire's art and architecture emerged from the widespread social practices of honorific and votive exchange.

A stone plaque from Dura-Europos illustrates how the two systems could work in concert (plate 85). In Greek, the standard language of the eastern Mediterranean, the inscription states:

The Assembly of Aurelian Antoninian Europeans [dedicates this to] Julia Domna, Augusta, Mother of the Senate and of the Sacred Camps.¹⁵

Like most dedications, the words focus attention on the parties connected by the gift and omit reference to its nature and impetus, which must be inferred. Here, Caracalla's official name (Marcus Aurelius Antoninus) has become part of Europos's, which typically indicates that the town gained higher administrative status during his reign. Julia Domna, who accompanied her son on official trips to her native Syria and oversaw correspondence, may have served as an intercessor for this honor, as the plaque's excavators note.¹⁶ In describing the empress, the Assembly chose from a number of propagandistic titles, all circulated through official coin issues. On a coin minted in Rome, for example, the obverse names her "Julia, Pious, Fortunate, Augusta," while the reverse designates her "Mother of the Emperors," "Mother of the Senate," and "Mother of the Fatherland" (plate 86). For their own dedication, members of the Dura-Europos Assembly selected the standard "Augusta" (conferred by the Senate in 193/4), "Mother of the Senate" (*Mater Senatus*, conferred by the Senate in 211) and the unusually articulated "Mother of the Sacred Camps" (*Mater Castrorum*, con-

ferred by the Senate in 195).¹⁷ The Assemblymen’s selection may indicate that they saw Julia Domna as someone who could pivot effectively between those governing from the capital and those camped at the edge of empire to defend the borders; the juxtaposition of titles connects the center to the periphery through the aegis of the “maternal” empress. They may have focused on Domna’s relationship to the Senate, rather than her imperial son(s), because they saw the Roman institution as a parallel body of collaborative government. The Assembly’s honorific award could also have comprised more than words. As the excavators observed, an inscription this size (48.3 x 63.5 x 15.9 cm) could have formed part of a statue base: the actual gift may thus have been a standing portrait, now lost.¹⁸ The plaque was found not in a civic square, however, but face down in the Babylonian-style sanctuary of Artemis-Nanaia. If originally set up there, then the dedication to the empress would have simultaneously pleased the Greco-Syrian goddess by increasing the glory of her precinct. In sum, the Assembly of this recently promoted garrison town had good reasons both for honoring a powerful empress (perhaps not coincidentally born in the region) and for highlighting her connections to the Senate and the military. Although the selection of an inscribed plaque, or even a portrait statue, was fitting, a freestanding arch would have expressed a far higher level of appreciation.



5.2. Silver denarius with head of Septimius Severus (obverse) and the SPQR arch for Septimius Severus, Caracalla, and Geta (reverse), c. 206 CE, Rome. British Museum, London, R.15321.

ARCH MONUMENTS

Arches played a hierarchizing role in honorific, votive, and funerary commemoration. A grandiose pedestal, the monument drew attention to inscriptions and often to statuary too. The elder Pliny (23–79 CE), the only ancient author to address the function of arches, wrote that their purpose was to “elevate some mortals above others,” hence to stratify statue dedications.¹⁹ A coin representing a senatorial arch dedicated to Septimius Severus, Caracalla, and Geta, for example, indicates that

the monument originally displayed a portrait of the emperor driving a six-horse chariot flanked by portraits of his sons on horseback (figs. 5.2, 5.6).²⁰ In scale and location (nearly 21 m tall and in the Forum at Rome), the honor of this statue-laden arch was greater than the honor of the inscribed plaque from Dura-Europos (plate 85), even if it once formed part of a simple plinth supporting the empress’s portrait.

Often inaccurately called “triumphal,” the arch’s essential purpose in antiquity was to commemorate connections between those awarding and those receiving the monument. The portal required only an inscription naming the donor, who could be an individual or a group, and the recipient, who might be a local leader, an emperor, a god or goddess, or even a deceased family member.²¹ All other characteristics—freestanding or connected to neighboring structures; arcuated or rectilinear; ornamented with relief sculptures or not; even endowed with statues or not—could and did vary. Remarkably flexible, the arch’s design dynamics differed from other forms of imperial culture, such as portraits of the emperor and his family. If members of a provincial community wished to honor an empress by setting up a statue of her in their town square, for example, the portrait often responded to formulae established by the imperial court. If the same community opted to place the statue atop an honorific arch, the monument did not necessarily resemble contemporary ones set up by the Senate in Rome, including those publicized on coin issues.

THE EMPRESS ON THE ARCH

Although arches could be dedicated to anyone—living, dead, or divine—they most often honored the emperor and his family, perhaps because the imperial family had the most valuable boons to bestow within the system of honorific exchange. According to Heinz Kähler’s 1939 catalogue (which needs updating), four empresses besides Julia Domna were included in the honor of an arch: Livia (r. 27 BCE–14 CE) can be connected to four; Agrippina (r. 41–54 CE), Plotina (r. 98–117 CE), and Salonina (r. 260–268 CE) to one each.²² Only three of these arches still stand, yet they illustrate the monument’s diversity of patrons and design. For example, at the entrance to the *agora* (town square) at Ephesus (Turkey), two men named Mazaeus and Mithridates commissioned, around 4 or 3 BCE, a triple-bay gateway dedicated in Latin to Augustus, his wife Livia, his son-in-law Agrippa, and his daughter Julia (fig. 5.3).²³ In a supplementary Greek inscription, Mazaeus and Mithridates further dedicated the monument “to their patrons and the people,” presumably the people of Ephesus. At Ancona, Italy, in 115 CE, the Senate and Roman People (SPQR) commemorated Trajan’s renovation of the port with a waterside, single-bay arch, originally displaying ship prows on its façade (fig. 5.4).²⁴ A lengthy central inscription in Latin addresses Trajan; inscriptions to either side name his wife Plotina and his deified sister Marciana. Back in Rome a century later, an individual named Aurelius Victor remodeled a triple-bay city gate (only the central bay survives) and dedicated it to Gallienus and his empress Salonina in 262 CE (fig. 5.5).²⁵

Julia Domna stands apart from preceding and subsequent empresses in being named as one of the honorees on at least 11 arches, all commissioned during the reigns of her husband and son (193–217 CE) and honoring them in tandem. Five in North Africa and one in Greece are known only through inscriptions and ruins.²⁶ Those at Rome, Lepcis Magna, Thevestis, Cuicul, and Volubilis still stand. The scope and significance of Julia Domna’s presence on arches has not been fully appreciated, in part because the monuments’ architectural, epigraphic, and sculptural aspects are often addressed separately. Studies focused on a single region (e.g., Rome or a province, but rarely both) have further obscured design and dedication patterns. Reintegrating these bodies of evidence amplifies what the arches can tell us about perceptions of the empress’s developing role during her husband’s reign and her son’s. At the same time, the arches reveal how flexibly the monument accommodated the honorific, votive, and even the funerary goals of ambitious patrons.²⁷



5.3. Arch of Mazaeus and Mithridates for Augustus, Livia, Agrippa, and Julia, 4–3 BCE, Ephesus.



5.4. Arch of the Senate and Roman People for Trajan, Plotina, and the Divine Marciana, 115 CE, Ancona.



5.5. Arch of Aurelius Victor for Gallienus and Salonina, 262 CE, Rome.



5.6. Arch of the Senate and Roman People for Septimius Severus, Caracalla, and Geta, 203 CE, Rome.

Julia Domna did not appear on all arches honoring her husband and sons.²⁸ The Roman Senate, for one, excluded her from the dedication and design of the only arch it commissioned for the dynasty (fig. 5.6).²⁹ According to the lengthy inscription, the SPQR erected the arch for Septimius Severus, Caracalla, and Geta to commemorate their “restoration of the Republic and spread of the Roman people’s dominion.”³⁰ The arch’s dedication occurred around 202–203, soon after the family’s return from a journey to Syria and Mesopotamia (197–202), where Severus had battled the Parthians for a second time. Imposing in scale (20.9 x 23.3 x 11.2 m), with projecting columns of the composite order, the triple-bay arch of concrete, travertine, and Proconnesian marble stood near the Curia in Rome’s Forum. The arch’s historical relief sculptures focus on Severus’s military campaigns and battlefield captives and the triumphal procession awarded by the Senate in response; personifications of seasons and regions further gloss his and his heirs’ achievements. As discussed above, coins representing the arch show a crowning statuary group, with Severus driving a chariot flanked by his sons on horseback (fig. 5.2). From the Senate’s perspective, Julia Domna had played no role in restoring the state’s stability and defending its borders; she therefore did not appear on the arch in either word or image. Gauging the dynasty’s service to the state was the Senate’s duty; its exclusion of the empress did not need to influence other patrons who were free to pursue their own priorities. Despite being widely publicized on coin issues, this SPQR arch did not set an empire-wide precedent in dedication or design.

In 203–204 CE, for example, the merchants (*negotiantes*) and financiers (*argentarii*) of Rome’s Forum Boarium dedicated a portal to Septimius Severus, Caracalla, Geta, Julia Domna, Plautilla (Caracalla’s bride in

203), and Plautianus (Caracalla’s father-in-law), according to the original inscription (fig. 5.7).³¹ The words connect the patrons and the honorees without ever mentioning the monument itself.³² The so-called “Arch of the Argentarii,” now embedded in the Church of San Giorgio in Velabro, was originally a freestanding, rectilinear gateway constructed of concrete, travertine, and Hymettian marble.³³ Modest in scale (6.3 x 5.7 x 2.2 m), it may have framed the market’s entrance. The north side was left undecorated, as were the lower piers now beneath ground level; any statues that may have been included in the gift are lost. Framed by pilasters with composite capitals, sculptural reliefs develop themes of victory (bound captives and military standards), divine approbation (Hercules and Roma flank the inscription), and piety. On the inner panels, Septimius Severus as Pontifex Maximus and Julia Domna (whose image resembles her second general portrait type) stand with heads piously veiled while the emperor pours a libation at an altar (fig. 5.8).³⁴ Geta likely once stood with them: his condemnation by Caracalla in 211 caused his image and name to be erased from this and many other public monuments. On the opposite panel, Caracalla likewise pours a libation: his actions mirror his father’s and evoke their continuation

in the future. Originally, Plautilla and Plautianus probably accompanied him; their images and names would have disappeared after their execution and banishment (respectively) in 205. Other reliefs feature ritual implements and—most importantly—cattle led forth for sacrifice.³⁵ The Forum Boarium likely provided the cattle necessary for sacrifices on religious occasions. The businessmen would have profited from those made upon the dynasty's victorious return to Rome in 202 and from the staging of the Secular Games (the *Ludi Saeculares*, celebrating the turn of a new century) in 204. Julia Domna played a prominent role in the latter religious festival and was also known as a patron of temples for goddesses.³⁶ The Forum Boarium's merchants and bankers may have responded to these activities, which benefited them, by visually highlighting the empress's religious persona and her affiliation with the state's present and future chief priests. Her inscribed titles, "Mother of the Emperors and of the Camps," reinforce her connection to both the familial and martial imagery.³⁷ The Arch of the Argentarii, in dedication, architectural form, and decoration, contrasts with the Senate's nearly contemporary monument, less than a mile away. Even in Rome, arch patrons pursued independent agendas.³⁸

The most magnificently sculpted arch featuring Julia Domna stood not in Rome, but in Severus's hometown Lepcis Magna, a 1000-year-old Punic city in the province Africa Proconsularis (fig. 5.9). In the absence of an inscription, the precise date (sometime between 203 and 209 CE), the identities of the donors and recipients, and the reasons for dedication are debated.³⁹ Inscriptions from Lepcis Magna's earlier arch monuments reveal a range of patronage precedents: the imperial officials who served as the town's sponsors (*patroni*) seem to have set up two single-bay arches for Tiberius in the context of a street paving project (35–36 CE);⁴⁰ the town collectively, with public funds, erected a tetrapylon for Trajan, presumably when he granted the town desirable colonial status (109–110 CE);⁴¹ a wealthy citizen named Avilius Castus financed, with the addition of public funds, a tetrapylon with statues for Marcus Aurelius (173–174 CE).⁴² The Severan arch may have resulted from a collective, public commission, perhaps with the participation of a wealthy citizen. The sculptural program—among the most extensive and thematically complex of all Roman arches—features the emperor, the empress, and their two teenage sons in scenes illustrating the imperial virtues of piety, valor, and concord. Because Septimius Severus, Julia Domna, Caracalla, and Geta all serve as protagonists in the reliefs, the arch likely honored all four of them. Julia Domna (now in an image recalling her third general portrait type) appears at least five times.⁴³ Though not from Lepcis, she may have been included repeatedly in the sculptures in order to underscore the familial nature of the city's connection to the emperor: Kampen has argued that when imperial women appear in historical reliefs—and they rarely do so—they conjure the domestic sphere.⁴⁴ Thus Lepcis Magna's personal purpose in highlighting Julia



5.7. Arch of the Negotiantes and Argentarii for Septimius Severus, Caracalla, Geta, Julia Domna, Plautilla, and Plautianus, 203–204 CE, Rome.



5.8. Arch of the Negotiantes and Argentarii, detail.



5.9. Arch of Lepcis Magna for Septimius Severus, Julia Domna, Caracalla, and Geta, 203–209 CE, Lepcis Magna.

Domna’s participation in a sacrifice scene differed from the business concerns of the *argentarii* and *negotiantes* of the Forum Boarium in Rome (fig. 5.10). A regionally distinctive sculptural style also distinguishes these reliefs from those on the nearly contemporary arches in Rome. Here, deep drilling defines the figures and their drapery with sharp lines of shadow. The monument’s form likewise responds to the city’s own architectural preferences. Although heavily and controversially reconstructed with many casts today, the limestone and Dokimian marble arch clearly took the form of a tetrapylon (c. 14 x 14 m at ground level) with projecting Corinthian columns. The form’s two intersecting archways (12.2 m high) effectively accommodated a major crossroads within the city.⁴⁵ The town’s arches for Trajan and Mar-

cus Aurelius were likewise tetrapyla, as were three miniature examples, likely statue bases, which stood in the market.⁴⁶ Severus’s hometown had certainly prospered during his reign. The conferral of privileges normally reserved for Italian cities (*Ius Italicum*), an official visit by the imperial family, and architectural benefactions all followed Severus’s accession; each offered an occasion for concretizing a close connection to those in power through the public honor of an arch.

Individuals could use arches to construct personal identities in relation to the imperial family. For example, a bereaved brother and sister in Thevestis (Tébessa, Algeria), near the border dividing Africa Proconsularis from Numidia, oversaw construction of a testamentary tetrapylon in honor of the deified Septimius Severus, Caracalla, and Julia Domna between 211 and 214 CE (figs. 5.11, 5.12).⁴⁷ A lengthy inscription on one pier indicates that C. Cornelius Egrilianus, a recently deceased prefect of the Fourteenth Legion Gemina, left funds in his will for, among other benefactions, “an arch with statues” (*arcum cum stauis*).⁴⁸ His brother and sister, executors of his will, take credit for the commission; they may have had to amend Egrilianus’s plans to include Geta. Constructed of limestone, this tetrapylon differed in design and proportions from the slightly earlier one at Lepcis (c. 14.5 x 14.5 m at ground level; 7.5 m high archways).⁴⁹ While omitting historical reliefs, the design did include figured keystones representing deities, similar to the Tyche keystone from Antioch (Syria) (plate 1). Columned Corinthian aediculae for statues once crowned the archways; inscriptions dedicate each to one member of the family (the north one perhaps intended for Geta is damaged). By dedicating the testamentary arch to the imperial family, but inscribing the terms of the will visibly on one pier, Egrilianus’s own family commemorated his life at a major crossroads within the city, where funerary monuments were typically not



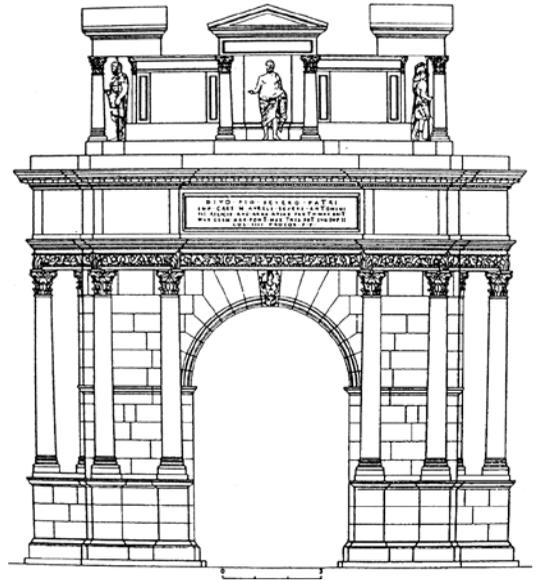
5.10. Arch of Lepcis Magna, detail. Archaeological Museum, Tripoli.

allowed.⁵⁰ At the same time, the arch functioned as both a funerary honor and a votive offering for Egrilianus's former commander-in-chief, Septimius Severus, as well as a civic honor for the army's subsequent commander, Caracalla. Julia Domna's status as "Mother of the Camps"—a role with which a camp prefect would have been familiar—likely recommended her inclusion. The inscription beneath her statue (now lost) states:

For Julia Domna Augusta, Mother of the Camps, and of the Emperor, and of the Senate, and of the Fatherland.⁵¹

After the honorific "Augusta," "Mother of the Camps" is listed first among her titles, in contrast to many other inscriptions, including the ones on Arch of the Argentarii and the plaque from Dura-Europos discussed above (plate 85). Through the ordering and selection of the empress's titles, patrons like Egrilianus and his family could customize for themselves the honorific language emanating from the imperial court and Roman Senate.

In 216 CE, a 100-year-old veterans' colony at Berber Cuicul (Djemila, Algeria), near the border dividing Numidia from Mauretania Caesariensis, erected an arch for Caracalla, Julia Domna, and the Divine Septimius Severus (in that order) (fig. 5.13).⁵² The inscription authored by the "Republic" of Cuicul counts among the few to name this kind of monument a "triumphal arch."⁵³ "Arch" alone is far more common, as on the testamentary inscription on the arch at Thevestis. In this context, "triumphal" likely conveys "successful," not least because the inscription mentions no specific triumphal procession in Rome (the only city where official ones could take place), and the monument neither elevated a triumphal chariot group, nor represented a procession in relief sculpture. As on the tetrapylon at Thevestis, the design here emphasizes statue display. Three bases for lost portraits of the honorees stand atop the reconstructed attic; aediculae in the attic and niches in the lower façade, both framed by projecting Corinthian columns, likely accommodated even more. The location of the tall (12.6 x 10.6 x 4.3 m), single-bay, limestone arch is instructive: the monument marked the western edge of a new plaza beyond the colony's original walls.⁵⁴ Although the arch and its statues likely made an impression on those arriving from the west, only the east side facing the plaza seems to have borne an inscription. The city council supervising the urban expansion must have seen the need for a portal defining the expanded boundary, and did so in a way that strengthened and advertised relations to living and deified members of the imperial family. Although the inscription gives no particular reason for the dedication, Caracalla's titles date the arch to the penultimate year of his reign. Then, Julia Domna may have been at the peak of her power while supervising the affairs of state from Antioch during her



5.11. Reconstruction of the arch of C. Cornelius Egrilianus for Caracalla, Julia Domna, and the Divine Septimius Severus, 214 CE, Tébessa (after Bacchielli 1987, fig. 5).



5.12. Arch of C. Cornelius Egrilianus, 214 CE, Tébessa.



5.13. Arch of the Republic of Cuicul for Caracalla, Julia Domna, and the Divine Septimius Severus, 216 CE, Djemila.



5.14. Arch of the Republic of Volubilitans for Caracalla and Julia Domna, 216–217 CE, Volubilis.

son’s absence on his Mesopotamian campaign. Her titles—“Pious, Fortunate, Augusta, Mother of Him [the emperor], of the Senate, of the Fatherland, and of the Camps”—prioritize her maternal relationship to her son first and foremost. Significantly, the arch anticipates the construction of a temple to the divine Severan dynasty, dedicated in 229, along the southern edge of the same plaza.

The same year, or perhaps the following one, a 400-year-old settlement of Berber and Punic heritage in the province Mauretania Tingitana dedicated an arch to Caracalla and Julia Domna alone—without the Divine Septimius Severus (fig. 5.14).⁵⁵ In the inscription, the “Republic of Volubilitans” (Volubilis, Morocco) calls the monument simply an “arch.”⁵⁶ The lengthy inscription’s oblique reference to the arch’s impetus—the honorees’ “unprecedented generosity”—may acknowledge either the bestowal of citizenship on all free-born residents of the empire (the Antonine Constitution of 212) or, more likely, special tax relief extended to the region.⁵⁷ Julia Domna may have mediated conferral of the latter privilege through her control of correspondence; such a scenario would explain the extremely rare pairing of an emperor and dowager empress on a major monument.⁵⁸ Her titles—“Augusta, Pious, Fortunate, Mother of the Emperor, and of the Camps, and of the Senate and of the Fatherland”—again prioritize her relationship to her son the emperor. Of the six-horse chariot group mentioned in the inscription, a few bronze fragments may survive from the horses and from a polychrome metal garment spectacularly embroidered with captive barbarians.⁵⁹ In addition, awkwardly carved panels of relief sculpture featured weapons, armor, stan-

dards, and personified seasons and victories, but not historical scenes. Altogether, the sculptural program conjures generic themes of cyclical prosperity and security sustained by the dynasty (although the panels are inaccurately arranged in the arch’s current reconstruction, which also omits most of the attic). This is the only commemorative arch known at Volubilis, and its design is as extraordinary as its dedication. The limestone arch’s proportions (originally c. 13.8 x 19.3 x 4.7 m) usually correspond to a triple-bay monument, but here the designers replaced the lateral archways with piped fountains and basins.⁶⁰ The trickling water transformed the grandiose statue base into a functional urban amenity, located in a residential quarter across from a bath complex near the city center.

CONCLUSION

It could be argued that Julia Domna’s name was inscribed on so many arches because dynastic propaganda emphasized the empress to an unprecedented degree at the precise moment when the general incidence of public inscriptions peaked. As Greg Woolf has suggested, however, the use of inscriptions expanded so dramatically because residents of the empire

saw in them a way to make enduring statements about ever more fluid identities and relations.⁶¹ Woolf's pivot to the patron's point of view is key. Julia Domna appeared on more commemorative arches than any other empress because more patrons sought to articulate relationships to her on major monuments. Yet she seems never to have received this high honor for herself alone. Arch inscriptions capture her multiple and evolving roles *within* the dynasty, as perceived by metropolitan and provincial residents. For them, the visual and textual rhetoric of family harmony and loyalty offered formulae flexible enough to describe Julia Domna's evolving authority during her son's unpredictable reign. Caracalla assumed and then wielded supreme power while unmarried and lacking heirs, either biological or adopted; in every year of his sole rule (211–217), he thus failed in his duty to promise the smooth transfer of power to son(s) upon his death. Recovering some provincial responses to this situation—wherein Julia Domna, rather than Caracalla's other associates or heirs, was entrusted with official correspondence and likely other responsibilities as well—requires reintegrating the material evidence of arches. When scholars limit investigations to historical relief sculptures, they see Domna primarily as a mother within a nuclear family during her husband's reign, not as a powerful dowager during Caracalla's. When they focus on the inscriptions alone, without considering the prominence arch monuments accorded the words architecturally, they miss the high register of honor the empress merited.

Reintegrating the sculptural, epigraphic, and architectural evidence for arches related to Julia Domna also yields new insights into the monuments' patrons and their priorities. Even the Senate, whose arches for emperors in Rome are too often assumed to set empire-wide standards, emerges in a clearer role. Although the arch the Senate dedicated to Septimius Severus, Caracalla, and Geta around 203 was widely publicized on coins, contemporary commissions by other patrons indicate that they did not feel bound by the Senate's specific dedicatory or design decisions. The arches reveal further that the monument held appeal for individuals (the prefect C. Cornelius Egrilianus), business partners (the merchants and bankers of Rome's Forum Boarium), and civic collectives ranging from a century-old Roman veterans' colony (Cuicul) to a centuries-old settlement of Berber and Punic heritage (Volubilis). Perhaps not surprisingly, these far-flung patrons commissioned an architecturally diverse set of monuments, even in a relatively short time span. All of the arches analyzed above date between 202 and 217—a mere 15 years. Their designs range from a relief-laden, post-and-lintel portal with no evidence of statuary (the Arch of the Argentarii), to a nearly relief-less tetrapylon elevating aediculae to frame and protect statues (the arch at Thevestis), to a statue-bearing arch with fountains (Volubilis). Urban locations include major crossroads (at Lepcis Magna and Thevestis), the entrances to a plaza (at Cuicul) and a market (at Rome), and even a residential quarter (at Volubilis). Conceptual functions vary too: the civic, funerary, and votive aspects of the arch at Thevestis make this particular monument one of the empire's most versatile.

The commemorative arch was one of Rome's most successful inventions. Later enthusiasts like Napoleon, who commissioned two “arcs de triomphe” in Paris, may have seen in the monument an enviable emblem of Roman dominion. Yet the monument's perceived “Romanness” must have varied considerably in antiquity. By the second century CE, many provincial residents encountered arch monuments primarily in the regions where they resided. Septimius Severus and Julia Domna themselves would have seen dozens before they ever set foot in Rome. For many patrons, the arch was not necessarily a symbol of allegiance to or conquest by the city of Rome, but instead a platform for negotiating imperial relations. Understanding how to use monuments in this way, even to address an exceptional empress, was an essential part of being Roman, everywhere.



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- 1 Kähler's empire-wide catalogue of 630 arches remains indispensable. Heinz Kähler, "Triumphbogen," in *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, 2nd ser., vol. 7A (Stuttgart: Alfred Druckenmüller, 1939), 373–493. Fred Kleiner, "The Study of Roman Triumphal and Honorary Arches 50 years after Kähler," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 2 (1989): 195–206. Sabine Fährdrich estimates that another 200 arches could now be added to Kähler's total in *Bogenmonumente in der römischen Kunst: Ausstattung, Funktion und Bedeutung antiker Bogen- und Torbauten* (Rahden: Marie Leidorf, 2005), 3n8. Regional catalogues and monographs now partially update Kähler's work, chief among them Sandro de Maria's *Gli Archi Onorari di Roma e dell'Italia Romana* (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1988).
- 2 Livy 33.27.3–4. De Maria, *Gli Archi Onorari*, 262–63.
- 3 De Maria, *Gli Archi Onorari*, 263–267.
- 4 For the Senate's espousal of the monument and the consequent shift in terminology (from *fornix* to *arcus*), Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, "Roman Arches and Greek Honors: The Language of Power at Rome," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 36 (1990): 143–81.
- 5 Anthony R. Birley, *Septimius Severus: The African Emperor* (New York: Routledge, 1988). Anne Daguët-Gagey, *Septime Sévère: Rome, l'Afrique et l'Orient* (Paris: Payot, 2000).
- 6 For an excellent account of Julia Domna's life, with a critical assessment of the primary sources and bibliography, see Barbara Levick, *Julia Domna: Syrian Empress* (New York: Routledge, 2007). For Julia Domna's literary circle in particular, see Emily Hemelrijk, *Matrona Docta: Educated Women in the Roman Élite from Cornelia to Julia Domna* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 122–26.
- 7 For the scholarly debate about the extent of Julia Domna's participation in government, see Levick, *Julia Domna*, 95–98.
- 8 Cass. Dio 78.18.2.
- 9 Fejfer catalogues 120 surviving statue bases for Julia Domna, but this number certainly does not represent the original total. Jane Fejfer, "The Portraits of the Severan Empress Julia Domna: A New Approach," *Analecta Romana Instituti Danici* 14 (1985): 129–38. In 1964, Nodelman catalogued at least 35 existing portraits, which can only rarely be connected to bases. Sheldon Nodelman, "Severan Imperial Portraiture, AD 193–217" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1964), 110–36.
- 10 Janet Stevens argues that invisible threads hold the coiffure together without artificial hair in "Ancient Roman Hairdressing: On (Hair)pins and Needles," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 21 (2008): 111–32.
- 11 Natalie Boymel Kampen, *Family Fictions in Roman Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 82–103.
- 12 Susann Lusnia, "Julia Domna's Coinage and Severan Dynastic Propaganda," *Latomus* 54, no. 1 (1995): 119–40.
- 13 Langford is especially attentive to the Senate's negotiation of imperial ideology through Domna's titles. Julie Langford, *Maternal Megalomania: Julia Domna and the Imperial Politics of Mother-*

- hood (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013).
- 14 J. E. Lendon, *Empire of Honour: The Art of Government in the Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).
- 15 Paul Baur, Michael Rostovtzeff, and Alfred Bellinger, eds., *The Excavations at Dura-Europos: Preliminary Report of the 3rd Season of Work, 1929–1930* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1932), 51–52. *Ιουλίαν Δόμναν / Αὐγοῦσταν τὴν μητέρα / συνκλήτου καὶ τῶν / ἱερῶν στρατευμάτων / Αὐρηλ(ιανῶν) Ἀντωνινιανῶν / Εὐρωπαϊῶν ἢ βουλή.*
- 16 *Ibid.*, 52.
- 17 For the conferral of titles and their chronological controversies, see Langford, *Maternal Megalomania*, 14 (*Augusta*); 84–112, 134–36 (*Mater Senatus*); 23–48 (*Mater Castrorum*).
- 18 Baur, Rostovtzeff, and Bellinger, *Preliminary Report* 3, 51.
- 19 Pliny, *HN* 34.27.
- 20 Fähndrich, *Bogenmonumente in der römischen Kunst*, 45, 48. Philip Hill, *The Monuments of Ancient Rome as Coin Types* (London: Seaby, 1989), 51–52.
- 21 Margaret Woodhull has analyzed a family funerary arch—unrelated to the imperial dynasty—at Pula, Croatia, in “Matronly Patrons in the Early Roman Empire: The Case of Salvia Postuma,” in *Women’s Influence on Classical Civilization*, ed. Fiona McHardy and Eireann Marshall (London: Routledge, 2004), 75–91. For arches dedicated to gods such as Jupiter, see Fred Kleiner, “The Sanctuary of the Matronae Aufaniae in Bonn and the Tradition of Votive Arches in the Roman World,” *Bonner Jahrbücher* 191 (1991): 199–224.
- 22 Kähler, “Triumphbogen,” 467–69, including a conjectured arch for Sabina.
- 23 Left bay attic: *Imp. Caesari divi f. Augusto pontifici / maximo cos. XII tribunic. potest. XX et / Liviae Caesaris Augusti / Mazeaus et*; right bay attic: *M. Agrippae L. f. cos. tert. imb. tribunic. / potest. VI et / Juliae Caesaris Augusti fil. / Mithridates patronis*; central bay attic: *Μαζ[αῖο]ς καὶ Μιθριδάτης [τοις πάτ]ρωσι καὶ τῶ δή[μῳ]*. Kähler, “Triumphbogen,” 454, 7.10. Wilhelm Alzinger, *Augusteische Architektoren in Ephesos*, 2 vols. (Vienna: Selbstverlag, 1974), 1:9–17.
- 24 Center of the attic: *Imp. Caesari divi Nervae f. Nervae / Traiano Optimo Aug. Germanic. / Dacico. pont. max. tr. pot. XVIII imp. IX / cos. VI p. p. providentissimo principi / Senatus P.q.R. quod accessum / Italiae hoc etiam addito ex pecunia sua / portu tutiorem navigantibus reddiderit*; left of the attic: *Plotinae / Aug. / coniugi Aug.*; right of the attic: *Divae / Marcianae / Aug. / sorori Aug.* Kähler, “Triumphbogen,” 403, 2.1. *CIL* 9.5894. De Maria, *Gli Archi Onorari*, 227–28.
- 25 *Gallieno clementissimo principi cuius invicta virtus sola pietate superata est et Saloninae sanctissimae Aug. / Aurelius Victor v.e. dicatissimus numini maiestatique eorum.* Kähler, “Triumphbogen,” 394, 1.36. *CIL* 6.1106. De Maria, *Gli Archi Onorari*, 311–12.
- 26 Kähler, “Triumphbogen,” 431, 5.16b (Dougga, Tunisia); 428–29, 5.11a (Vaga, Tunisia); 435, 5.27c (Khamissa, Tunisia); 428, 5.10 (Vazitana, Tunisia); 445, 5.55 (Assuras, Algeria); 450–51, 6.18 (Thasos, Greece). About a third of the Dougga arch still stands. Samir Aounallah, *Thugga, Dougga: Ville Romano-Africaine de Tunisie* (Sousse: Contraste Éditions, 2006), 64–65. The Thasos arch has collapsed, but most of its ashlar survive. Jean-Yves Marc proposes a reconstruction in “Der sogenannte Caracalla-Bogen in Thasos und die Funktion Monumentaler Bögen in den griechischen Städten der römischen Kaiserzeit,” in *100 Jahre österreichische Forschungen in Ephesos: Akten des Symposions Wien 1995*, ed. Barbara Brandt and Karl Krierer (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1999), 707–11. Julia Domna may also have been included in the

- dedication of the headquarters portal (“groma”), sometimes inaccurately called a triumphal arch, at Dura-Europos. Josef Mühlenbrock, *Tetrapylon: Zur Geschichte des viertorigen Bogenmonumentes in der römischen Architektur* (Münster: Scriptorium, 2003), 242–43.
- 27 For the increasingly local significance of arch monuments over time, see also Henner von Hesperg, “Bogenmonumente der frühen Kaiserzeit und des 2. Jahrhunderts n. Chr.: Vom Ehrenbogen zum Festtor,” in *Die römische Stadt im 2. Jahrhundert n. Chr. Der Funktionswandel des öffentlichen Raumes*, ed. Hans-Joachim Schalles et al. (Cologne: Rheinland-Verlag, 1992), 277–99.
- 28 Julia Domna was excluded from nine arches during the reign of Septimius Severus, but from only two arches during the reign of Caracalla. Kähler, “Triumphbogen,” 468–69.
- 29 Kähler, “Triumphbogen,” 392–93, 1.34. Diane Favro, “Construction Traffic in Imperial Rome: Building the Arch of Septimius Severus,” in *Rome, Ostia, Pompeii: Movement and Space*, ed. Ray Laurence and David J. Newsome (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 332–60. Zahra Newby, “Art at the Crossroads? Themes and Styles in Severan Art,” in *Severan Culture*, ed. Simon Swain, Stephen Harrison, and Jaś Elsner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 201–49, esp. 202–6. Susann Lusnia, “Battle Imagery and Politics on the Severan Arch in the Roman Forum,” in *Representations of War in Ancient Rome*, ed. Sheila Dillon and Katherine Welch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 272–98. Richard Brilliant, *The Arch of Septimius Severus in the Roman Forum* (Rome: American Academy in Rome, 1967).
- 30 For the inscription (CIL 6.1033), which was partly re-carved following Geta’s death and condemnation, see De Maria, *Gli Archi Onorari*, 305–7. *Imp. Caes. Lucio Septimio M. fil. Severo Pio Pertinaci Aug. patri patriae Parthico Arabico et / Parthico Adiabenico pontific. maximo tribunic. potest. XI imp. XI cos. III procos. et / Imp. Caes. M. Aurelio L. fil. Antonino Aug. Pio felici tribunic. potest. VI cos. procos. [[p.p / optimis fortissimisque principibus / <<et/ p. Şeptimjo Ğetae nođılışimjo Çaeşari>>]] / ob rem publicam restitutam imperiumque populi romani propagatum insignibus virtutibus eorum domi forisque SPQR.*
- 31 Kähler, “Triumphbogen,” 393–94, 1.35.
- 32 De Maria, *Gli Archi Onorari*, 309. *Imp. Caes. L. Septimio Severo Pio Pertinaci Aug. Arabic. Adiabenic. Part. Max. fortissimo felicissimo / pontif. max. trib. potest. XII imp. XI cos. III patri patriae et / Imp. Caes. M. Aurelio Antonino Pio Felici Aug. trib. potest. VII cos. [[III p. p. procos. fortissimo felicissimoque principi / <<et P. Şeptimjo Ğetae nođılışimjo Çaeş>>]] et Iuliae Aug. matri Aug. [[n. et castrorum et Senatus et patriae / <<Augg. et caştrorum et Fulviae Plautillae Aug.>>]] Imp. Caes. M. Aureli Antonini Pii Felicis Aug. / [[Parthici Maximi Britannici Maximi / <<uđorj filiae Ç. Fulvi Plautiani ç. v. pontif. nođılışimj pr. pr. çoş II neçeşari et comitiş Augg?>>]] argentari et negotiantes boari huius [[loci que invehent / <<loçi>>]] devoti numini eorum. For alternate reconstructions, Anne Daguët-Gagey, “Larc des argentiers, à Rome: À propos de la dédicace du monument (CIL 4.1035 = 31232 = ILS 426),” *Revue Historique* 129, no. 3 (2005): 499–519.*
- 33 For materials and dimensions, De Maria, *Gli Archi Onorari*, 307–9.
- 34 Nodelman, “Severan Imperial Portraiture,” 125–26.
- 35 Elsner emphasizes the general relation between the representations of cattle sacrifice and the market’s function (“Sacrifice and Narrative on the Arch of the Argentarii in Rome,” *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 18 [2005]: 83–98, esp. 90–92).
- 36 Levick, *Julia Domna*, 53–54, 78. Francesca Ghedini, *Giulia Domna tra oriente e occidente: Le fonti archeologiche* (Rome: L’Erma di Bretschneider, 1984), 42. Charmaine Gorrie, “Julia Dom-

- na's Building Patronage, Imperial Family Roles and the Severan Revival of Moral Legislation," *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 53, no. 1 (2004): 61–72.
- 37 On the addition of "Mother of the Senate and of the Fatherland" after the erasure of Plautilla's names, see Langford, *Maternal Megalomania*, 134–36.
- 38 Daguet-Gagey contextualizes this dedication among others by corporations (*collegia*) that benefited from Severan reforms concerning their constitution ("Larc des argentiers," 499–519).
- 39 For bibliography, the debate, and the seemingly unrelated inscription found nearby, see Mühlenbrock, *Tetrapylon*, 212–16. Newby, "Art at the Crossroads?," 206–11. Kampen, *Family Fictions*, 82–103. Kähler, "Triumphbogen," 436–37, 5.31c.
- 40 The patronage of these arches remains unclear. The identical inscriptions in honor of Tiberius do not mention the arches that displayed them, but instead describe the street-paving project supervised by one of the patrons. Joyce M. Reynolds and John B. Ward-Perkins, eds., *The Inscriptions of Roman Tripolitania* (Rome: British School at Rome, 1952), 100–101 (nos. 330, 331). Kähler, "Triumphbogen," 436, 5.31a.
- 41 Mühlenbrock, *Tetrapylon*, 207–9. Kähler, "Triumphbogen," 436, 5.31b.
- 42 Mühlenbrock, *Tetrapylon*, 209–11.
- 43 Nodelman, "Severan Imperial Portraiture," 134–35. Volker M. Strocka, "Beobachtungen an den Attikareliefs des severischen Quadrifrons von Lepcis Magna," *Antiquités Africaines* 6 (1972): 147–72. Elena La Rocca, "I rilievi minori dell'arco di Settimo Severo a Leptis Magna: Una proposta di ricostruzione," *Prospettiva* 43 (1985): 2–11.
- 44 Natalie Boymel Kampen, "Between Public and Private: Women as Historical Subjects in Roman Art" in *Women's History and Ancient History*, ed. Sarah Pomeroy (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 218–48. Kampen's concern is with coercive ideology; I emphasize here that the citizens of Lepcis Magna had their own reasons for taking up the theme of family by representing the empress repeatedly.
- 45 For materials and estimated dimensions, Mühlenbrock, *Tetrapylon*, 212–13.
- 46 Although statues and sculptural programs do not survive with these arches, the tetrapylon at neighboring Oea (Tripoli), financed by a local priest and politician for the co-emperors Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, had both relief sculptures and niches for statues on the piers. Mühlenbrock, *Tetrapylon*, 216–17 (miniature tetrapyla at Lepcis); 218–24 (Oea).
- 47 Little is known about the urban development of Thevestis, although it did serve briefly as a base for the *legio III Augusta* around 75 CE. Jean-Marie Blas de Roblès, *Sites et Monuments Antiques de l'Algérie* (Aix-en-Provence: Édisud, 2003), 220–234. Kähler, "Triumphbogen," 441, 5.47a.
- 48 Lidiano Bacchielli, "Il Testamento di C. Cornelio Egriliano ed il coronamento dell'arco di Caracalla a Tébessa," *L'Africa Romana* 4, no. 1 (1987): 295–321.
- 49 For archway measurements and materials, Mühlenbrock, *Tetrapylon*, 200–205. Most publications give the measurement 10.94 x 10.94 m for the ground level, although those numbers would seem to exclude the projecting columns.
- 50 Only later was the arch incorporated into a city wall (539 CE). Bacchielli, "Il Testamento di C. Cornelio Egriliano," 296.
- 51 *CIL* 8.1856. *Iuliae Domnae Aug(ustae) matri / castrorum et Aug(usti) et Sen(atu)s et patriae.*
- 52 For an overview of Cuicul's development, the arch, its dimensions, and the differential treatment

- of its minor façades see Claudia Kleinwächter, *Platzanlagen nordafrikanischer Städte: Untersuchungen zum sogenannten Polyzentrimus in der Urbanistik der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Mainz: Von Zabern, 2001), 62–71, 107–108. See also Blas de Roblès, *Sites et Monuments Antiques de l'Algérie*, 88–124.
- 53 Kähler, “Triumphbogen,” 430, 5.14b. *CIL* 8.8321. *Imp. Ca[es.] M. Aurelio Severo Antonino Pio Felici Aug. / Parth[ic]o Maximo Britannico Max. Germanico max. / pont. [ma]x. trib. pot. XVIII cos. IIII imp. III p. p. procos. / et Juli[ae D]omnae Piae Felici Aug. matri eius et Senatus et pa / triae et [cast]rorum et Divo Severo Aug. Pio patri Imp. Caes. M. Aureli Se / veri Ant[onini] Pii [Felic]is Aug. arcum triumphalem a solo d. d. res p. fecit.*
- 54 Blas de Roblès, *Sites et Monuments Antiques de l'Algérie*, 109–10. For freestanding arches marking urban boundaries, A. L. Frothingham Jr., “De la véritable signification des monuments romains qu'on appelle ‘arcs de triomphe,’” *Revue Archéologique*, 4th ser., 6 (1905): 216–30.
- 55 Martina Risse, *Volubilis: Eine römische Stadt in Marokko von der Frühzeit bis in die islamische Periode* (Mainz: Von Zabern, 2001), 52–57.
- 56 Kähler, “Triumphbogen,” 432, 5.17. *CIL* 8.9993, 9996, 21828. *Imp. Caes. M. [A]ur[ellio Anto]nino Pio Felici A[ug. Parth.] Max. Britt. [M]ax. Germ. Max. / pontifici max. tri[b] pot. XX imp.] IIII cos. IIII p. p. p[rocos.] et Juliae A[u]g. Piae Felici Matri / Aug. [e]t castroru[m et Senat]us et patriae resp. [Volubtil]itanorum ob singularem eius / er[gl]a universos [et novam] supra omnes r[etro prin]cipes indulgentiam arcum / c[u]m seiugibus e[t orname]ntis omnibus in[staurant]e et dedicante M. Aurelio / Seba[s]teno pr[oc. Aug. d]evotissimo nu[m]ini eorum a] solo fa[ci]endum cur[a]vit. Arch inscriptions occasionally record the presence of the provincial governor or other imperial representative for the dedication, which was an effective way to expand the community’s honorific relationships.*
- 57 For the regional tax relief, see Claude Domergue, “L’Arc de Caracalla à Volubilis: Le monument, la décoration, l’inscription,” *Bulletin Archéologique du Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques* (1963–64): 201–29, esp. 223–28.
- 58 A lost arch marking the entrance to a sanctuary for Mercury in Civitas Vazitanarum (Tunisia) also honored Caracalla and Julia Domna alone. Kähler, “Triumphbogen,” 428, 5.10 (Vazitana, Tunisia).
- 59 Christiane Boube-Piccot, “Trophée damasquiné sur une statue impériale de Volubilis,” *Bulletin d’Archéologie Marocaine* 6 (1966): 242–50.
- 60 For dimensions and materials (local limestone from the Zerhoun massif), Domergue, “L’Arc de Caracalla,” 201–29. A single-bay arch at (long-buried) Pompeii also incorporated fountains. Kähler, “Triumphbogen,” 410, 2.17d.
- 61 Greg Woolf, “Monumental Writing and the Expansion of Roman Society in the Early Empire,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 86 (1996): 22–39.



THE “ROMANNESS OF THE SOLDIERS”: BARBARIZED PERIPHERY OR IMPERIAL CORE?

Simon James

Surviving historical accounts record some striking instances of what happened when imperial Rome’s soldiers (*militēs*), overwhelmingly born and recruited in distant provinces, came into contact for the first time with the people of Italy. In 69 CE, during the civil wars following the death of Nero, Vitellius brought soldiers from Germany to secure the capital. His Rhineland troops were swaggering and aggressive, even fighting amongst themselves, and terrorized the civil population to whom they all, legionaries as well as provincial auxiliaries, appeared dangerous aliens.¹ To the people of the city, Vitellius’s strangely garbed *militēs* became targets of ridicule and, in an instant, figures of terror: some soldiers responded to mocking and attempted robbery with lethal violence.² Soon after, when Vespasian’s eastern legions fought the Vitellians in the Po Valley, they proved themselves equally alien to Italy, manifesting the oriental custom of hailing the rising sun,³ and showing no empathy for their fellow Roman citizens when they savagely sacked Cremona as though it were a barbarian stronghold.⁴

Similarly, when in 193, during the civil wars triggered by the death of the emperor Commodus, the imperial contender Septimius Severus sent troops from his Danubian armies into the city of Rome, they caused consternation among the people of the capital.⁵ Because of their uncouth speech, boorish manners, and strange dress, these Roman soldiers were not perceived as “our brave troops” but seemed literally outlandish: contemporary images of such *militēs* suggest their garb was indeed little different from that of northern barbarians being sold in the slave markets (fig. 6.1)—yet these men, some of whom *were* second or even first generation “barbarians” in imperial service, were not subdued captives but armed, arrogant, and dangerous alien-looking agents loose on the streets.

To Romans of Rome, then, it appeared by the year 200 that Roman soldiers, from armies long stationed on the frontiers of far-flung provinces, had become “barbarized.” Even citizen legionaries were now hardly recognizable as fellow Romans, let alone the provincial auxiliaries who came to form the majority of the military. Indeed most serving imperial auxiliaries were not (yet) Roman citizens, but recruited provincials, while some really were barbarian-born conscripts or volunteers. Yet all these were formally Roman *militēs*, under oath to the emperor and on the imperial payroll.

The unfolding story of imperial Rome’s *militēs* and their culture during the Principate, from Augustus’s establishment of permanent standing armies to the great military crisis



6.1. The “Antonine revolution” in Roman military dress, and its primary source in the dress of northern “settled barbarian” peoples. Left: Grave stela of the centurion Minucius, found at Padua, probably 40s BCE. He wears the traditional short Italian tunic, which leaves the limbs exposed. Center: A Danubian German of the 2nd century CE from the Column of Marcus Aurelius at Rome. He is clad in a long-sleeved tunic, close-fitting breeches, and a *sagum* fastened at the shoulder by a brooch. Right: A Roman soldier of around 300 CE, wearing the “barbarian”-style military clothing ensemble adopted during the 2nd century, depicted on a mosaic from Piazza Armerina, Sicily.

of the third century which saw the collapse of the Augustan order and the beginnings of Byzantine autocracy, offers an excellent case study for the issues at the heart of the present book and exhibition. It is highly pertinent to the notions of “cultural peripheries,” and of a “core” providing a frame of reference against which the nature and degree of conformity, divergence, or deviance of the peripheries may be judged. Specifically, I would argue that imperial soldiers represent one of the most important, yet unduly neglected, of all cases across the wider Roman world of evolving “Romanness.” (I prefer “Romanness” to the now widely used form “*romanitas*” because it is mainly a later term, not a Roman one: the word was apparently unknown before c. 200 CE.⁶)

The “Romanness of the soldiers” has been neglected, and profoundly misunderstood, precisely because it has long been considered peripheral in multiple senses. Firstly, notwithstanding the thousands of Praetorians and other imperial guards in the city itself, the vast majority of Rome’s soldiers were literally peripheral in geographic terms, stationed along the distant *limites* of the empire. Secondly, they are widely seen as strongly divergent from an Italian yardstick of “Romanness,” because they were culturally mongrelized by having been recruited from more “primitive and barbaric” peoples around the frontiers. Thirdly and by no means least, the soldiers were—and often still are—seen as crude, vulgar, and *uncultured*, lacking knowledge or understanding of the metropolitan elite culture which has long provided our yardstick for Roman civilization; this is, then, a matter of class distinction (plus ancient and modern snobbery) as well as ethnic contrasts.

However, I will argue that the true dynamics and significance of the case of the soldiers effectively turn this received picture on its head, making us question the very concepts of core and periphery, and the fundamental nature of Roman culture and identity. This claim may seem paradoxical, because archaeology provides plentiful evidence—artifacts, visual representations, epigraphy, and subliterate texts—with which to cross-check the picture provided by writers like Tacitus and Dio, all of which seems on first impression simply to corroborate the image of the soldiers presented by the surviving ancient historical literature.



6.2. Painting of Julius Terentius, Temple of the Palmyrene Gods, Dura-Europos (in situ), 1930–31.

“BARBARIAN” SOLDIERS

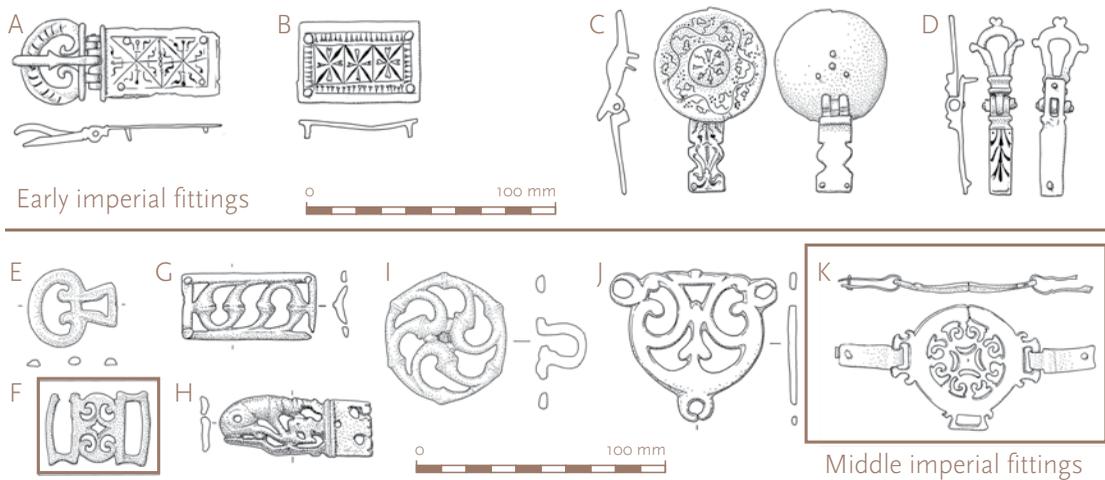
Indeed, Yale’s collections and archives preserve archaeologically recovered testimony as well as objects that offer us one of the best pictures we have from anywhere in the empire for the life and culture of a body of Roman soldiers of the third century CE: that of the urban garrison of Dura-Europos on the Syrian Euphrates. Garrison and city perished in a Sasanian siege c. 256 CE, the site then remaining largely abandoned and undisturbed until its rediscovery in 1920. The most vivid single piece of evidence is, perhaps, the wall painting known as “the sacrifice of Terentius” from the Temple of the Palmyrene Gods (fig. 6.2).⁷ This shows a body of Roman troops attending a sacrifice to a group of divine figures at left. The sword-armed officiant is labeled in good Latin script as “Julius Terentius, tribune,” clearly situating the scene in a Roman military milieu: indeed, other texts recovered from the site show that Terentius was present in the city in the 230s and that he commanded probably the largest Roman unit based at Dura, the 1000-strong *cohors XX Palmyrenorum*, an auxiliary force comprising infantry, cavalry, and camel-borne troops.⁸

Beyond the altar on which Terentius offers incense, a standard bearer holds the regimental banner (*vexillum*), while behind the tribune are ranks of other soldiers witnessing the rite. However, beyond the officiant’s very Roman name and specified military rank written in Latin and the *vexillum*, there is little here that would indicate to, say, an Augustan military tribune or centurion that we are looking at *Roman* soldiers at all. Every mortal figure is clad in shoulder-fastening cloak, tunic with long close-fitting sleeves, and, perhaps most noteworthy, trousers or rather close-fitting hose with sewn-in feet. This ensemble (corroborated by other textual, representational, and archaeological data from Dura and elsewhere) comprises garments alien to republican Roman tradition; indeed, such dress had long been specifically associated with barbarians. The square cloak (*sagum*), long-sleeved tunics, and trousers were the archetypal barbarian garb, connoting wild, undisciplined Gauls and Germans, and bizarre easterners like Parthians (fig. 6.1, center).

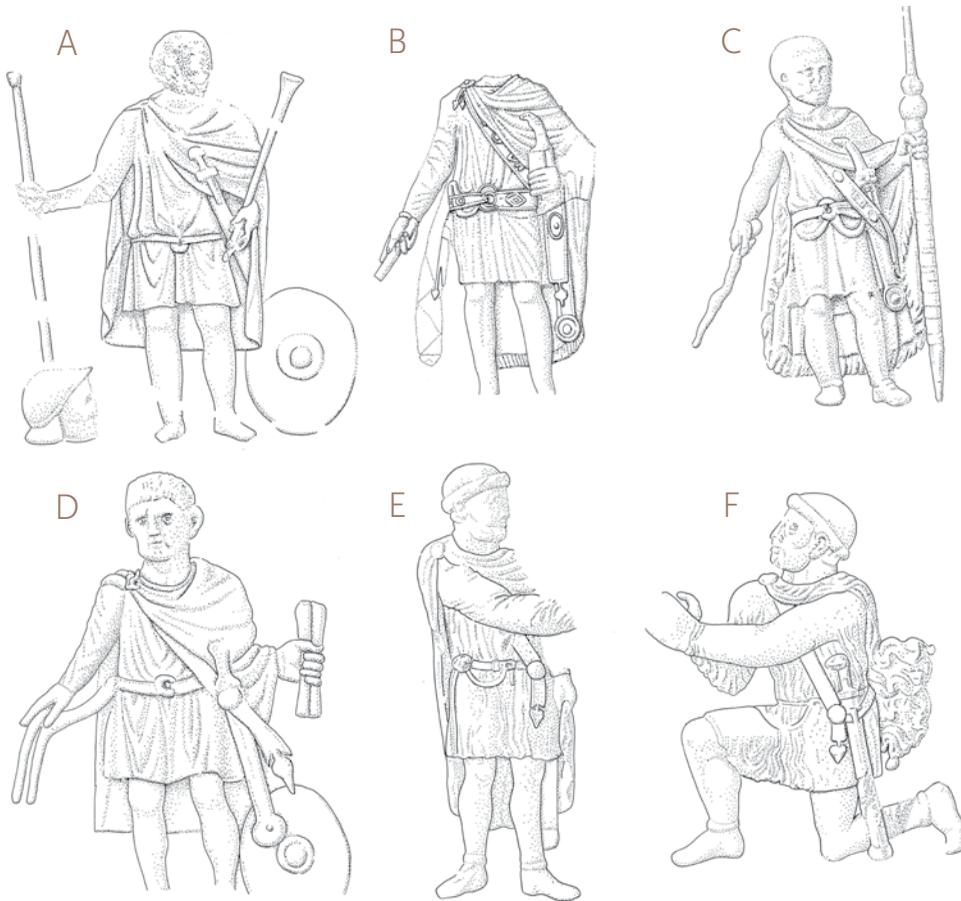
The deities who are the apparent objects of sacrifice are also distinctly exotic. Neither Roman state gods nor imperial cult feature here: Terentius offers to a triad of Palmyrene deities, along with the *Tychai* (Greek goddesses of Fortune) of Palmyra and of Dura itself.⁹ This scene, then, depicts a Palmyrene “ethnic” unit of the Roman armies sacrificing to deities of its mother city (140 miles to the west across the dry steppe) within a Palmyrene sanctuary at Dura; from a traditional Roman perspective it shows semi-barbarian soldiers, in barbarous dress, worshipping alien deities. Further, although by the time the Terentius scene was painted (in the third century CE) all serving auxiliaries had been made Roman citizens along with most other provincials by Caracalla, the epigraphic and papyrological evidence from Dura suggests that these *milites* likely still spoke Semitic dialects as their first language. They will have conversed with their superiors, and with the Syrian-born legionaries who shared the urban base with them, in the Greek *koiné* of the eastern empire. Probably few of Dura’s soldiers knew much Latin beyond stock military phrases and commands, except for their commander and the scribe who labeled him in the painting.

The exceptional assemblage of military artifacts recovered from Dura adds intriguing twists to the story. Alongside weapons and armor, it includes hundreds of elaborated metal fasteners, attachments, and purely decorative pieces (fig. 6.3, plates 60, 62–65).¹⁰ Mostly simple “openwork” copper alloy castings, these—significantly—are generally of types known from Roman military sites across the empire, along the Danube and Rhine, in Britain and Africa. During the second century CE these openwork fittings generally replaced the solid plate types of the earlier Principate. Archaeological associations and contemporary depictions show that they come from soldiers’ waist-belts and sword-baldrics, items symbolizing military service and offering prominent fields for visual display, or from cavalry-horse harnesses, which again provided opportunities to show off military wealth and style (fig. 6.4).

Such fittings, then, are material correlates of a common culture shared by imperial soldiers across the empire, and they exhibit a fairly standard repertoire of design and décor (if not quite uniform in either the general or modern military sense). Some of them feature overtly Roman or generally classical motifs, such as Jupiter’s eagle, *pelta*- or ivy-leaf ornament, or Latin (sometimes Greek) texts. However, other such dress fittings represent another decorative tradition entirely.



6.3. Examples of military dress and harness fittings of the 1st century CE compared with their later 2nd- to earlier 3rd-century equivalents. A: Soldier’s belt-buckle, B: Belt plate, C: Horse-harness strap junction, D: Horse-harness strap connector (all from Vindonissa, Switzerland), E: Buckle loop, F: Small frame buckle, G and H: Buckle plates, I: Baldric fastener, J and K: Horse-harness strap connectors (A–D: after Unz and Deschler-Erb 1997; E–J: from Dura-Europos, after James 2003; K [not to scale]: after Chirila et al. 1972).



6.4. Representations of Roman soldiers of the first half of the 3rd century CE, showing their prominent sword baldrics and waist belts with decorative metal fittings. A: Stela of Aurelius Surus, bucinator of *legio I Adiutrix*, B: Unknown, Rome, C: Tombstone of M. Aurelius Lucianus, Rome, D: Unknown, holding strap ends, funerary relief, from Herakleia-Perinthos, E: Sasanian relief depicting Roman emperor, probably Valerian, Bishapur II, F: Sasanian relief depicting Roman emperor, probably Philip, Bishapur II (A and D: Istanbul Museum; B–C: after Bishop and Coulston 1993; E–F: after Herrmann 1983).

Some of the fittings from Dura, including parts of belts and bridles, are embellished in “trumpet ornament,” a highly characteristic sinuous style. Circular examples may exhibit rotary symmetry (plates 62–63). Such pieces often suggest “Celtic art” to modern eyes, being derivations of European Iron Age La Tène style, and indeed earlier Roman-era archaeological finds indicate the origins of the Roman examples are to be sought in pre-Roman central or western Europe.¹¹ But what are “Celtic-style” pieces doing on the Syrian frontier? In fact trumpet-ornament pieces commonly comprise a proportion of such fittings recovered from third-century Roman military sites right across the empire as far as Britain. This phenomenon most likely represents a familiar process among soldiers down to our own time: acquisition and general adoption of enemy or allied military kit because it is deemed better, or copying of foreign style because it has cachet (e.g., associations of particular skills or courage)—or simply because it is novel. Well-known examples include the craze to copy Hungarian hussar cavalry in the eighteenth century, American Civil War regiments imitating French colonial Zouave troops, and so on down to the case of a British soldier friend of mine who, working with American troops in Afghanistan, swapped some British kit for a US Army Gore-Tex® jacket.¹²

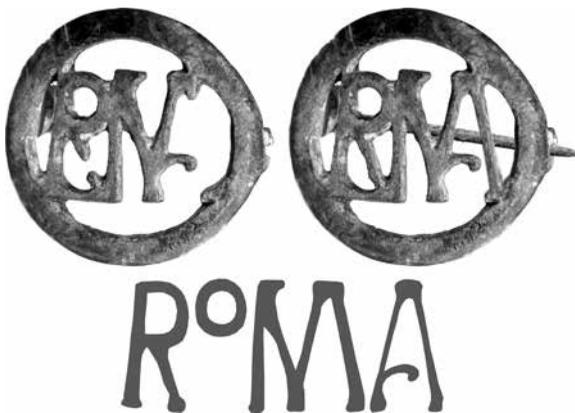
In the case of Roman military trumpet-ornament fittings, we can probably trace the introduction of these to recruitment of soldiers, especially cavalry, from upper Danubian or Rhineland peoples, men entering Roman service with their native kit. This was spread round the empire as such units were posted abroad, and the style was taken up by other Roman troops who admired it. Further, such “Celticizing” artifacts are the material correlates of a much broader impact of these western provincials or “barbarians” on Roman martial culture, which included adoption of styles of fighting, tactics, and other military practices, plus associated technical language. Arrian records how many Roman cavalry maneuvers and the terminology describing them were drawn from “Celtic” peoples and their languages.¹³

This “Celtic” component, then, is actually just the tip of an iceberg of foreign cultural importations and integrations into Roman martial culture during the Principate. There is reason to believe that the basic idea of simple yet strong cast-openwork fittings originally came to central and western Europe from the steppe, where they were already used by Sarmatian horse peoples (also the likely inspiration for similar openwork fittings used in the Parthian Empire). A steppe origin is also postulated for a range of other military equipment appearing in Roman use in the second century CE.

Many of the new openwork fittings are from baldrics, a new type of belt for suspending the sword that appeared in Roman use as a package with a new kind of scabbard attachment. The familiar ring-attached scabbard of the earlier empire was displaced by the scabbard slide, through which ran a strap tied to a ring projecting behind a large plate on the front of the baldric (fig. 6.4F). In Roman use this arrangement was worn as a shoulder belt: however, originally it was designed as a waist-belt system for carrying the long blades favored by steppe cavalymen, a system the Romans adopted and adapted to suit infantrymen too.¹⁴

Adoption of the scabbard slide and baldric by *militēs* was broadly contemporary with the appearance in Roman service of other things known to have been in steppe use at the time, e.g., ring-pommel swords which became a short-lived Roman fashion, and a more enduring adoption of dragon-headed windsock standards, plus the introduction of armored lancers (cataphracts). These innovations have been deemed to result from intense second-century fighting with, and large-scale recruitment from, Sarmatian peoples leading to postulation of a major episode of “Sarmatization” of Roman military culture.¹⁵ In my view, we may still be missing a major part of the story: we know far less about Rome’s major martial interactions with the great Parthian Empire across the Euphrates, where Rome encountered cataphracts long before it did on the Danube. The Parthians also used the scabbard slide, and apparently dragon standards as well.¹⁶

If the details are still revealing themselves, the evidence nevertheless seems strongly to support the received image of profound “barbarization” of the soldiers—the Roman culture they had inherited from legionaries of Augustus’s new standing provincial armies becoming gradually attenuated, diluted, and garbled on the distant territorial peripheries of the empire. To be sure, we can certainly interpret these cultural processes as comprising a substantial “de-Italianization” of Roman martial culture, with decline of recruitment in Italy in the first century CE being followed in the second by partial replacement of received Italian martial culture by practices, equipment, and associated



6.5. A soldier’s patriotism, written on the body. A military cloak brooch in copper alloy openwork, later 2nd–mid-3rd century CE, 35 mm diameter, from Novae, Moesia, shown as found (top left), reconstructed (top right), and its ligatured text expanded (bottom). Svishtov Museum, I-460.

jargon drawn from provincial and even foreign recruits. This might indeed be regarded as “provincialization” and “barbarization.”

Nevertheless, I also argue that, paradoxically, the development of Roman military culture from the reign of Augustus to the mid-third century actually represents not “degeneration of proper Roman culture,” but vigorous *continuity* of a deeply felt and strongly self-aware “Romanness.” That the *milites* regarded *themselves* as staunch Romans is clear in the historical record, and archaeology shows how soldiers literally wrote their patriotism on their bodies. Military cloak-brooches are known from Europe, simply proclaiming ROMA (fig. 6.5), analogous to the national flag patches on modern combat uniforms, while a widely attested design for the fittings soldiers wore on their prominent sword-belts proclaimed: “[Jupiter] Best [and] Greatest protect [us] a regiment of fighting men all.”¹⁷

Further, this frontier-centered, military “Romanness” has every ground to be considered just as authentic as that of the people of the city itself. Indeed, many third-century soldiers may well have felt that they—especially the men in the ranks of legions founded by Augustus himself—were the *true* curators of traditional republican Roman cultural values, rather than the population of the city, whether slaves or even senators. And as I will further argue, this was more than the anachronistic conservatism often observable among long-established expatriate communities, who cling onto ways their parent societies have long since abandoned. I think that the third-century soldiers would have had a real point, which the deified Augustus, could he have seen them from his divine vantage point, would have accepted—and then perhaps wondered what he had set in motion two centuries earlier...

CULTURAL CONVERGENCE IN THE EARLY EMPIRE

The sun-drenched civil “glory that was imperial Rome” during the Principate, that key achievement which since the Renaissance the West has so admired, and which the Romans and Greek provincial writers of the Antonine Age itself so celebrated, was centered on a great flourishing of urban civilization in Italy and the Mediterranean provinces, also extending to some regions beyond, e.g., Gaul and even Britain. This efflorescence of civic life was made possible by the celebrated *pax Romana*, one of the key lasting successes of the Augustan revolution, generally effective in banishing war from the geographical core of the empire for two centuries. Of course there were some bouts of civil war and instances of terrible carnage, notably in Judea, routine brutal treatment of slaves, and extensive internal oppression, but nevertheless political stability clearly paid massive dividends to many. This unprecedented internal peace and cultural development was underpinned by the central pact of empire, between an emergent cosmopolitan civil aristocracy, the emperor, and his soldiers, who acted as guarantors of the imperial order in return for their maintenance through taxation.¹⁸

Within the prosperous “core” provinces of the early empire, the dominant process was the evolution of a convergent elite culture based on integration of the Italian and provincial landed elites who ran local government, enforced law, collected taxes, and through civic leadership and benefactions drove the development of new cities—or redevelopment of existing towns along more Roman lines. Whether Gauls or Spaniards, Africans or Syrians, these local bigwigs were allied with each other and with the Roman state. They formed an empire-wide ruling class, increasingly integrated, both internally (through adoption of a shared elite culture), and with the imperial regime through acquiring the Roman citizenship already held by their Italian peers.¹⁹

Not just Roman citizenship, but equestrian and senatorial status soon spread to leading provincials. During the second century CE senators of provincial origin reached the imperial throne itself. By the third century, “Romanness” was no longer tied to the city, or even to Italy: from 212 Roman citizenship was almost universal throughout the provinces, while the empire’s statesmen, jurists, generals, and emperors increasingly came from places like

Spain, Provence, Africa, and Syria. We will return later to the implications of this for notions of “core” and “periphery,” especially for the empire of the second and third centuries.

This history of cultural change and integration has, for a century, been understood in terms of an acculturative process of “Romanization”—of provincials *becoming* Roman through uncritical adoption of a Roman cultural package, of values, material culture, language, and sense of identity; but that different groups achieved this one-way transition with highly varied degrees of comprehension, competence, and success, resulting in multiple levels, and various manifestations, of “Romanization.”²⁰ However, with good reason, such an interpretation has come under intense critical attack in recent decades.²¹ Above all, it was at the outset a deeply colonialist conception, envisaging Roman culture as something innately superior that “more primitive peoples” would race to adopt; it allowed them no agency. It also widely presumed that there was a coherent “Roman (core) culture” for the grateful provincials to imitate, doing so more or less “correctly.” In recent times such crude views of simple unidirectional acculturation have been widely abandoned. Nevertheless some have continued to maintain that, despite its colonialist baggage, the term “Romanization” still has value, in that the process did constitute convergence of provincial societies toward common cultural characteristics emanating from the *geographical* core of the empire; and that this process was “Romanizing” in that it was taking place within an imperial system ruled by Rome, and not least that almost everyone in the empire came to be *legally* Roman, as citizens.²²

Whatever we choose to label the process of convergence and integration of Rome’s civil provinces, it is clear that it was primarily an elite-led phenomenon. Typically, the emperor delegated local power to favored indigenous landed magnates, who oversaw the donkeywork of administration, law enforcement, and tax collection, with the ever-watchful imperial power ready to crush rebellion, or resistance to (or from) these provincial agents. The favored provincial few, typically the first to acquire Roman citizenship, used the wealth accumulating from privilege to buy into the existing common aristocratic lifestyle and value system of the imperial core, establishing and advertising themselves as members of the empire’s power structure. However, in terms of *content* it is now generally understood that this medium of elite convergence actually comprised Greek rather than native-Roman or Italic cultural traditions. It was articulated around Hellenic education and Greek values: *paideia*.²³

Indeed, much of what we think of as archetypically Roman, e.g., in private and public architecture (like underfloor heating systems, mosaics, Corinthian capitals), was actually Hellenistic Greek (or, in the case of amphitheaters, Campanian) in origin, adopted and naturalized as Roman. This was a process well underway in the later republic, but nonetheless in Augustan times and beyond much still comprised recent or new importations to Roman culture, not hallowed traditions from the early republic. Rome’s desire for cultural validation in relation to the established prestige of Greek culture was cemented in Augustus’s reign through creation of the national epic, the *Aeneid*, which affirmed Roman origins among Homer’s Trojans, at the wellhead of Hellenism. To this central Greek strand were subsequently added many others from other Mediterranean cultures, most familiarly in the field of religion: cults were widely adopted not just from the Greek world but also from Egypt and the East.

Cultural convergence among the imperial elites themselves, then, was not necessarily or primarily about “becoming Roman” for its own sake; it was more about establishing credentials of membership of the multi-ethnic ruling class within the empire, in terms which were more Greek, or at most Greco-Roman, than Italian; and not least it was about emphasizing class distinction from subordinate groups. Like possession of Greek-style cultural education (*paideia*), acquiring Roman citizenship was initially valuable as a *status* distinction, and passport to opportunities on the imperial stage; already-wealthy enfranchised

provincial families could aspire to move rapidly to equestrian or even senatorial status, and lucrative careers in imperial service for their sons.

(Wider observable convergence on versions of [Greco-]Roman culture clearly apparent within the ranks of provincial societies proceeded by different mechanisms, whether emulation and ambition for, or subversion of elite status distinctions, or selective self-expression of subordinates through creation of cultural “creoles,” etc. These expressed and reflected a reality of myriad “discrepant experiences” of empire. Such processes were also very important, but limitations of space oblige me to focus here on the dominant discourse of the power and culture of the civil elite.²⁴)

While considerable attention has been paid to cultural adoptions, innovations, and transformations involved in the processes of integration between Italian/Roman and provincial elite culture, much less attention has been paid to something I believe to be of equal importance: what the convergent elites (or for that matter other Roman citizens and even the majority of free provincials) were obliged to *abandon* during this process.

The celebrated *pax Romana* was of course defended—and, where necessary, imposed—by the soldiers. However, its establishment and maintenance also relied on something profound and little discussed: hand-in-hand with creation of a standing, professional army personally loyal to the emperor (who nobly took up the burden of imperial defense) went effective *demilitarization* of Italy and the Mediterranean, for the first time ever. This creation of a virtual imperial monopoly on organized armed force did not (as widely misunderstood) involve general disarmament of civil populations in Italy or beyond: weapons could be kept for personal protection. However, it did precipitate a profound redefinition of the basis of free Roman masculinity.

THE CENTRALITY OF WAR AND GLORY TO ROMAN CULTURE

Augustan writers like Livy and Virgil extolled the *mos maiorum*, the ways of their republican ancestors who had lived in a world of war. In terms both of “national” culture, and the values of the male citizens who formed the body politic, republican Rome was, like its peers, extremely warlike and became even more so during the third and second centuries BCE as it victoriously overcame all other powers in the Mediterranean. Where Hellenistic Greeks now widely employed professional soldiers, triumphant Rome still retained a citizen militia army, in which ideology—the personal value-system of the soldiers and their commitment to the state—generated a skilled ferocity in battle that more than compensated for relatively amateurish senatorial command. Any propertied Roman citizen could expect to be called to serve his country in war. His masculinity—his *virtus*, “real-manliness”—depended on a deeply felt sense of personal honor, guaranteed by capacity for lethal armed violence when threatened.²⁵ This capacity was socially controlled by channeling it into military service for the state, battle becoming the supreme arena for public demonstration of *virtus*. Middle republican culture was profoundly permeated by war—or rather it was articulated around *successful* war, manifested in the cult of Victory, and *profitable* war: Rome’s cityscape became permeated with reminders of its triumphs, from the spoil-festooned mansions of generals to the many “manubial” temples, i.e., shrines erected in thanks to the gods for fulfilment of pre-battle vows, funded by the booty of victory.²⁶

There is actually a major caveat here, in that bloodthirsty Roman rhetoric masked a more complex reality in which the republic’s skills in alliance-building, and the relative inclusiveness of Roman culture—to us still highly selective but appearing astonishingly promiscuous to Greeks—seem to have been as fundamental to Roman success as victorious warfare. This was the profoundly effective combination I have called the sword and open hand.²⁷ Nevertheless, ideologically it is difficult to overstate the centrality and importance of martial values, military service, and glory to republican citizens, and to traditional Roman

culture and identity. Against this background, the Augustan military reforms may be seen to have had profound consequences.

Augustus effectively removed the obligation—or right, or opportunity—for most ordinary Roman males to serve in the legions; now military service was the responsibility of a smaller group of professionals.²⁸ The new legions continued to be commanded by senatorial generals, but no longer as autonomous commanders: they were now merely frequently rotated legates, deputies of the emperor, who received the soldiers' oaths and monopolized the glory. These changes achieved Augustus's essential aim, of effectively breaking the dangerous symbiosis between legionaries ambitious for glory and booty, and their generals' ambitions for both plus power, which had torn the republic to pieces. Yet the Augustan military reforms had other major outcomes certainly unintended by the first emperor.

Confining military participation to a subset of citizens serving as long-service professionals turned the majority of Roman male citizens into life-long civilians. For most free Romans, the traditional expectation that they would spend much of their younger adulthood in military service was abolished. Young senators, too, found their traditional avenues to demonstrating *virtus* compromised, because they could no longer aspire to victorious autonomous generalship: the ultimate mark of aristocratic *virtus*, the granting of a triumph, was now confined to members of the imperial family. For most, then, notions of masculinity could no longer be framed around establishing *virtus* on the battlefield, and so had to be redefined. Capacity for violence in defense of personal honor remained important, and possession of weapons for personal security and hunting remained commonplace; but henceforth civilian engagement in armed violence would be shaped not by the exigencies of war, but limited to private mayhem regulated by the severity of law. Those who still chose regardless to pursue formerly honorable routes to masculine standing, through raiding and plunder, were henceforth *latrones*: bandits.²⁹

Augustus was aware of the dangers and sought to maintain the martial spirit of Italians through reviving traditional military ceremonies and games. However, ensuing demilitarization of Italy and of the pacified, ungarrisoned “civil core” provinces during the first century CE was an inevitable result of, and indeed necessary condition for, success of the *pax Romana*: stopping internal war, if not eliminating other forms of internal violence so much as redefining some as criminal.

The “civilianized” Roman citizens whom Augustus thus almost accidentally created nevertheless continued to cling to the violently domineering ethos of the Roman Republic, although now as cheering spectators rather than participants. This was manifested in celebrating the victories of the emperor and his distant armies, and in the brutal pleasures of the arena, where gladiators continued to reproduce in lethally symbolic form Roman triumphs over others, and their freedom to do what they willed with the vanquished—including condemning them to an elaborate public theater of death. It was this significantly transformed Roman/Italian culture, still ideologically militaristic yet practically demilitarized, which Augustus, probably without understanding the full long-term implications of his revolution, bequeathed to the Mediterranean world.

Alongside stone amphitheaters, Rome and other now-peaceful places continued to accrue monuments crowing over victories, from the allegorical relief of Claudius subduing Bri-



6.6. Relief of Claudius subduing Britannia, 1st century BCE, Aphrodisias.

tannia found in Aphrodisias (fig. 6.6) with its sexual symbolism of military domination, to the starkly brutal realism of the scenes of enslavement, abuse, and slaughter of unarmed men and women on the Column of Marcus in the city itself.³⁰ For all the refinement and sophistication of its lifestyle, the prosperity of its multiplying cities and the many artistic accomplishments the modern West has long lauded, through the Antonine Age and beyond the integrating cosmopolitan civil culture of the Roman Mediterranean still also reveled in blood. Yet it was now normally unseen others who did most of the actual killing, in far-distant lands.

THE ROME OF THE SOLDIERS

Augustus’s successful initiation of a stable Roman imperial culture based on integrating provincials through the arts of peace, rather than dominating them with the sword, truly represented a radical transformation, both of the provinces and of “Romanness” itself. In harmony with the spirit of the Augustan era as a whole—revolution presented as restoration of hallowed, idealized ancestral traditions—it ostensibly preserved the republic’s martial ethos, while in practice diverting Italian cultural development onto an unprecedented demilitarizing track, creating a new civil “Romanness” fundamentally different from the culture of the later republic.

Simultaneously, as the Italian citizenry became demilitarized, while Roman citizenship spread rapidly to include people hitherto appalling to Italian Romans such as Gauls and Syrians, in ideological terms the new professional citizen legionaries found themselves *de facto* inheritors and guardians of the “core” martial ethos and traditions of republican Rome and “Romanness.” This was at the levels both of the state and of the individual male citizen—and especially at their intersection, i.e., demonstration of traditional *virtus* through exhibiting aggression and courage in battle in service of the state. Ideologically, by comparison with civilianized Italians and other *geographically* “core” provincials, who had effectively lost their martial *virtus*, imperial legionaries could see themselves not just as “real” Romans but effectively now as “Roman supermales.” For this new life-service professional-soldier subset of the citizenry, their sense of identity and *raison d’être* emphasized the martial aspect of received Roman culture even *more* strongly than for Scipio’s or Marius’s legionaries, famed soldiers who nevertheless still expected also to spend much of their adulthood as civilian farmers or townsfolk.

The proudly curated traditional martial *virtus* of the new imperial legions then provided the basis for rapprochement with frontier provincials, and indeed foreign peoples, through recruitment and integration based on comparable “warrior” value systems. Julio-Claudian armies recruited Spanish, Gallic, Thracian, Syrian, German, and even Parthian fighting men as auxiliaries; not (yet) Roman citizens, but in status and identity also *Roman* soldiers. An especially famous example was the Germanic Batavians, “our weapons and armor,”³¹ who supplied prodigious numbers of excellent troops instead of paying taxes in cash. Their outstanding reputation exemplifies the mutual respect of legions and auxiliaries as fighting men distinct from the civil population, even if, as soldiers of different corps still often do in bars, they sometimes fought each other as well.³²

This frontier-zone process of cultural integration between citizen legionaries and becoming-citizen auxiliaries, based on shared (or at least compatible) warrior values, looked like “barbarization” to Romans of Rome. Yet it was in fact a close analogue for Roman/Italian integration with other Mediterranean societies: convergence of civil elites around common Greek-derived cultural values in the civil provinces was paralleled in the armies by convergence between Roman and selected provincial and “barbarian” groups based on compatible martial cultures. However, the martial process, articulated by rankers and junior officers such as centurions who regulated evolving Roman military tradition, was also more

demotic than the civil-elite process, and therefore perceived not just as barbarizing, but also as vulgar, by educated civilian writers writing for equestrian and senatorial audiences.³³

AUGUSTUS'S TWIN DESCENDANT ROMES

To summarize, the culture of the soldiers has often been perceived as a stunted, distorted, barbarized, vulgarized, and peripheral branch off the true mainstream of Roman cultural development. I take a very different view, that in conducting the radical surgery to the body politic Augustus deemed essential to bringing stability to the war-torn empire, he effectively bifurcated, into distinct martial and civil strands, a republican culture which had hitherto been characterized by intimate integration of both—but that combination, which had brought astonishing success to a city-state, in the circumstances of world empire had become unsustainable. What we might characterize as the “supermilitarized Romanness” of the new imperial soldiers, which articulated integration of citizen legionaries with provincial and “barbarian” auxiliaries mainly in the frontier regions during the first two centuries CE, was in effect the counterpart or reciprocal of the transforming “demilitarizing Romanness” which formed the armature for simultaneous integration of Italy and the civil provinces around the Mediterranean.

But even if this model of bifurcation of “republican Romanness” into distinct civil and martial “imperial Romannesses” is accepted, beyond mere geographical terms, was one in any deeper cultural sense really “core” and the other “peripheral”? Was either of them more authentic than the other?

Any answer to these questions of course depends on what we think “authentic Romanness” comprised. It is actually hard to identify many truly *Roman* cultural phenomena that can be traced in continuity from early republic to late empire. So much of what is now thought of as “quintessentially Roman,” from architectural styles, heating systems and baths to gladiatorial games, comprised late republican importations from other Italian, or especially Hellenistic sources. Even Latin language fails, since half the empire always instead employed Greek as the *koine*. There is, however, one trait which does seem to be truly characteristically Roman, and to be retained through the many and varied transformations of Rome over 1000 years, from largest Latin city-state to an imperial autocracy embracing a Levantine monotheism. This is to be found in a comment by Polybius on “unbifurcated” republican Rome at the height of its glory, having just eclipsed Hellenistic Greek power in the Mediterranean: “no nation [other than the Romans] are so ready to adopt new fashions and imitate what they see is better in others.”³⁴

It is, I think, very significant that the context for this comment is military—Polybius’s famous description of the republican army—and that the most celebrated example Polybius offers of Roman openness to the foreign is a weapon, the famous *gladius Hispaniensis*, the “Spanish sword” with which the legionaries almost literally carved out Rome’s Mediterranean empire.³⁵ The same phenomenon, as both a general cultural trait and specifically military phenomenon, was echoed three centuries later by the Greek-speaking Roman officer Arrian:

The Romans are worthy to be praised because they do not embrace [only] their own native things. Thus, having chosen noble things from everywhere, they made them their own. You would find that they take some armaments from others—and indeed they are called “Roman,” because the Romans especially use them. [They also take] soldierly exercises from others.³⁶

Over time almost anything and anyone, including even ex-slaves, *could* become naturalized as “Roman.” To be sure, the process was always highly selective, yet this openness was the most Roman of Roman traits, in sharp contrast to the ethnic exclusivity of the Greeks.

In practice *both* civil and military branches of imperial “Romanness” continued strongly to exemplify this republican tradition of absorption of foreigners and foreign ways: “the open hand.” *Both* “Romes” continued to embrace and naturalize as fully Roman material culture, practices, and people deemed valuable, whether we are discussing “Celtic” belt fittings, Parthian horse-archers, Hellenistic medicine, Gallic landowners, or Syrian religions.

But to Augustus among his fellow gods, or to Scipio in the Elysian Fields, it is moot which of the descendant “Romes” would have looked more recognizable. For if “military Rome” increasingly took on the aspect of more and more outlandish foreigners like Germans, Sarmatians, and Parthians, it did vigorously maintain the fierce spirit of republican martial *virtus*; while “civil Rome” had perforce abandoned this, even as it integrated groups which earlier Romans had despised perhaps more than the wildest barbarian warriors which continually fed into “military Rome”: Gauls “softened by peace,” “decadent” Greeks, and “shifty” Syrians. In the process, “civil Rome” lost any vestige of a clear “Italian cultural core”; by the third century, what constituted civil “Romanness” was decided in Antioch or Alexandria, Ephesus or Carthage, Augusta Emerita or Lugdunum as much as in the city of Rome—and even the emperors came from the provinces. Conversely, the very city itself, and much of Italy, was largely populated by descendants of immigrants from the provinces and beyond, brought in by ambition, imperial service, or enslavement; from top to bottom, the citizen body of Italy in the second century was in “blood” very mixed, only partly directly descended from the population of archaic Italy: genetically and culturally, the society of the original heartland of the empire was, then, arguably as transformed and “mongrelized” as the armies. Further, the city itself was becoming, by 200, a backwater. For if Rome’s *political* core was the imperial court, then from the second century emperors spent less and less time in the capital, and were more and more embedded among the soldiers. The court was increasingly permeated by the culture of “military Rome,” as the state lost its civil constitutional façade, under the Severans revealing itself as naked military autocracy.

The third century saw the political ascendancy of “military Rome,” ironically as a result of its own bellicosity that inadvertently precipitated the rise of dangerous new powers around the frontiers, from large new Germanic confederations to the mighty Sasanian Empire. Fifty years of catastrophic conflicts with these powers, and also renewed civil wars between Rome’s own armies and soldier-emperors risen from their ranks, resulted in the new imperial order of the Dominate. The empire was reorganized on overtly militarized lines, as a vast logistics system for the armies and soldier emperors. This marked, for a while, the triumph of “military Rome” over “civil Rome,” an ascendancy only gradually attenuated, especially by the growing power of the church.

In my view, “imperial Romanness” was bifurcated at the outset, resulting in divergent evolutions of “civil” and “military Romes,” each rooted in the republican past, but representing distinct and different aspects of the Roman tradition, one emphasizing the open hand, the other the sword. Nevertheless, both “Romes” worked through the characteristically Roman tradition of selective integration of neighboring societies and cultures, albeit each engaging with a different set of neighbors, radically different from each other in geographical location and culture. Subsequently, “civil Rome” became regionalized and geographically “decentered”; “military Rome” may largely have been geographically peripheral to “civil Rome,” yet it became politically dominant and culturally influential throughout the Roman world. How useful, then, is the notion of “core and periphery” for thinking about the Roman Empire? I suggest that, as with “Romanization,” it is time to move on to new conceptual frameworks that may better describe the cultural dynamics of the Roman world.



I am grateful to Lisa Brody and Gail Hoffman for inviting me to contribute to the present volume. Thanks also to Louise Revell who first alerted me to the fact that the term “*romanitas*” is, in effect, “cod Latin.”

- 1 Tac., *Hist.* 1.64, 2.27, 2.66, 2.69, 2.74, 2.88.
- 2 Tac., *Hist.* 2.88.
- 3 Tac., *Hist.* 3.24.
- 4 Tac., *Hist.* 3.33.
- 5 Cass. Dio 75.2.6.
- 6 The word “*romanitas*” is first attested in Tertullian’s *On the Mantle (De Pallio)* 4.1, written sometime around 200 CE—and it was used pejoratively of his fellow citizens in Carthage who were aping Roman culture. Whether or not, as some have suggested, Tertullian coined the word himself (e.g., Bernard Green, *Christianity in Ancient Rome: The First Three Centuries* [London: T&T Clark, 2010], 129; Bruce W. Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities* [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2003], 5n11), if it existed at all before his time, it was evidently not in wide circulation, occurring in no earlier surviving classical source. I therefore follow Winter, and others like Louise Revell (*Roman Imperialism and Local Identities* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009], xi), in avoiding this authentic-sounding, but effectively spurious and certainly anachronistic term when discussing the cultural dynamics of the early to middle Roman Empire.
- 7 James Henry Breasted, “Peintures d’époque Romaine dans le désert de Syrie,” *Syria* 3 (1922): 177–206; Breasted, *Oriental Forerunners of Byzantine Painting: First-Century Wall Paintings from the Fortress of Dura on the Middle Euphrates* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1924); Franz Cumont, “Le sacrifice du tribun romain Terentius’ et les Palmyréniens à Doura,” *Monuments et Mémoires* 26 (1923): 1–46; Cumont, *Fouilles de Doura-Europos 1922–3* (Paris: Geuthner, 1926), 89–114, table 6, plates 49–51.
- 8 On references to Terentius, and the *cohors XX Palmyrenorum*, see C. Bradford Welles, “The Epitaph of Julius Terentius,” *Harvard Theological Review* 34 (1941): 79–102; Robert Fink, “The *Cohors XX Palmyrenorum*, a *Cohors Equitata Miliaria*,” *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 78 (1947): 159–70; John Gilliam, “The *Cohors XX Palmyrenorum*: Its History,” in *Excavations at Dura-Europos 1928–1937: Final Report 5, Part 1: The Parchments and Papyri*, ed. C. Bradford Welles, Robert Fink, and John Gilliam (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 26–28; David Kennedy, “The *Cohors XX Palmyrenorum* at Dura Europos,” in *The Roman and Byzantine Army in the East*, ed. E. Dabrowa (Krakow: Uniwersytet Jagielloński, Instytut Historii, 1994), 89–98.
- 9 Identifications of the three male figures have long been debated, some arguing that they were emperors; however, that they actually represent a Palmyrene divine triad is, in my view, now secure: Ted Kaizer, “A Note on the Fresco of Julius Terentius from Dura-Europos,” in *Altertum und Mittelmeerraum: Die antike Welt disseits und jenseits der Levant*, ed. Robert Rollinger and Brigitte Truschneegg (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2006), 151–59.
- 10 Simon James, *Excavations at Dura-Europos 1928–1937: Final Report 7; The Arms and Armour and Other Military Equipment* (London: British Museum, 2004), nos. 1–369.
- 11 Nancy Netzer, “The ‘Celtic’ Bronzes from Dura-Europos: Connections to Britain,” in *Dura-Europos: Crossroads of Antiquity*, ed. Lisa R. Brody and Gail L. Hoffman, exh. cat. (Chestnut Hill:

- McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, 2011), 283–94.
- 12 On these processes, see Thomas S. Abler, *Hinterland Warriors and Military Dress: European Empires and Exotic Uniforms* (Oxford: Berg, 1999).
 - 13 On Roman adoption of Celtic cavalry evolutions and terminology: Arr., *Tact.* 43.2 and 32.3 respectively.
 - 14 On adoption of the scabbard slide see Simon James, *Rome and the Sword: How Warriors and Weapons Shaped Roman History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2011), 182, 189, 213, 215.
 - 15 Jon Coulston, “Tacitus, *Historiae* 1.79 and the Impact of Sarmatian Warfare on the Roman Empire,” in *Kontakt—Kooperation—Konflikt: Germanen und Sarmaten zwischen dem 1. and 4. Jahrhundert nach Christus*, ed. Claus von Carnap-Bornheim (Marburg: Wachholz, 2003), 415–33.
 - 16 On Partho-Sasanian influence on Roman martial material culture see Simon James, “The Impact of Steppe Peoples and the Partho-Sasanian World on the Development of Roman Military Equipment and Dress, 1st to 3rd centuries AD,” in *Arms and Armour as Indicators of Cultural Transfer: The Steppes and the Ancient World from Hellenistic Times to the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Markus Mode and Jurgen Tubach (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2006), 357–92. In an apparently overlooked passage, Lucian’s satirical *How to Write History* includes a scathing attack on another writer’s hyperbolic, distorted account of Parthian dragon standards he had never actually seen, but which Lucian himself evidently knew about: “Another entertaining person, who has never set foot outside Corinth, nor travelled as far as its harbour—not to mention seeing Syria or Armenia—starts with words which impressed themselves on my memory:—‘Seeing is believing: I therefore write what I have seen, not what I have been told.’ His personal observation has been so close that he describes the Parthian ‘Dragons’ (they use this ensign as a numerical formula—a thousand men to the Dragon, I believe): they are huge live dragons, he says, breeding in Persian territory beyond Iberia; these are first fastened to great poles and hoisted up aloft, striking terror at a distance while the advance is going on; then, when the battle begins, they are released and set on the enemy; numbers of our men, it seems, were actually swallowed by them, and others strangled or crushed in their coils; of all this he was an eye-witness, taking his observations, however, from a safe perch up a tree. Thank goodness he did not come to close quarters with the brutes! We should have lost a very remarkable historian, and one who did doughty deeds in this war with his own right hand; for he had many adventures, and was wounded at Sura (in the course of a stroll from the Craneum to Lerna, apparently). All this he used to read to a Corinthian audience, which was perfectly aware that he had never so much as seen a battle-picture. Why, he did not know one weapon or engine from another; the names of manoeuvres and formations had no meaning for him; flank or front, line or column, it was all one” (Lucian, “The Way to Write History,” in *The Works of Lucian of Samosata*, trans. H. W. Fowler and F. G. Fowler, vol. 2 [Oxford: Clarendon, 1905], 124).
 - 17 Translated by Lindsay Allason-Jones. For an example of a baldric fastener from such a set, see Allason-Jones, “An Eagle Mount from Carlisle,” *Saalburg Jahrbuch* 42 (1986): 68–69.
 - 18 I have explored this “pact of empire” more fully in *Rome and the Sword*, 118–21, 163–66, 198–99, 222, 250.
 - 19 Nicola Terrenato, “The Romanization of Italy: Global Acculturation or Cultural *Bricolage*?” in *TRAC 97: Proceedings of the 7th Annual Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference, Nottingham 1997*, ed. Colin Forcey, John Hawthorne, and Robert Witcher (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1998),

- 20–27; Terrenato, “*Tam Firmum Municipium*: The Romanization of Volaterrae and Its Cultural Implications,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 88 (1998): 94–114; Terrenato, “A Tale of Three Cities: The Romanization of Northern Coastal Etruria,” in *Italy and the West: Comparative Issues in Romanization*, ed. Simon Keay and Nicola Terrenato (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2001), 54–67; Greg Woolf, “Becoming Roman, Staying Greek: Culture, Identity and the Civilizing Process in the Roman East,” *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 40 (1994): 116–43; Woolf, *Becoming Roman: The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
- 20 Mommsen’s term *Romanisierung* was developed in the Anglophone world as “Romanization” by Haverfield (e.g., Francis Haverfield, *The Romanization of Roman Britain* [London: Henry Frowde, 1906]); see Richard Hingley, *The Recovery of Roman Britain 1586–1906: A Colony So Fertile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 315–17.
- 21 There are many critiques of “Romanization,” notably by David J. Mattingly in *Dialogues in Roman Imperialism: Power, Discourse and Discrepant Experience in the Roman Empire*, ed. David J. Mattingly (Portsmouth: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 1997); Mattingly, *An Imperial Possession: Britain in the Roman Empire, 54 BC–AD 409* (London: Penguin, 2007).
- 22 See, notably, Keay and Terrenato, *Italy and the West*.
- 23 Woolf, “Becoming Roman, Staying Greek”; *Becoming Roman*.
- 24 Jane Webster and Nick Cooper, eds., *Roman Imperialism: Post-Colonial Perspectives* (Leicester: School of Archaeological Studies, University of Leicester, 1996); Mattingly, *Dialogues in Roman Imperialism*; Jane Webster, “Creolizing the Roman Provinces,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 105, no. 2 (2001): 209–25.
- 25 Myles McDonnell, *Roman Manliness: Virtus and the Roman Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
- 26 James, *Rome and the Sword*, 77.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 109, 143–44, 178, 205–7, 278–83.
- 28 Lawrence Keppie, *The Making of the Roman Army: From Republic to Empire* (London: Batsford, 1984); James, *Rome and the Sword*, 126–28.
- 29 Imperial transformations of *virtus* among civilians: James, *Rome and the Sword*, 168–69; criminalization of forms of armed violence: *ibid.*, 163.
- 30 Kenan T. Erim, “A Relief Showing Claudius and Britannia from Aphrodisias,” *Britannia* 13 (1982): 277–81. Hermann Petersen, Alfred von Domaszewski, and Guglielmo Calderini, *Die Marcus-Säule auf Piazza Colonna in Rom* (Munich: Bruckmann, 1896); Iain M. Ferris, *Hate and War: The Column of Marcus Aurelius* (Stroud: History Press, 2008).
- 31 Tac., *Germ.* 29.
- 32 Willem Willems, *Romans and Batavians* (Amersfoort: ROB, 1983); Johan Nicolay, “Interpreting Roman Military Equipment and Horse Gear from Non-Military Contexts: The Role of Veterans,” in *Jahresbericht 2001: ROMEC XIII 2001*, ed. Erhardt Deschler-Erb (Bruges: Vindonissa Museum, 2002), 53–65; Carol van Driel-Murray, “Imperial Soldiers: Recruitment and the Formation of Batavian Tribal Identity,” in *Proceedings of the 19th Congress of Roman Frontier Studies, Pécs 2003*, ed. Zsolt Visy (Pécs: University of Pécs, 2005), 435–39; Johan Nicolay, *Armed Batavians: Use and Significance of Weaponry and Horse Gear from Non-Military Contexts in the Rhine Delta (50 BC to AD 450)* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007).

- 33 E.g., Iiro Kajanto, "Tacitus' Attitude to War and the Soldier," *Latomus* 29, no. 3 (1970): 699–718. Note also patronizing attitudes toward the *simplicitas* of uneducated, uncultured soldiers, eg., regarding military wills: J. Brian Campbell, *The Emperor and the Roman Army, 31 BC–AD 235* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 226–27.
- 34 Polybius, *Histories*, trans. W. R. Paton (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1930), 6.25.11.
- 35 James, *Rome and the Sword*, 30, 79–84 and illus. 25–26; Peter Connolly, "Pilum, gladius and pugio in the Late Republic," *Journal of Roman Military Equipment Studies* 8 (1997): 41–57.
- 36 Arrian, *Tactical Handbook*, trans. James DeVoto (Chicago: Ares, 1993), 33.



IMPRESSIONS OF IDENTITY: CHOOSING A SIGNET RING IN THE ROMAN ARMY

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INTRODUCTION

In 1970 Martin Henig discussed hero veneration amongst soldiers of the Roman army using as evidence intaglios, incised gemstones of all shapes and colors set into metal finger rings.¹ A large number of intaglios found on a variety of military sites from throughout the empire contain images of mythological heroes and warriors, suggesting that soldiers in the Roman army, particularly legionary soldiers and officers, were particularly attached to heroic figures such as Achilles and Theseus, and their stories. However, it is challenging to insert fully the narratives of these very classical heroes into the mindset of auxiliary soldiers originating from provincial communities and only newly incorporated into a Roman daily context.² When examining a material culture set from Vindolanda, a frontier settlement in northern Britain occupied almost exclusively by auxiliary military units with provincial origins, it becomes more difficult to overlay completely these distinctly Greco-Roman stories onto the identity of a provincial soldier originating, for instance, from Germanic or Spanish homelands. Rather, I contend that the qualities that these figures represented became important to one with a martial focus in life who had joined the Roman army, but without necessarily fully adopting or knowing every aspect of the Greco-Roman myths behind them. I argue that the images found on signet rings in the context of auxiliary military communities should be associated less with an adoption of or adherence to Greco-Roman beliefs, as Henig argued for legionary finds,³ and instead have more to do with the complex and varied identity of those individuals present in these provincial and frontier settlements.

Interpreting specific types of material culture associated with a soldier's identity is interesting and in many cases, keeping in mind the limitations of the evidence, seems to be a successful route to investigating the incorporation of provincial groups into the Roman Empire.⁴ Simon James has argued that the material expression of this soldierly identity helps to define the "imagined community" of soldiers, especially as it stands out against the backdrop of the monolithic entity we think of as the Roman military machine.⁵ In the past decade we have come to see the Roman provinces, and especially the Roman army within them, as comprising regionally diverse groups rather than monolithic entities under a single umbrella identified as "provincial" or "non-Roman" or "military." Regional differences existed throughout the empire, resulting in hybrid cultures that were a mixture of local and

foreign influences that could vary, sometimes greatly, between regions.⁶ The provinces and the populations living within them all had different circumstances based on their status of conquest, incorporation, pre-Roman situation, local power, and so on. These discrepant realities cannot be categorized in simple terms just because their general status was “provincial” or “non-Roman.”⁷

Essential to the study of provincial communities, especially the Roman army, is the understanding that identity is situationally constructed and may change quite purposefully under different circumstances.⁸ Personal allegiances could be easily advertised by way of material expressions of bodily adornment such as brooches and other decoration of provincial origin. Conversely, Roman military armor clearly expressed an allegiance first and foremost to the Roman army.⁹ For an auxiliary soldier in the Roman army his identities as native provincial and Roman soldier were likely both significant to his daily life, but different social contexts would have called for greater visibility or emphasis of one over the other.

This essay uses material culture to address some of these issues, particularly how identity may have been expressed visually through personal choices made by soldiers guarding the frontiers of the empire. It seeks to understand how soldiers integrated themselves and negotiated their identity between Roman soldier and non-Roman provincial, as well as how this negotiation played out in the population that accompanied soldiers into the military community, living in mixed settlements near military bases in the provinces. It uses one particular luxury item—the signet ring with incised gemstone (intaglio)—to explore the choices made by auxiliary soldiers about outward appearance and status-bearing items. Since there is no tradition of carved seal stones in the pre-Roman West,¹⁰ these items can be used to investigate the incorporation of thoroughly Roman material items into the daily life of one provincial group. The mass-produced nature of intaglios by the first century CE suggests that signet rings were used at this point less often as an administrative tool to seal official documents and had become the purview of anyone who might afford the status-bearing item of a metal ring with gemstone.¹¹ In this case the very Roman character of the images worn by auxiliaries becomes meaningful when we consider the soldiers’ provincial backgrounds and the role intaglios played in the visible expression of identity. These items can provide a window into how this population incorporated distinctly Roman items into the daily expression of self and how these items might be differently interpreted to fit the needs of a mixed frontier population.

THE AUXILIARY ROMAN ARMY AND MATERIAL CULTURE

The Roman army was comprised of two types of soldiers: legionary soldiers, organized into units (legions) of 5000 men, usually citizen soldiers from the core of the empire and often called the backbone of the Roman military; and the auxiliary or “helping” units, organized into units of infantry and cavalry (cohorts and *alae*) of 500 to 1000 soldiers recruited from the conquered provinces.¹² Auxiliary soldiers in the imperial army spent almost a lifetime serving Rome, with retirement usually after 25 years of service, if one was lucky enough to reach that milestone alive. We can imagine this lengthy service becoming the focal point of an individual’s life, and it has been argued that the martial aspect of one’s identity would over time trump all others.¹³ It seems likely that this was to a certain degree true, as so much of a soldier’s time was occupied by the regimented military schedule. One can imagine the military identity becoming dominant in such an environment. Expression of this identity might be sought by way of outward physical symbols. Similar to donning military dress, in a provincial and auxiliary context wearing a Roman signet ring with a mythological war hero could also project this participation in a Roman military group.

At the same time auxiliaries, the non-citizen soldiers recruited from subjugated areas of the empire, appear to have also retained some of their original ethnic background in their

daily identities. Recruitment into the military occurred typically between the ages of 18 and 22, so involved grown men, who were sometimes already married at the point of recruitment.¹⁴ On many sites it is relatively clear if the majority of the population was auxiliary by means of inscriptions and knowledge of the unit in residence. Dedications to Jupiter Optimus Maximus and other military deities divulge the auxiliary unit present, while personal religious dedications or tombstones often indicate the original cultural affiliation of individual soldiers. There is even some evidence indicating that small groups of soldiers with the same cultural background formed peer groups within larger ethnically mixed military units by making religious dedications together.¹⁵ It appears then that men were recruited from tribes as a group and entered military communities together; this affected provincial societies greatly by the loss of young men from a population and resulted in mixed military populations.¹⁶ The cultural affiliations of many military units shifted through time; auxiliary units were more ethnically homogeneous in the first century shortly after they were raised from a specific part of the empire. They became culturally diversified through the second century as new recruitment into units occurred from various provincial regions, including the local area where the unit was stationed. Moreover, it has become clear in the past few decades that soldiers were accompanied by family members, often wives from their home tribe and the children born during service.¹⁷ Such a mixture of backgrounds in a military community could lead to individuals asserting their cultural affiliation at certain times, but also could create circumstances in which their identities as soldiers of Rome became important as the one common characteristic among members of a unit.

It is precisely this hybrid identity that makes the Roman army an interesting sub-group to consider in an investigation of identity and material culture in the provinces. Men recruited into the auxiliary units and the families that traveled with them into the military communities around the empire became a part of the entity that enforced Roman control in provincial regions and on the frontiers. Poor treatment by soldiers was sometimes also the very reason for a native group rising up against this control and at the same time the Roman army would have been the group that maintained peace after rebellion. As a result soldiers might express allegiance to their identity as Roman in one context, while stressing their original ethnic or cultural affiliation in another, for instance within a mixed group where ethnic identity might be compromised or endangered.¹⁸ In such situations cultural affiliation may be emphasized and stressed through material expression. Thus the choices made to display identity through visible outward appearance become very interesting and potentially helpful in understanding the prioritization of one aspect over another.

The personal choice of whether to own a ring with gemstone is even more interesting in light of the important role played by these items to express status in the Roman world outside the military sphere. Beside the practical use of an intaglio as a symbol with which one would seal a document, the metal of the ring itself was important to declare social status to the outside world. In Rome and Italy, only senators and equestrians were legally permitted to wear gold rings of any sort, while lower status individuals wore inferior iron rings. Because of the very hierarchical nature of the Roman army and the importance of status within the ranks, it is probable that similar rules of outward appearance were observed on legal and social levels. By the second century CE rings with intaglios were no longer used as individual markers, as they were then mass-produced with the same image repeating several times on a single site, but they were still important visual cues of status and identity. Expressions of rank and wealth were important within the military hierarchy and likely would have been sought after. The lack of a similar personal item in most pre-Roman northern and western European cultural traditions means that its adoption by auxiliary soldiers, especially in the first and early second centuries, is a new expression of identity and one that indicates some form of participation in Roman cultural habits. Since it is more probable that these are choices made by individuals—that is, there is no indication that the military

formally controlled this aspect of personal adornment—the image chosen for one’s personal gemstone might help us investigate the incorporation of Roman goods into the material culture package of individuals in an auxiliary military community. How the negotiation between native and military expressions plays out in this small item says a great deal about how Roman material expression could be used, manipulated, and ultimately hold different meaning, in the hybrid setting of provincial Roman military camps.

INTAGLIOS IN THE ROMAN EAST AND WEST

As a case study, this essay examines the assemblage of intaglios from the Roman fort at Vindolanda on Hadrian’s Wall in England (first–third century CE).¹⁹ As a comparable reference point I will also look at the stones from Dura-Europos (second–third century CE) in order to investigate the differences and similarities found in this material assemblage in a community in the East.²⁰ These two sites in many ways are very different, but both represent a hybrid community of people from varying backgrounds and include a combination of Roman soldiers and civilians having experienced some form of conquest and integration by Rome (by c. 85 CE for Vindolanda and c. 165 CE for Dura-Europos).²¹

Examining the Vindolanda assemblage as a whole, it is apparent that the images chosen as part of one’s outward appearance represent broad categories that were universally appealing to specific groups such as military personnel and related civilians living in a small frontier community.²² One can count the specific occurrences of individual deities such as Ceres, Fortuna, and Bonus Eventus, but when viewed more broadly they all express the notion of good tidings and a bountiful existence. In the same way, it is no surprise that a large number of stones from Roman forts are of military or heroic scenes such as Achilles donning armor or Theseus bearing his sword, as Henig noticed long ago;²³ however, I do not suggest that a Batavian or Tungrian soldier, newly incorporated into this Roman world in the first century CE, thought fondly of his *Iliad* as he wore his ring with Achilles. Would a soldier from a northern European tribe or Syria or Moesia know and hold dear the story of Achilles? It is more likely that the image of a soldier with helmet and armor was a universal symbol of military might and an auxiliary responded to this generic image as a symbol of personal strength and power in his new guise as Roman soldier. Possibly this was done in an attempt to belong to this new social group or for more personal reasons of incorporating status-bearing items that were valued by the new Roman culture that was now a major part of an auxiliary soldier’s world. Material expression was a major part of the choices being made by individuals as they were incorporated into the Roman Empire in various places and in different ways.²⁴

It can be difficult to locate great significance for the personal meaning of an intaglio and the particular images found on them because of the overall similarity of stones from cities and settlements around the empire. This was particularly true by the second century CE when the Roman Empire had made it possible for merchants to transport goods easily over a vast expanse of territory, resulting in some homogeneity of products. Compounding this homogeneity is the mass production of intaglios and rings by the second century, when stone cutting was inferior and the final product was no longer a unique seal. Identical intaglios can be found from East to West and on sites with very different character, indicating that production was centralized and that local workshops closely followed models already in existence.²⁵ As H  l  ne Guiraud noted about the collection of intaglios from Dura-Europos, they are not unique in any way in the choice of image or the style of craftsmanship.²⁶ The Vindolanda assemblage also follows models found throughout the empire.²⁷ Nonetheless, the choices made are still individual ones that may allow us to evaluate the themes that were important to a particular group, such as auxiliary soldiers and their dependents living on the frontiers of the Roman Empire.²⁸ There is no indication that there was any formal

control by the Roman military or government of the motifs allowed, beyond the limitations of availability of types carried by merchants on the frontiers. Therefore, presumably an individual chose the image, style, and motif of the intaglio and ring because it had some personal significance. Guiraud points to a clear thematic connection between the assemblages of intaglios from Dura-Europos and Gadara (Jordan) and Caesarea (Israel), suggesting that similar choices were being made in different geographical locations of the East.²⁹ Would this similarity also be found in communities across the empire, in different, yet similarly hybrid, towns such as Dura and Vindolanda?

The Vindolanda assemblage now holds almost 100 gemstones from a period of occupation of about two centuries from the late first to the late third century. For unknown reasons, intaglios were essentially out of use by the fourth century, with only small numbers appearing, often reused in other artifacts such as necklaces. Carnelian and red jasper stones predominate at Vindolanda, making up roughly 50% of the assemblage, followed by the *nicolo* and imitation *nicolo* paste settings.³⁰ The Vindolanda assemblage contains no stones of unusually high quality, especially as compared to another military assemblage from the legionary fort at Caerleon in southern Wales.³¹ The predominance of common and even mass-produced materials such as mold-made paste gems reflects the somewhat lower status of the populations at Vindolanda. A few rings, however, are of incredibly fine quality, exhibiting the relatively high status of certain members of the community.

The images that predominate in the assemblage broadly belong to categories of prosperity and abundance, as well as military depictions of power. There are almost no stones from Vindolanda depicting emperors or other historical figures,³² nor are any stones inscribed, even though both types are common throughout the empire. Fantastical figures such as centaurs and sphinxes also do not feature at Vindolanda. Upon first glance, however, despite these lacunae, the Vindolanda assemblage still reveals a canonical group of subjects typical of this medium from throughout the empire: military images of the eagle, Mars, and Minerva, or Greek heroes such as Achilles, Ajax, and Theseus, as well as personifications of prosperity figures like Ceres, Fortuna, or Bonus Eventus. But there may be more to this seemingly typical and perhaps unsurprising group. The stones found in the Vindolanda assemblage all include symbols that place the image in a more universally understood realm, such as grain or martial implements. The assemblage lacks purely mythological symbols of specific Greco-Roman content that require in-depth knowledge of people, stories, and traditions from this specific cultural context. Moreover, Guiraud asserted that the lack of local images in the Dura assemblage such as Bel, Atargatis, or the fertility goddess Nanaia may only be masked by the owner's personal interpretation of the gemstone.³³ In other words, even when an image represented a typically Greco-Roman figure, the individual meaning of the stone for a culturally non-Roman owner may have been connected more to their personal background and outlook. These connections may be adopted more easily when the stone shows familiar symbols that can be universally understood by individuals from various cultural backgrounds.

This is precisely how I would like to interpret the assemblage from Vindolanda. I contend that intaglios from an auxiliary context should be investigated more fully for their meaning within that specific context, rather than assuming a full adoption of Greco-Roman ideals and beliefs by everyone incorporated into the Roman Empire. Mattingly also takes this approach in evaluating Greco-Roman art in the provinces, using as his case study the tombs at Ghirza in Libya.³⁴ Rather than seeing the adoption of Roman artistic elements as an intentional emulation of Roman culture, Mattingly urges that we begin to examine how these images operated within indigenous agendas.³⁵ Such an approach can be applied usefully in the case of the intaglios in an auxiliary frontier setting, especially examples with clear archaeological context such as those at Vindolanda, where we also know the auxiliary unit present on site in most occupation periods; by considering the agency of the individ-

ual using the material item in the provinces it restores a sense of choice on the part of the owner. The ring with intaglio may have been used as a status symbol within this new world of the Roman army. The image chosen, however, does not necessarily suggest a whole-hearted adoption of Greco-Roman traditions, but may have been interpreted through the lens of one's original cultural background.

As an example, images depicting Theseus typically show a nude male figure accompanied by a diadem and a sword, with identification made possible for the modern scholar by our knowledge of the myth and the presence of the necessary attributes of the story: the rock hiding the sword and sandals hidden by his father Aegeus.³⁶ One such image comes from Corbridge, a site only a few miles east of Vindolanda, also garrisoned by auxiliary soldiers with a large civilian population. A similar image of Theseus with sword slung over his chest was found at Vindolanda. The identification and therefore the meaning of the image rest on the soldier's knowledge of the story of Theseus and their understanding of the significance of the rock in the scene. Modern scholars recognize these familiar symbols from our process of categorizing such material in Greco-Roman terms, but would a non-Roman soldier have such familiarity with the necessary details of the story to analyze the image in this way?

Similarly, a ubiquitous image type identified as Achilles depicts a young man wearing a *chlamys* on his back, with plumed helmet and a transverse spear, leaning over to affix a greave to his shin (fig. 7.1). A short column stands in front of the figure with a jug sitting on top and a sword hanging on the side. A definite identification of this image as Achilles, however, rests on the auxiliary soldier knowing details from the Homeric stories intimately, such as the scene of the hero in just this moment of quiet activity.

A non-Roman auxiliary soldier with provincial origins and a cultural background quite different from that of Rome might not have understood these images specifically as Achilles donning armor in a specific scene in the *Iliad* or Theseus retrieving his belongings; however, the symbolism of a strong and victorious soldier with plumed helmet and greaves emerges clearly. Images such as these would have been a regular part of a soldier's life and ones that may have been beneficial to express this soldierly identity visually when the need arose. While the identification of these images by modern scholars as Theseus or Achilles as they apply to a Roman metropolitan context is probably correct, I contend

that the meaning of the device to an auxiliary soldier with non-Roman origins should be questioned. The Vindolanda gem portraying Achilles leaning over to affix a greave to his shin more generally depicts a soldier in quiet repose with his implements of war. We recognize this imagery immediately as the poignant scene from the end of Book 19 in the *Iliad* (lines 369–70) and can appreciate the quiet solitude before a storm that we know approaches; however, it seems far more likely that a soldier with a Batavian or Tungrian origin (from northern Gaul and Germany) understood none of this, not the representation and characterization of Achilles, nor the poignancy of the moment. He more likely admired the symbols of military strength and power, perhaps together with a sense that this image and its military paraphernalia were drawn from a Roman story, rather than fully appreciating a detailed allusion to Achilles or the Homeric tradition.

What then did the individual of provincial origin living on the northern frontier see in the representations of Greco-Roman images? Perhaps the more obvious and understandable symbols are the attributes that are associated with



7.1. Nicolo stone intaglio with Achilles and his armor, Vindolanda.

the figure, just as the soldier himself is identified daily by his equipment and dress. Whether war hero or deity, these images are accompanied by spears, shields, grain ears, cornucopiae, offering plates, and other attributes that allow interpretation of the image. Many intaglios are part of a more general category invoking good fortune, wealth, and bounty through the representations of gods and goddesses. The farmer or grain merchant might desire a signet displaying Ceres or Fortuna, recognizing in the gem the grain ears or sheaf of wheat, and therefore possibly the symbolic device requesting a good harvest. The huntsman perhaps chose to wear a stone with a stag, or a man returning from a successful hunt with an animal slung over his shoulder,³⁷ or simply Diana wielding her bow and arrow (plate 45).³⁸ Whether or not these are grounded in a specific myth, the meaning can be extracted by anyone with the ability to understand such universal symbols of prosperity. Broad categories of abundance and *militaria* are found in some numbers at Vindolanda and at Dura, while more specific images such as a portrait of an emperor, commonly found elsewhere in the Roman world, are rare in these two provincial assemblages.³⁹ Perhaps the stones with a very specific political meaning were more relevant to events in Rome and had little meaning in provincial and frontier communities with culturally mixed populations. While we must take into account that one could only buy what the merchant brought up to the northern frontier; the dealer surely knew his specific market and brought what was sure to be popular there.

At Vindolanda there are a number of gems that could be interpreted as related to the worship of Bacchus, none of which however actually represents the deity himself. A striding satyr carrying a bunch of grapes and an image of Pan dancing and holding the *syrix* (pan pipes) both suggest celebration and more generally a bounty of wealth (fig. 7.2). Even when the direct links to Bacchus are clear, these images can also be appreciated simply as a scene of celebration that suggests abundance and prosperity within a community. Another possible interpretation could point to the common activity of drinking in a military site; indeed the Vindolanda writing tablets list beer and wine as common commodities entering the fort; another tablet records an urgent request for delivery of more beer.⁴⁰ Amphorae used to transport wine are a common find throughout the ceramic assemblages of all periods of occupation at the fort as well.⁴¹ Soldiers and civilians living on the northern frontier in Britain would experience months of cold, wet, and short days; an environment that might likely produce personal symbols representing celebration and hoped-for prosperity.

Mars and Minerva in their roles as strong soldier and victorious warrior would have been obvious favorites for a soldier, again because of the military imagery rather than necessarily a supposed adoption of the Greco-Roman pantheon. A gem from Vindolanda shows a typical representation of Mars, who is often depicted in full military uniform including helmet, with his shield and spear either leaning



7.2. Red jasper intaglio with Pan dancing, Vindolanda.



7.3. Carnelian intaglio with Mars holding spear and shield, Vindolanda.



7.4. Red jasper intaglio with seated Jupiter and eagle, Vindolanda.

nearby or held close to his body (fig. 7.3; compare plate 50). The Dura assemblage includes a well-preserved silver ring with its intaglio depicting Minerva still intact (plate 43).⁴² The worship of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, who is represented at Vindolanda by at least four gems in slightly different guises, is also not surprising as part of a military repertoire (fig. 7.4). It appears that Jupiter was easily syncretized with the many sky gods common throughout the conquered territories of the western empire, usually with similar attributes of strength and power, which may allow someone with non-Roman cultural background to appreciate the image all the same. Postcolonial perspectives on syncretism of religion in the Roman provinces may offer a useful comparison here in support of the contention that the images on gemstones can have meanings that vary among different individuals. Webster argues for a much more inclusive interpretation of religion in the provinces, giving agency to the native “actors” in the process of syncretism.⁴³ A tidy interpretation of native acceptance of Roman deities by way of conflation with something recognizable is no longer tenable. This outdated approach ignores the spectrum of possible

responses to this process and assumes the acceptance of something “Roman” on the part of the provincial individual. Religion remains a deeply personal experience, and as Webster suggests, we may expect a panoply of responses to the changes that took place after conquest.⁴⁴ In a similar way, we cannot assume that the non-Roman auxiliary soldier suddenly understood and accepted the complete stories of the Greco-Roman heroes such as Achilles even if he chose to wear this symbol on a daily basis. The image on the stone meant something to him, presumably, but this meaning may be far more complex than at first seems and a simple reading is unlikely. As argued by both Mattingly and Webster, the interpretation of Roman material within a provincial context needs to take into account the different agendas at play in these communities.

Indeed, Jupiter was a symbol of strength and represented the all-encompassing power of the Roman Empire, an entity protected by the Roman army. In a frontier community the strength of Rome and its ability to protect border regions would be an ongoing concern for the population. Whether worn by a soldier or a member of the surrounding military community, the strength of Jupiter would have been an appropriate symbol in hopes of peace and safety. The attributes typically associated with Jupiter cannot be misunderstood: the *fulmen* (thunderbolt) with star and moon (fig. 7.5), or seated holding a scepter, accompanied by an eagle and the globe held in hand (as seen in fig. 7.4). These are all symbols that are used in various cultural contexts to visualize power, dominance, and victory and it is conceivable that these would be concerns for a soldier or someone in a military community that took pride in their role in defense of the frontier. But this is a simple reduction of the evidence and can only be one option among several possibilities. Emphasizing the universal nature of symbols would at least remove the prioritization of the Greco-Roman function of



7.5. Bronze intaglio with idealized lightning bolt symbol, Vindolanda.

an image of Achilles and allow the non-citizen provincial to develop their own meaning in the device. It is possible that a completely personal meaning of an image trumped a supposed deliberate relationship with the Greco-Roman world, as Henig suggested in his article considering the veneration of heroes in intaglios from military sites.⁴⁵

Jupiter's ability to take on new roles, therefore appealing to individuals with non-Roman cultural backgrounds, is well demonstrated in the Vindolanda assemblage. A green glass stone has the added detail of horns and a *modius* (a barrel-shaped wheat measurement) on the deity's head, connecting it to the Egyptian deities Amun (the Roman Jupiter Ammon) and Serapis (fig. 7.6). Serapis himself is a conflation of Osiris and Apis,⁴⁶ brought into the Roman sphere in conjunction with the power of Jupiter. This Egyptian influence found in some stones may only reflect the popular desire for exotic items from Egypt in the early Roman Empire, rather than an intentional mark of cultural origin on the part of a soldier. In this way an intaglio may look like a mass-produced commodity holding little personal meaning for its owner, but this broad association might also be the key to its meaning. The Greco-Roman pantheon and the panoply of stories that accompany these individuals held characteristics that could have wider significance and cross-cultural meaning. Wearing a ring with an incised gemstone in its bezel may have been the adoption of a thoroughly Greco-Roman practice on the part of the non-Roman wearer; however, the choice of image and style (and as importantly how to interpret it) could have been a selection as individual as what to inscribe on a personal altar.

This comparison is noteworthy, since in some way there is a parallel phenomenon with religious expression amongst Roman auxiliary troops. While almost all forts appear to have had large altars to Jupiter Optimus Maximus or the *genius* (divine spirit) of the emperor set up in public spaces displaying the fulfillment of their obligations to the state, small personal altars that fit into one's hand are found associated with many auxiliary forts. In many cases these are dedications to native deities that appear to derive from the cultural background of the soldiers.⁴⁷ Deities such as Epona, a horse goddess, or confluations of Roman deities with Celtic or Germanic ones, such as Mars Thincsus, have been recorded at various sites around the Hadrian's Wall zone.⁴⁸ These altars reveal more explicitly the personal choices being made by individual soldiers to express old ideas and beliefs in new material ways. This phenomenon may also have occurred with the adoption of wearing an incised gemstone. With personal altars soldiers from non-Roman backgrounds were adopting a practice that was foreign to them—that of inscribing the object of one's worship on a stone. This practice was not known in the pre-Roman Celtic or Germanic worlds. Therefore, while the worship of a local or native deity remained intact the expression of this belief was now made visible by means of a Roman epigraphic habit. In a similar way, the choice of image incised on a gemstone may also reflect ideas familiar



7.6. Green glass molded gem of Jupiter with symbols of Ammon and Serapis, Vindolanda.



7.7. Red jasper intaglio of Helios Serapis with horns of Ammon, trident, and snake, Vindolanda.



7.8. Red and white jasper intaglio of Ceres with wheat and offering plate, Vindolanda.

to the non-Roman individual, such as hoped-for military strength or agricultural prosperity, but articulated in a new material way in a status-bearing finger ring.

By far the most amazing feat of syncretism at Vindolanda is found on a red jasper intaglio from the late second century CE context (fig. 7.7). The gem shows a bust of a diademed male with the attributes of no less than five deities. In front of the bust is the trident of Neptune entwined by the snake of Aesculapius. From the head of the figure projects the rays of Helios, the horns of Ammon, and the *modius* of Serapis. These symbols all represent typical confections with the Greco-Roman Jupiter figure, but they also all have their origin in the East. The gem may have originated with an eastern or possibly North African trader or appealed to a soldier with this cultural background.⁴⁹ Of course, it is not possible to link intaglios to their original owners with certainty, but it is worth thinking through the possible meanings of these objects in their frontier context in settlements associated with provincial populations. We know, for instance, that a unit of Syrians were present at the nearby fort at Carvoran with epigraphic evidence for the worship of a Syrian

deity also at Vindolanda,⁵⁰ and an influx of North African soldiers in northern Britain has long been assumed.⁵¹ For a soldier these accompanying attributes would suggest power and dominance, possibly of both land and sea as suggested by the trident, as well as health and prosperity, all of which would have been recognizable symbolically to individuals with varied cultural backgrounds.

Most of the gems found at Vindolanda have a general symbolic meaning that could carry significance for someone without a Greco-Roman cultural background; whether the specific associations with the detailed nuances of each image were understood by the individual owner in antiquity must remain conjecture. A gem with Mars or Minerva holding a shield and helmet may have been read by a German auxiliary soldier residing on the British frontier simply as symbols of military supremacy. Either image could have evoked for him the power of a divine warrior, and he could have hoped that the amulet would carry him through his tenure in the army safely and successfully. Similarly, the difference in meaning and iconography between Ceres and Bonus Eventus may have been slight. A gem from Vindolanda (fig. 7.8) shows Ceres carrying wheat sheaves and an offering plate, not very different from a typical image of Bonus Eventus with the same attributes (fig. 7.9). In both examples the attributes would have been generally recognizable to a wider audience of varying cultural backgrounds, and it is the theme of agricultural abundance that would have attracted owners looking to evoke the same hope of prosperity. A gem from Dura displays equally obvious themes of abundance with Fortuna holding the cornucopia rather than the grain associated with Ceres (plate 46).⁵²

Several people in the community would have depended on a good harvest: those hoping to make their yearly wage by selling crops to the Roman army or the military personnel responsible for obtaining the proper supplies and rations to



7.9. Red jasper intaglio of Bonus Eventus with wheat and offering plate, Vindolanda.

support the unit. Both may have chosen a symbol of agricultural abundance for personal representation, primarily based on the recognizable symbols of sheaves of wheat and offering plates, while having no particular allegiance specifically to the Greco-Roman idea of Ceres or Bonus Eventus.

CONCLUSION

When an individual living in the vast expanse of the Roman Empire desired a personal signet they had only Roman themes from which to choose and perhaps would have selected a gem which carried obvious symbols pertaining to one's own hopes and aspirations. Whatever the subject, they might have understood the deeper meaning of the religious beliefs or simply enjoyed the protection felt from the outward symbols the image projected. It is also quite probable that someone once wore a finger ring that included an image that meant little or nothing to them personally. These small details of personal ambition, desires, and whims cannot be recovered with certainty for the Roman individual.

The gems from Vindolanda and Dura-Europos form a similar group in both images depicted and production style. This could be attributed to the homogeneity of the medium across the empire. Something more individual can be found, however, by looking beyond this uniformity to what is also lacking in these two assemblages. Depictions with specific political significance such as busts of emperors, which conspicuously lack universally recognizable symbols like grain and *militaria*, are for the most part missing from both these provincial assemblages. Perhaps such politically specific images held little appeal to populations with predominantly non-Roman cultural backgrounds. On the frontiers and in the provinces the adoption of a Roman cultural habit could still be imbued with personal choices that expressed concerns about their individual lives.



- 1 Martin Henig, "The Veneration of Heroes in the Roman Army: The Evidence of Engraved Gemstones," *Britannia* 1 (1970): 249–65.
- 2 Many provincial regions, for instance southern Gaul, would potentially have had long-standing contact with Greco-Roman traditions. For this paper I focus more on newly incorporated provinces and areas with no serious contact with the classical world before conquest.
- 3 Henig, "Veneration of Heroes."
- 4 Simon James, "The Community of the Soldiers: A Major Identity and Centre of Power in the Roman Empire," in *TRAC 98: Proceedings of the 8th Annual Theoretical Archaeology Conference, Leicester 1998*, ed. Patricia Baker et al. (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1999), 14–25, explores the fashioning of identity through material culture specific to the role as "soldier," while Lindsay Allason-Jones, "What is a Military Assemblage?," *Journal of Roman Military Equipment Studies* 10 (1999): 1–4, questions whether the presence or absence of traditionally "military" finds can give us secure identification of spaces and people.
- 5 James, "Community of the Soldiers," 14.
- 6 David J. Mattingly, "Identities in the Roman World: Discrepancy, Heterogeneity, Hybridity, and Plurality," in this volume.
- 7 Mattingly's "discrepant experiences." David J. Mattingly, *An Imperial Possession: Britain in the Roman Empire, 54 BC–AD 409* (London: Penguin, 2007); Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power, and Identity: Experiencing the Roman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), esp. 203–45; Mattingly, "Identities in the Roman World"; Simon James, "The 'Romanness of the Soldiers': Barbarized Periphery or Imperial Core?," in this volume explores how the Roman military created a provincial community.
- 8 For a discussion of the exploration of ethnicity in the past through archaeological material see generally, Siân Jones, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity: Constructing Identities in the Past and Present* (London: Routledge, 1997), *passim*.
- 9 Tatiana Ivleva, "British Emigrants in the Roman Empire: Complexities and Symbols of Ethnic Identities," in *TRAC 2010: Proceedings of the 20th Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference, Oxford 2010*, ed. Dragana Mladenovic and Ben Russell (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2011) explores the example of British auxiliary soldiers moving throughout the empire by way of brooch distributions in military forts.
- 10 Though physical markers of status surely abounded in pre-Roman Iron Age Europe.
- 11 The Snettisham hoard (Catherine Johns, *The Snettisham Roman Jeweller's Hoard* [London: British Museum, 1997]) in England is a good example of the repeat images that can be found on scores of stones. These same images are found across the empire, not only in individual regions. Gemstones also came to be produced in mold-made paste materials that mimicked higher end stones such as nicolo, but were more affordable to lower classes such as auxiliary soldiers.
- 12 The composition of the Roman military changes over time as more people in the empire gain citizenship through the first and second centuries CE. The legions in the first century are thought to comprise citizen soldiers, often Italians, while the auxiliary units are raised from provincial regions with unit names that reflect the original provincial or tribal recruiting location. This changes throughout the late first and early second centuries, but how quickly and to what degree is still debated. The cultural background of the units changes through the second century as soldiers are recruited locally and from different parts of the empire as units move around. However,

- there is evidence that still in the third century CE attempts were made to distinguish between different cultural affiliations on military sites. For an important inscription at Vindolanda making a clear distinction between Gauls and Britons, see Anthony Birley, “*Cives Galli de(ae) Galliae Concordesque Britanni: A Dedication at Vindolanda*,” *L’Antiquité Classique* 77 (2008): 172–87.
- 13 James, “Community of the Soldiers,” *passim*.
 - 14 Roman soldiers were not legally allowed marriage during service in the first and second centuries CE and Roman law dictated that after enlistment any existing marriage was null and void. However, it is quite clear that soldiers had *de facto* relationships and started families throughout their period of service. See Carol van Driel-Murray, “A Question of Gender in a Military Context,” *Helinium* 34 (1998): 342–62; Lindsay Allason-Jones, “Women and the Roman Army in Britain,” in *The Roman Army as a Community*, ed. Adrian Goldsworthy and Ian Haynes (Portsmouth: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 1999), 41–51; Penelope Allison, “Mapping for Gender: Interpreting Artefact Distribution inside 1st- and 2nd-century AD Forts in Roman Germany,” *Archaeological Dialogues* 13, no. 1 (2006): 1–20; Elizabeth M. Greene, “Before Hadrian’s Wall: Early Military Communities on the Roman Frontier in Britain,” in *Breaking Down Boundaries: Hadrian’s Wall in the 21st Century*, ed. Rob Collins and Matthew Symonds (Portsmouth: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2013), 17–32.
 - 15 Alexander Meyer, *The Creation, Composition, Service and Settlement of Roman Auxiliary Units Raised on the Iberian Peninsula* (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 2013), 39–41.
 - 16 For further discussion, see Carol van Driel-Murray, “Ethnic Recruitment and Military Mobility,” in *Limes XX: Estudios Sobre la Frontera Romana*, ed. Ángel Morillo, Norbert Hanel, and Esperanza Martín (Madrid: Ediciones Polifemo, 2009), 813–22; Van Driel-Murray, “Those Who Wait at Home: The Effect of Recruitment on Women in the Lower Rhine Area,” in *Frauen und Römisches Militär: Beiträge eines Runden Tisches in Xanten vom 7. bis 9. Juli 2005*, ed. Ulrich Brandl (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 2008), 82–91.
 - 17 See above, note 14.
 - 18 Fredrik Barth, “Introduction,” in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1969), esp. 9–12. Theoretical approaches to ethnicity have primarily come to archaeological and historical research from social and cultural anthropology, in which ethnographic analogy is common. Barth was most influential in showing that boundaries between ethnic groups were not as rigid as had previously been thought and that ethnic identity could be maintained even with intense cross-cultural contact. He showed that an individual voluntarily chose specific relevant markers to memorialize their ethnicity when in a situation that could compromise this aspect of their identity. These markers would be continually expressed in order to maintain that identity. Barth’s conclusions mean generally that there was a persistence of ethnic identity in a new environment and that an individual might successfully maintain ethnic indicators by material means.
 - 19 Gemstones have been a focus of collectors throughout history, leaving no information about the archaeological context of most gems. The Vindolanda assemblage, however, has been recovered entirely through modern excavation rather than antiquarian collection. It is, therefore, a fully stratified group of gems with archaeological information about dating and association with a specific occupation period on the site as well as the unit in residence at the fort. For full publication of this assemblage, see Barbara Birley and Elizabeth M. Greene, *The Roman Jewellery from Vindolanda* (Greenhead: Roman Army Museum, 2006), 53–116.

- 20 First published: Hélène Guiraud, “Intaglios from Dura-Europos,” *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin* (1992): 48–85. This paper makes reference to pieces in the Yale University Art Gallery collections as an example of certain motifs. Stones without archaeological provenience are not used in the argument of the paper.
- 21 For general discussion of the fort and settlement at Vindolanda, see most recently Robin Birley, *Vindolanda: A Roman Frontier Fort on Hadrian’s Wall* (Stroud: Amberley, 2009); Robin Birley, *Civilians on Rome’s Northern Frontier* (Greenhead: Roman Army Museum, 2009). For recent archaeological work at Vindolanda and bibliography for previous excavations, see Andrew Birley and Justin Blake, *Vindolanda Excavations 2005–2006* (Hexham: Vindolanda Trust, 2007). For the military presence at Dura-Europos, see Simon James, *Excavations at Dura-Europos 1928–1937: Final Report 7; The Arms and Armour and Other Military Equipment* (London: British Museum, 2004); James, “The ‘Romanness of the Soldiers,’” in this volume.
- 22 It can also be argued that the populations living on a far flung frontier were limited in choice by what merchants brought to the area; however, merchants would certainly know their market and bring what they knew would sell. Moreover, the Vindolanda tablets indicate that soldiers on the northern frontier in Britain were quite mobile and certainly would have had opportunity to buy personal items elsewhere.
- 23 Henig, “Veneration of Heroes.”
- 24 James, “Community of the Soldiers,” 14–25.
- 25 A major production site was located at Aquileia in northern Italy: Gemma Sena Chiesa, *Gemme del Museo Nazionale di Aquileia* (Aquileia: Associazione Nazionale per Aquileia, 1966). For local craftsmanship see the example of the Snettisham hoard in England: Johns, *Snettisham Roman Jeweller’s Hoard*.
- 26 Guiraud, “Intaglios from Dura-Europos,” 49.
- 27 For some of the major publications of gemstones, see Adolf Furtwängler, *Die Antiken Gemmen: Geschichte der Steinschneidekunst im klassischen Altertum*, 3 vols. (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1964–65); Elfriede Brandt, *Antike Gemmen in Deutschen Sammlungen* (Munich: Prestel, 1968–75); Martin Henig, *A Corpus of Roman Engraved Gemstones from British Sites*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Archaeopress, 1978); Antje Krug, *Antike Gemmen im Römisch-Germanischen Museum Köln* (Frankfurt: Von Zabern, 1981); Marianne Maaskant-Kleibrink, *Classification of Ancient Engraved Gems: A Study Based on the Collection in the Royal Coin Cabinet, The Hague* (Leiden: Boerhaavezalen, 1975); Maaskant-Kleibrink, *The Engraved Gems: Roman and Non-Roman* (Nijmegen: Ministry of Welfare, Health and Cultural Affairs, 1986); Gertrud Platz-Horster, *Antike Gemmen aus Xanten*, 2 vols. (Cologne: Rheinland-Verlag, 1984/87); Platz-Horster, *Die antiken Gemmen im Rheinischen Landesmuseum Bonn* (Cologne: Rheinland-Verlag, 1984); Gemma Sena Chiesa, *Gemme di Luni* (Rome: G. Bretschneider, 1978); Sena Chiesa, *Gemme del Museo Nazionale di Aquileia*; J. David Zienkiewicz, *The Legionary Fortress Baths at Caerleon II: The Finds* (Cardiff: Welsh Historic Monuments, 1986).
- 28 Cf. Guiraud, “Intaglios from Dura-Europos,” 54.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 55. It is also arguable that a certain population would be subject to purchasing what was available from merchants; however, one would expect the availability and choice to be vast in a city like Dura, perhaps much less in a small frontier community on Hadrian’s Wall in England. Guiraud, for instance, notes a lack of local divinities in the eastern assemblages, which is also a characteristic of intaglios in Roman Britain.

- 30 These are all quartz stones that were abundant and readily available in the empire, apparently for a reasonable price given their ubiquity in the archaeological record. There are no precious stones in the Vindolanda assemblage and compared to the stones at the legionary fort at Caerleon (Zienkiewicz, *Legionary Fortress Baths*, 117–41) it appears that the Vindolanda population had less money to spend on these luxury items. See Birley and Greene, *Roman Jewellery from Vindolanda*, 53–116.
- 31 Zienkiewicz, *Legionary Fortress Baths*, 117–41.
- 32 One stone may be a portrait of the emperor Septimius Severus. Birley and Greene, *Roman Jewellery from Vindolanda*, 112–13, cat. 54.
- 33 Guiraud, “Intaglios from Dura-Europos,” 55–56.
- 34 Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power, and Identity*, 246–68.
- 35 *Ibid.*, 246–47.
- 36 Henig, “Veneration of Heroes,” 250.
- 37 E.g., YUAG 1938.2336; Guiraud, “Intaglios from Dura-Europos,” cat. 10.
- 38 Guiraud, “Intaglios from Dura-Europos,” cat. 3. Guiraud (55) suggests a similar interpretation for some Dura gems associated with activities of profession or ethnic background.
- 39 From Vindolanda see above, note 32. From Dura-Europos comes a bust of a male, but the mythological symbols of the satyr are still clear: Guiraud, “Intaglios from Dura-Europos,” cat. 8. There is no evidence that image types were restricted to certain groups, though we may be lacking relevant information for such an assertion.
- 40 Alan K. Bowman and J. David Thomas, *The Vindolanda Writing Tablets: Tabulae Vindolandenses II* (London: British Museum, 1994), no. 186, 145–48; no. 190, 153–57; Bowman and Thomas, *The Vindolanda Writing Tablets: Tabulae Vindolandenses III* (London: British Museum, 2003), no. 581, 23–34; no. 628, 84–86.
- 41 Elise Marlière and Josep Torres Costa, “Tonneaux et amphores à *Vindolanda*: Contribution à la connaissance de l’approvisionnement des troupes stationnées sur le mur d’Hadrien (II),” in *Vindolanda Excavations 2003–2004*, ed. Andrew Birley and Justin Blake (Greenhead: Roman Army Museum, 2005), 214–36.
- 42 Guiraud, “Intaglios from Dura-Europos,” cat. 4.
- 43 Jane Webster, “A Negotiated Syncretism: Readings on the Development of Romano-Celtic Religion,” in *Dialogues in Roman Imperialism: Power, Discourse and Discrepant Experience in the Roman Empire*, ed. David J. Mattingly (Portsmouth: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 1997), 165–84.
- 44 *Ibid.*, 167. Also see Jane Webster, “Necessary Comparisons: A Post-Colonial Approach to Religious Syncretism in the Roman Provinces,” *World Archaeology* 28, no. 3 (1997): 324–38.
- 45 Henig, “Veneration of Heroes,” 249–65.
- 46 See Ann M. Nicgorski, “The Fate of Serapis: A Paradigm for Transformations in the Culture and Art of Late Roman Egypt,” in this volume.
- 47 For instance Germanic deities are common in the frontier zone in Britain presumably because of the number of Germanic soldiers and units in the province. Anthony Birley, “Some Germanic Deities and Their Worshippers in the British Frontier Zone,” in *Monumentum et Instrumentum Inscriptum*, ed. Henning Börm, Norbert Ehrhardt, and Josef Wiesehöfer (Stuttgart: Steiner,

- 2008), 31–46.
- 48 Ibid., 32–33.
- 49 Julian Munby and Martin Henig, *Roman Life and Art* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 1977), 342.
- 50 Anthony Birley, “The *Cohors I Hamiorum* in Britain,” *Acta Classica* 55 (2012): 1–16.
- 51 Vivien Swan and Jason Monaghan, “Head Pots: A North African Tradition in Roman York,” *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 65 (1993): 21–38.
- 52 Guiraud, “Intaglios from Dura-Europos,” cat. 7.



LOCAL IDIOMS AND GLOBAL MEANINGS: MITHRAISM AND ROMAN PROVINCIAL ART

Lucinda Dirven and Matthew M. McCarty

EXPLAINING DIFFERENCES OR SIMILARITIES?

Around 180 CE, a Roman army veteran named Titus Aurelius Marcus dedicated a marble relief to the god Mithras in a sanctuary just outside the fort at Apulum in the province of Dacia (fig. 8.1), on the northern edge of the Roman Empire (see map, p. v; fig. 8.2). In the center of the relief, Mithras, clad in his characteristic “eastern” dress—a felt cap, a billowing cloak over a tunic, and trousers—drives his left knee into the back of a collapsed bull, and, yanking the bull’s snout back, plunges a dagger into its shoulder. A snake and a dog rear up, eagerly licking the blood pouring from the wound. To the left (poorly preserved) and right, two torch-bearing attendants, Cautopates and Cautes, stand by, their legs crossed, similarly clad in “eastern” garb. In the spandrels of the arch that delineates this central scene, flanking busts of the personified Sun (at left) and Moon (at right), Mithras appears again: on the left, dragging the bull by its hind legs; on the right, rising naked (save his cap!) from a crescent, bearing a torch and his dagger, while below, a lion—positioned vertically—drinks from an elaborate mixing-bowl. Further vignettes drawn from myths about Mithras’s life and achievements decorate registers above and below the main scene, which is flanked by columned pilasters. A Latin inscription runs above the main scene: “To the Unconquered God Mithras, Titus Aurelius Marcus, of the Fabian voting-tribe, veteran of the *legio XIII Gemina* [dedicated this].”



8.1. Tauroctony relief dedicated by Titus Aurelius Marcus, c. 180 CE, Apulum. Muzeul National al Unirii, Alba Iulia.



8.2. Locations of mithraea discussed in Dacia and Syria.

Over 1,200 miles away, in Dura-Europos, Syria, a garrisoned frontier town along Rome’s border with Persia, Zenobius, an officer in a unit of Palmyrene archers, dedicated his own relief to Mithras in the local Mithraeum in 170/1 CE (fig. 8.3). Under an arch supported by two columns and decorated with the signs of the zodiac, the same trousered, cloaked, and bonneted Mithras wrestles a bull to the ground, plunging a dagger into the side of its neck, while a dog and snake lap up the gushing blood. Busts of the Sun and Moon look on from the spandrels; the Sun appears again just above Mithras’s cap. To the right, a series of worship-

pers appears, all wearing their hair in the puffy coiffure favored in Durene portraiture, and each labeled with his name in Greek script: Barnadaath, Iariboles, and Zenobius, who drops incense on a small altar. Barnadaath and Iariboles stand on an elevated dais, their right hands raised in acclamation, while two smaller, unlabeled figures kneel below. The main dedicatory inscription (also in Greek) runs under the scene: “To the god Mithras. Zenobius, who is also [called] Eiaeibas, son of Iariboles, commander of the archers, in year 482 [170/1 CE].” During a period of refurbishment (around 240 CE), scenes were painted on the wall arching above the reliefs that include some drawn from the same mythological repertoire as those found in the registers flanking the main scene of Marcus’s relief at Apulum: Mithras drawing his bow and reclining at a banquet with the sun-god.



8.3. Tauroctony relief dedicated by Zenobius, 170/1 CE. Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1935.98.

Yet differences between the two monuments abound, ranging from the minor to the much more obvious. Zenobius’s

relief includes a portrait of Zenobius himself dropping incense onto an altar to the right of the main scene, with four smaller figures standing to his right. Not only does Marcus’s offering at Apulum include a host of other Mithraic scenes on all sides of the bull-slaying, but it also includes the two attendants, Cautes and Cautopates, in the main scene. Each monument uses the popular local language for inscriptions: Greek for Zenobius, Latin for Marcus. It is equally clear, however, that both reliefs replicate a common schema, as do the other nearly 1000 Mithraic tauroctony (bull-slaying) reliefs found in a geographic area that ranges from northern Britain, to the edge of the Sahara, to the Euphrates. Like all of the art produced across the vast expanse of the Roman Empire, these reliefs call for discussion and explanation of their similarities and divergences, of the “social life” of the images, of differences in the agency and patronage behind their production, and of potential discrepancies

not just in what they signify, but in how they signify. Reflecting on these issues also sheds light on the myriad ways that interconnections, commonalities, and distinctions worked to create a sense of being Roman within the empire.

Recent work on Roman provincial art, including many contributions to the present volume, emphasizes the differing ways patrons and craftsmen of various technical competencies across the empire responded to, appropriated, and adapted a figurative, largely mimetic system of representation from the classical world.¹ In other words, the burgeoning field of Roman provincial art has focused on the creative reception—and remaking—of a visual tradition. Rather than seeing variations from this classical tradition as deficiencies, studies now ascribe value and meaning to them, often under the assumption that such variations represent intentional departures from classical “norms” (not that such things ever existed in themselves). Such variations are thought to personalize the images and make them more potent, hybrid signifiers for peoples with their own imagistic traditions. These studies have revealed how a seemingly shared repertoire, and even a shared style, might be instrumentalized in very different ways to invent unique identities or imagined traditions.² If a visual idiom was held in common, the various meanings and significances created by (or freighted upon) any given image are supposed to be “local”: things that look the same do not always mean the same.

Yet despite the fact that most of our modern knowledge of Mithraism stems from the reliefs, statues, paintings, and inscribed altars that stood in mithraea across the empire, the study of “Mithraism” has moved in a very different direction: toward unifying rather than differentiating. In mithraea, as with much of the visual culture of the Roman Empire, there were shared formal configurations and sets of symbols: witness the two reliefs discussed above. Yet this formal similarity has been precisely the grounds upon which modern scholars have constructed a homogeneous notion of Mithraic “doctrine”: their claim has been that the images do not just look the same, but also “mean” the same, and do so in a similar manner.³ There might be slight differences in quality of workmanship, local workshops might impart their own “styles,” but adaptations and alterations are largely cast as embellishments, flourishes, and additive extensions to an unchanging core.⁴ If there are variations in Mithraism in time and space, these stem from the hermeneutic interpretations that communities might build around the basic core of “brute facts” implicit in the shared iconographies of their monuments.

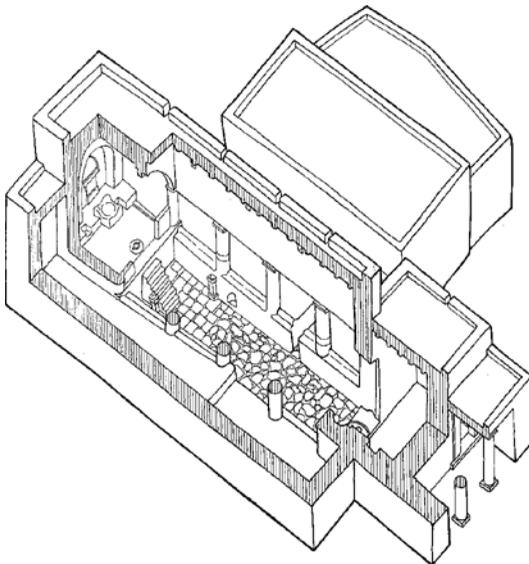
In some ways, Mithraic monuments present a slightly different type of case study than most forms of provincial art, for they were set in similar contexts and were probably engaged via similar ritual practices, even if the users of these images came from different places, social backgrounds, and traditions. That said, it is unclear what precise function these images had for their communities—or whether, despite their shared iconography and similar placement within mithraea, they all served the same purpose. Were they just depictions of a myth-narrative whose further significances elude us?⁵ A “transcription, via image, of philosophy”?⁶ Starting points for hermeneutic exegesis in the manner of sacred texts?⁷ Didactic tools to help community leaders teach Mithraic doctrine?⁸ Symbols that embodied cosmological truths?⁹ “Cult images” that received veneration?¹⁰

In this essay, by looking at two sets of Mithraic images from very different social, cultural, and geographic milieux—those from Syria in the East and those from Dacia in the West—we propose to revisit some key questions in light of the different directions that scholarship about Roman provincial art in general and Mithraic art (as the evidence for Mithraism) in particular have moved. Is the art associated with Mithraism exceptional in its enmeshment within a tightly bound symbol-package when compared to other types of art produced and consumed in the Roman provinces? Is its seeming homogeneity a chimera of modern scholarship that needs to be re-evaluated on the basis of recent work on provincial art? Or does the art in mithraea suggest that we need to modify our paradigms of reception in provincial art?

The monuments from these two distinct parts of the Roman Empire in fact suggest that we do need to rethink some of our understandings of art in the provinces, including notions of the “local,” for they reveal how a tightly packaged bundle of significances could travel, intact, across vast spaces. If a visual schema could be elaborated with distinctively local visual idioms, as happens both at Dura and in Dacia, this was done in a way that maintained a high degree of recognizability, allowing members of Mithraic communities to move between sanctuaries across the empire.

MITHRAISM IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE: SOME GENERALITIES

To speak of “Mithraism” is already to make an interpretive leap: to group disparate images, sanctuaries, and communities together into a neatly bound heuristic package. Ancient authors never spoke of “Mithraism,” only of the “mysteries (*mustēria*) of Mithras,” the “rite (*teletē*) of Mithras,” or the “sacred things/rites (*sacra*) of Mithras,” putting emphasis on the sets of actions that worshippers might direct to the god.¹¹ As with almost all discourses around “religion” in the ancient world, ritual practice was privileged over belief and doctrine.¹²



8.4. Isometric reconstruction of the Late Mithraeum at Dura-Europos by Henry Pearson.

Historically, Mithra had long been worshipped as a minor deity in the kingdoms of the Near East. Yet the particular package of rites, images, and architecture that we equate with “Mithraism” seems to have been born in or around Rome in the mid-first century CE, and it spread rapidly through the empire. If certain aspects of the cult—Mithras’s name, the eastern dress of the god, the use of Persian loan-words like *nama* (hail) in inscriptions—draw to mind the claimed Persian origins of the cult and actively cast the cult as foreign and “other,” the images and practices of Mithraic communities have no clear parallels in the Near East: they are largely a product of the Roman Empire.¹³ Not only was this particular assemblage of materials and symbols “local” to the Roman Empire, it never traveled beyond the empire’s borders (unlike, for example, worship of Christ).

On the most general level, there are a great number of similarities documented in cults of Mithras across the Roman Empire. First and foremost, the scene of bull-killing, whether painted or carved in relief, seems to have occupied a prime position.¹⁴ Often, as at Dura, it appeared in the rear of the sanctuary, highlighted by architectural embellishments like platforms and niches. Communities seem to have been organized along similar lines, with a ranked hierarchy of members occupying seven different stages of initiation, led by those titled “fathers” and “lions.”¹⁵ At Dura, for example, at least six of these grades are attested in graffiti, although any mention of cult-rank is absent from Dacia. Third, aspects of the rites seem to have been shared across the empire: at both Dura and Apulum Mithraeum III, for example, small tile boxes set in the floor of the sanctuary contained the remnants of sacrificed chickens. Finally, the sanctuaries themselves shared a number of features. Unlike most Greco-Roman temples, where the ritual action took place in a courtyard before the temple (which was a display-box for a statue of the god), Mithraism was an “indoor cult,” whose long and narrow spaces were sometimes slightly sunken below ground level and, as was the case with the Dura Mithraeum, lined with benches along the side walls (fig. 8.4).¹⁶ Such benches were for members of the sanctuary community

to recline while banqueting in imitation of the meal Mithras is often shown sharing with the sun-god (fig. 8.5). The space of the sanctuary is then designed for a particular cult-act, but one that is set in relation to a mythological narrative.¹⁷

It seems too that mithraea across the empire were laid out with cosmological symbolism. One third-century CE philosopher, Porphyry, draws upon the worship of Mithras to substantiate his own neo-Platonic ideas.¹⁸ Porphyry describes the first sanctuary dedicated to Mithras as a cave that bore “s.”¹⁹ In other words, the entire space was a representation of ideas about the universe, a cosmology. Nor were such ideas confined to the musings of Porphyry: a number of mithraea are covered with astral signs that turn them into miniature cosmos, from stars painted on their vaulted ceilings (as in the Dura Mithraeum) to the signs of the zodiac surrounding either tauroctony reliefs (fig. 8.3) or arranged through the mithraeum.²⁰ Even if drawing upon widespread ideas about the stars, this suggests a level of complex astrological significances shared across many mithraea.

Yet despite these broad similarities, there are also marked differences in idioms among sanctuaries dedicated to Mithras, as the examples of Dura and Dacia will show: variations that point to the way shared sets of significances and features might be couched in more localized visual rhetoric.

DURA-EUROPOS

In comparison to other Roman provinces, Syria has yielded few Mithraic monuments.²¹ Notwithstanding the paucity of the remains, Mithraic monuments from this province have long played a prominent role in the discussion on regional variety of the cult: chief among them is the Mithraeum from Dura-Europos, discovered in 1934 and now on display in the Yale University Art Gallery.

The small provincial town of Dura-Europos is situated on the west bank of the Euphrates. During the last 100 years of its existence, from 165 to 254 CE, the city was a Roman garrison on the eastern frontier of the Roman Empire. Erected close to the northwest corner of the city wall by members of a unit of Palmyrene archers shortly after the city fell into Roman hands in 165 CE, the Dura Mithraeum is the easternmost mithraeum found to date.²² Dura’s proximity to the Parthian Empire explains the excitement of Franz Cumont, the founder of Mithraic studies, at its discovery, for Cumont firmly believed that the cult of Mithras originated in Iran, and he hoped to find at Dura a cult still close to its Iranian origins. After he had studied the monument with his colleague Michael Rostovtzeff on the spot, he concluded that the Late Mithraeum, rebuilt around 200 CE and redecorated with paintings about 40 years later, was in perfect accord with Mithraic monuments discovered throughout the Roman Empire.²³ Instead of illustrating the cult’s Iranian origin, the Dura Mithraeum became the ultimate proof of the presumed Mithraic orthodoxy of which Cumont was one of the most ardent advocates.

There can be no doubt that the broad outlines of the cult in Dura are commensurate with what is known about the cult elsewhere. Still, there are certain features that are unique and that call for an explanation.²⁴



8.5. Mithras and Sol from the Middle Mithraeum, c. 210 CE. Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1935-99a.

As is usual with Mithraic sanctuaries throughout the Roman world, the Dura Mithraeum is made up of a large rectangular room with benches on either side (fig. 8.4).²⁵ Yet in contrast to many other known mithraea, it is constructed above ground, an anomaly typically explained by the natural conditions of the site. Two tauroctony reliefs—Zenobius’s and a second, smaller one that also dates to the first years of the sanctuary—are set in the back wall.²⁶ The extensive redecoration of the Mithraeum around 240 CE includes a series of new wall paintings that were painted over those of the earlier “Middle Mithraeum.” Their iconography also tallies with what we find elsewhere in the Roman world: around the outer edge of the larger bas-relief a series of 13 small scenes depict cosmological events as well as scenes from Mithras’s life that largely concur with the scenes found on either side of cult reliefs and paintings in the West, including those in Dacia.²⁷ The soffit of the vaulted niche was decorated with pictures of the 12 signs of the zodiac, another element common in Mithraic iconography.²⁸ A third tauroctony was painted on the upper part of the outer surface of the arch. In the center is the figure of the bull-slaying Mithras with Cautes to his left. The figure to his right is completely lost, but was almost certainly Cautopates, holding his customary lowered torch. On either side of this group are seven cypress trees, alternating with seven altars. In the midst of the foliage of the tree next to Cautes appears the bust of a naked child with Phrygian cap.

Several elements in the decoration of the Dura Mithraeum deviate from what we find elsewhere. In Zenobius’s relief (fig. 8.3), the dedicant and members of his family or, more probably, of his military unit, attend the bull-killing.²⁹ This feature is unique in Mithraic iconography but is easily explained by local cultic and artistic traditions, in which it was common to depict dedicants on cult reliefs.³⁰ In the Middle Mithraeum, members of the community were pictured on the side walls of the sanctuary, another feature that mirrors local custom.³¹ Despite the fact that this is unique to Dura, the innovation is not at odds with Mithraic iconography as described above and is very much in keeping with other local religious and dedicatory practices. In the mithraeum, myth and ritual, past and present, are intertwined at various levels and the attendance of mortals at a mythological event is another expression of the same phenomenon.

Another unique feature in this relief is the seven small circular forms that are pictured in a neat line between the knee of the right foreleg of the bull and his left front hoof. Although often identified as altars, these spherical objects have the wrong shape for an altar.³² Given the prominence of astrological lore and the seven planets in Mithraic cult, including as protectors of each grade of initiation, it is more likely that these globules represent the planets.³³

Like the innovations outlined above, this particular mode of rendering the planets and including them in the scene has its closest parallels not in Mithraism, but in other cult iconography of the region. For example, on the lintel from the northern thalamos of the Temple of Bel in Palmyra, seven balls are arranged alongside the snake that hangs from the claws of a giant eagle. Here, the balls undoubtedly represent planetary bodies. For the Palmyrene archers who dedicated the Mithraic relief, this was a familiar image, and it is likely that they interpreted the balls below the leg of the bull along these lines as well. Local visual idioms, then, were used to construct and build upon the core axioms and practices of Mithraism, reinforcing the importance of both astrology and the number seven.

The Dura Mithraeum yielded three representations of the tauroctony, which nicely illustrates that this scene was indispensable during the celebration of the rituals. In all likelihood, the painter added a third scene on the arch because the two votive reliefs could not be seen from the benches in the third and final stage of the sanctuary. The fact that the reliefs were twice reused and reinstalled for central display after renovations demonstrates the elevated status of both objects for the Mithraic community. Their importance is at least partially due to the significance of the dedicants of the reliefs, who probably were the first leaders of the Mithraic religious community in Dura-Europos.

The authority of the community's worldly leaders may be behind another unique image in the Dura Mithraeum, the two enthroned figures in Persian dress that flank the cult niche (fig. 8.6).³⁴ Both are bearded and hold a scroll in their left hand and a staff in their right. The staff of the figure on the left-hand side points down, whereas the staff of his companion is pointed upward: an image probably inspired by the twin torchbearers Cautes and Cautopates, one of whom holds an upturned torch, the other a downturned torch. But whereas the symbolism is at least partly the same as elsewhere in the Roman Empire, the two figures are obviously not torchbearers. Similarly, their beards preclude identification of the figures as the youthful Cautes and Cautopates. Phrygian bonnet and staff are well-attested attributes of the *pater*, the religious leader of Mithraic communities.³⁵ The fact that there are two figures does not contradict this identification; one of the graffiti from the Mithraeum indicates that this community could have two *patres* at the same time.³⁶ Although the iconography is unique, the elevated status of the *pater* certainly is not.³⁷ Numerous monuments illustrate his authority in Mithraic communities throughout the Roman Empire. Yet here, even this localized image of the community's leaders is inflected via association with Cautes and Cautopates, and used to depict the "harmony of opposites" that seems to sit as one of Mithraism's shared and central axioms.³⁸

The most unusual paintings of the Mithraeum, set on the side walls of the cult niche, each show a figure on horseback in Parthian dress with a Phrygian bonnet, hunting animals with his bow (fig. 8.7).³⁹ In the painting on the left-hand side, the figure gallops toward the cult niche; in the one on the right-hand side, he moves away from the niche. The horseman is traditionally identified as Mithras. A mounted Mithras hunting animals is attested thrice in Germania.⁴⁰ Contrary to the German representations where the horseman is alone, the mounted hunter appears twice in Dura and seems to move in circles. While it may be possible that Mithras is pictured twice in Dura, it is equally possible to suppose that the two paintings represent different figures. This possibility is confirmed by mural paintings that were recently discovered in a mithraeum in Hawarte (northern Syria), where Persian horsemen also occur in pairs in fourth-century paintings.⁴¹ If we come to think of twin figures who look like Mithras but who are at the same time differentiated from him, the twin brothers Cautes and Cautopates immediately spring to mind. Since Cautes and Cautopates generally appear as opposites—one holding an upturned, the other a downturned torch—in both image and meaning,⁴² it is highly significant that the riders in Dura are moving in different directions: one charges toward the niche with the reliefs, the other away from it. Here again, a visual idiom with particular resonance in Syria is chosen to convey significances shared by Mithraic communities across the empire: hunting was of great importance to the elite in the Iranian world and the high status of this activity no doubt



8.6. Mithraeum reconstruction with enthroned figures highlighted. Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos.



8.7. Hunting fresco in Late Mithraeum, c. 240 CE. Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1935.100.

enhanced its appeal among Durene soldiers, many of whom originated from Dura and its surroundings. Furthermore, armed and mounted twin deities abound in the sculpture of Dura and through the remainder of Roman Syria. The association of these twins with the couple Cautes and Cautopates lies close at hand in a Semitic environment.

If art in the Roman provinces is often cast as partaking in a standard visual repertoire, yet freighting that repertoire with particularly “local” meanings, the Mithraeum at Dura shows exactly the opposite happening. Through a system of sign-substitution, concepts common to Mithraic communities across the empire are translated into idioms more common and recognizable at Dura and to the Palmyrene archers who founded the sanctuary in the mid-second century. Similarly, Zenobius’s relief is fitted not just into the artistic traditions of the site, but also into Dura’s social and cultic norms, highlighting both the dedicant and his associates. Here, a local iconographic motif is adapted and reinterpreted in the light of the organization of a “foreign” cult. For the local viewer, the Mithraic community is presented as a close-knit family of soldiers.

THE TAUROCTONIES OF ROMAN DACIA

A brief look at the Mithraic monuments dedicated in the two main urban centers of Dacia, Apulum and Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa, demonstrates how the practices surrounding dedication developed and varied at different sanctuaries, as well as the common visual and semantic systems that made Mithraism a unified package across the empire.

After the Roman conquest of Dacia in the first decade of the second century CE, Apulum became the seat of the legion tasked with maintaining the newly acquired province. The area itself was comprised of several different settlements: the main legionary camp and the village that grew up around it, and a civilian *colonia* just to the south that served as an important port on the Mureş River. From these two areas, at least four different mithraea are known: two around the legionary camp, and two in the *colonia*.⁴³ Each community had a slightly different social profile: it seems that the mithraea closer to the legionary camp were used more heavily by soldiers and veterans than those in the *colonia*.⁴⁴

All but three of the 15 tauroctony reliefs from Apulum are large (over 1 m wide), three-register compositions that seem to follow the same schema as Marcus’s relief (fig. 8.1), even if only four survive mostly intact.⁴⁵ The bull-killing scene is flanked by scenes of Mithras riding the bull and then carrying the bull at left, and by a lion drinking from a mixing-bowl and Mithras’s rock-birth at right. In the top and bottom registers, the same set of scenes unfolds. Above, a figure approaches Mithras, who is seated on a rock and preparing to fire his bow; then a figure climbs a tree; the bull stands atop a crescent, and to the right, a small building appears; next, a shepherd leans on his staff amid his flock; and finally, the god Saturn reclines. In the lower register, although the bottom left corner is broken on all three, Sol and Mithras dine reclining under the arch of a cave, then Mithras climbs into Sol’s four-horse chariot, and at right, a bearded figure sits, a snake wound around his lower torso.

Yet despite these similarities, the reliefs were displayed in different mithraea at Apulum: Marcus’s comes from outside the fort, while another comes from the port, and the others do not have recorded findspots. At Apulum, even if there were multiple cult centers and Mithraic communities that differed in their social make-up, they were tightly bound by a common visual idiom. Among the other urban centers known to have had multiple mithraea—Ostia, Heddernheim, Poetovio, Aquincum—there is no evidence for such a tightly shared visual package.

Notwithstanding the highly standardized triple-register composition and including the same set of scenes—a combination unknown outside of Apulum, save perhaps in two fragments from Sarmizegetusa⁴⁶—these reliefs are also not copies of one another. Some of the differences among the reliefs are simply in level of embellishment: Marcus’s relief is the

only one to include the arch of the cave in the tauroctony scene, or architectural framing. Variations also occur in the rendering of individual features: on two of the reliefs, the lion is shown with its head in frontal view, while the lion on Marcus's relief appears in profile. Cautes and Cautopates hold their objects differently on each of the three reliefs. Other differences stem from spatial constraints: on one of the reliefs, the reclining Saturn is squeezed into the main register (fig. 8.8). Finally, and perhaps most interestingly, there is also sign-substitution: in Figure 8.8, Sol and Luna appear not as busts (their usual form), but driving chariots in the upper register.

What is clear from these reliefs is that the mode of representation was less important than including all of the key figures and scenes in a specific order, distinctive to Apulum. The underlying significances and semantic ties between each scene were what mattered: not the precise visual idioms. And even if such smaller, narrative vignettes are common on Mithraic reliefs, especially in the Danubian provinces, they almost never appear in the same order or include the exact same subset of scenes, even within a single microregion:⁴⁷ the level of overlap at Apulum is specific to these two settlements, and not to Mithraism in general, or even Mithraism in a broader area. Despite the fact that the Mithraists of Apulum worshipped in different and distinct temples, and that each temple-community seems to have had a different demographic, there was a common set of priorities and significances shared at the level of the twin settlements (and apparent in the reliefs) of Apulum. Social distinctions did little to dictate either the visual formulas selected, or to inflect the larger package of significances and links created by those schemata.

Sarmizegetusa, the other major urban center in Dacia, presents a very different type of community and visual *koine*. Colonists from across the Roman world settled at the former military camp of Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa in the early second century, and as the financial capital of Roman Dacia, the town grew steadily to be one of the richest and best appointed in the province. The city had at least one mithraeum; although only part of the rear niche of the temple survived, its dimensions suggest that this mithraeum was one of the largest known in the Roman world, estimated at over four times the size of that at Dura.⁴⁸ The sanctuary was probably built in the 160s or 170s, when a donor, Lucius Aelius Hylas, dedicated a large tauroctony relief (fig. 8.9) whose inscription specifies that the dedication included an apse—presumably the niche excavated.⁴⁹

The most striking feature of the Mithraic community at Sarmizegetusa is the sheer number of sculpted offerings attested, far more than at any other mithraeum in the Roman world: over 90 fragments from tauroctony reliefs, most carved from local Bucova marble,



8.8. Tauroctony relief, late 2nd–early 3rd century CE, Apulum. Muzeul National al Unirii, Alba Iulia.



8.9. Tauroctony relief dedicated by Lucius Aelius Hylas, c. 160–170 CE, Sarmizegetusa. Muzeul Civilizatiei Dacice si Romane, Deva.

and almost all part of distinct monuments.⁵⁰ Based on inscriptions, the dedicants of these objects came from a range of social statuses and include both those whose careers may have carried them around the empire (provincial officials, imperial freedmen) and those whose lives and careers were more firmly rooted around Sarmizegetusa (city councilors, public priests, and those without any named post).⁵¹

In any event, the structure of the Mithraic community at Sarmizegetusa appears much different than that at Apulum. In the latter city, the Mithraists were divided into a number of small temple-communities, each made up of individuals who shared vaguely similar backgrounds (military versus civilian); at Sarmizegetusa, there was one large group comprised of worshippers of every imaginable background. And within that centralized Mithraic community, members practiced a particular dedicatory rite, offering small tauroctony reliefs in very large numbers.

Of these reliefs, only Hylas's and one other fragment would have stretched over 1.2 m wide, further evidence that Hylas's tauroctony was one of the main dedications in the sanctuary. His relief focuses on the main scene of bull-slaying as it takes place under the rough arch of a cave. Busts of Sol and Luna, with a crescent behind her, peek over the edges of the cave. To the left of the bull-slaying, Cautopates stands, holding his usual downturned torch in his right hand and a scorpion in his left; to the right, Cautes holds his habitual upturned torch in his right hand, while cradling a bull's head in his left. The fact that the two attendants' legs are not crossed and the unusual objects they hold set the relief apart from other tauroctonies. Even at its founding, the community lacked some "standard" tauroctony scene unpacked by an imagined Mithraic *colporteur*.⁵²

Almost all of the other reliefs from Sarmizegetusa are much smaller than Hylas's or those from Apulum, with dimensions between 20 and 30 cm.⁵³ Of the 19 that survive mostly intact, 10 follow the same basic layout: in a single register, Mithras slays the bull beneath busts of Sol and Luna, while cross-legged Cautes and Cautopates look on, their bodies turned frontally, each holding two torches. If Cautes and Cautopates are frequent presences in tauroctony scenes, only once outside of Dacia do they appear holding two torches in this manner: this is clearly a visual idiom unique to the province of Dacia in general, and to Sarmizegetusa in particular.⁵⁴ For worshippers there, not only was there a uniquely common dedicatory practice—giving a relief of a specific size—but also a shared, preferred visual scheme.

It is also important to note that these smaller scenes, if they respond to one another, are not simply small-scale reproductions of Hylas's main relief, for details of the scene—especially regarding Cautes and Cautopates—differ.⁵⁵ If, at the moment when this community was founded, a particular cult image was installed, this did not play an outsize role in shaping the community's subsequent visual repertoires and preferences.⁵⁶

Nor is the repetition of this common size and type wholly a matter of production, of purchasing a given relief either "off-the-rack" or according to the only schema used by a workshop. If the majority of reconstructable reliefs from Sarmizegetusa fall into the fixed type described above, other options (including multi-register affairs, akin to Marcus's relief from Apulum) were available to dedicants—they simply were not as popular.

At the same time, two further reliefs from Sarmizegetusa demonstrate the ties among communities of Mithraists across a much larger area. Both are the normal size for offerings at the site (20–30 cm), yet rather than being carved from local Bucova marble, isotope analysis reveals that their marble was quarried in Asia Minor.⁵⁷ Neither relief uses the schemata popular in Dacia, yet both have features that link them to workshops in Moesia, just south of Dacia.⁵⁸ As such, they are probably imported pieces, brought by members of Mithraic communities in Moesia who had moved to Sarmizegetusa. Many individuals moved among Mithraic communities as they relocated around the empire; for example, a military commander involved in one of the mithraea at Apulum was later posted to North Africa, where

he founded a new Mithraic community.⁵⁹ The imported reliefs at Sarmizegetusa suggest that the cult of Mithras there, even if elaborated in its own ways, with its own specific dedicatory habits and visual norms, was not only recognizable to worshippers from other provinces (and vice versa), but also open to their integration within the community.⁶⁰

Although found within a single province, each cult community had a different social profile, a slightly different set of ritual practices (at least as far as dedications went), and different visual idioms for the central, shared tauroctony scene and the Mithras-myth that was spun behind, around, and through it. The dedicants of reliefs at Sarmizegetusa looked to one another to work out a common iconography for the sanctuary, rather than to Hylas's large, central tauroctony; this was not the vertical emulation of a major work, but a more horizontal, organic development of norms within a community. However the Mithraic community was established, whatever image and set of concepts and rites was set at its founding, dedicants then developed their take on practices and the visual idioms from there.

The material from these mithraea also raises challenges to the very notion of the "local" in the Roman world, a concept and term that has become a catch-all description and explanation for anything in the provinces that seems to depart from classical norms in either appearance or usage. Localness is fundamentally a slippery concept, dependent upon juxtaposition with some wider, supra-local frame.⁶¹ At Apulum, from a visual and material standpoint, even sanctuaries in different parts of the settlement were tightly linked via their common tauroctonies, in marked contrast to other sites with multiple mithraea. The bonds among these cult-communities may also have extended beyond the settlements of Apulum to a fort 75 km away at Micia, where this same configuration was repeated on a tauroctony relief carved of limestone quarried at the site itself, presumably by a Mician workshop.⁶² "Localness" in this case was not bounded as a single sanctuary community, a single settlement, or even a neat geographic area: the imported reliefs at Sarmizegetusa, the way worshippers of Mithras might move from community to community, demonstrate that despite these variations, recognizability and commonality among communities spread far-and-wide was key.

CONCLUSIONS

The visual assemblage from Dura appears quite different from those of the Mithraic communities at Apulum and Sarmizegetusa, and although several rites (initiations, communal meals) were held in common, each of these communities may have engaged in somewhat different dedicatory practices. Many of the differences are the result of sign-substitutions, or particular embellishments, and of the way individual communities, or networks of Mithraic communities, developed their own visual norms and practices, both internally (Sarmizegetusa) and with reference to local visual traditions (Dura). If the astrological framework of Mithraism might not be as striking in the tauroctony scenes of Dacia as at Dura (where planets are couched in a local visual idiom) and elsewhere, this astrological valence was frequently highlighted in the miniature cosmos of the mithraeum itself, and in the kinds of painted and architectural decoration not preserved in Dacia—a difference in emphasis. This flexibility in the visual idioms used hints at how the shared basis of Mithraism was not entirely constructed through, mediated by, or freighted upon, the images themselves: instead, whatever significance was shared existed at least partly autonomous of the particular iconographies, perhaps connected more firmly to shared ritual practices.

In addition, whatever variations there were among the visual idioms of Mithraic communities, this was not necessarily predicated upon the social backgrounds of the dedicants. At Apulum, a number of Mithraic communities, both soldierly and civilian, shared a common tauroctony type, while dedicants of all statuses and positions at Sarmizegetusa offered reliefs of a common schema and dimension. Yet at Dura, in carrying the local tradition of

including the dedicant and his family on votive reliefs onto his tauroctony, Zenobius also adapts that tradition to reflect his Mithraic “family.”

Art related to the cult of Mithras may well be an exceptional case when compared to the other arts of Rome’s provinces, given the way it was interwoven with myth and ritual. Yet Mithraic art should serve as a cautionary case for some of the current trends in Roman provincial studies, whether they focus on the primacy of social position in dictating image choice, with images serving simply as instruments for the structuration of communities; or the facile equation of varied signs with varied significances; or the search for divergent valences behind shared visual idioms (their polysemous potential notwithstanding!).

These, however, are far from being final conclusions; if they further problematize issues of the “local” and the dichotomies between signs and the signified in Roman provincial art, they raise an equally large number of questions about how the symbol-package stayed so coherent—a consistency that is not paralleled in the remains of any other cult at the time, whether polytheistic, Jewish, or Christian. How did this Mithraic set of significances move around the Roman Empire while remaining largely intact, especially in the absence of a trans-sanctuary hierarchy?

If nothing else, Mithraism remains a prime “think-space” for understanding art, religion, and traditions in the Roman Empire.



- 1 Sarah Scott and Jane Webster, eds., *Roman Imperialism and Provincial Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
- 2 E.g., Greg Woolf, *Becoming Roman: The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Roman Gaul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); David J. Mattingly, “Family Values: Art and Power at Ghirza in the Libyan Pre-Desert,” in *Roman Imperialism and Provincial Art*, 153–70.
- 3 Robert Turcan, “Hiérarchie sacerdotale et astrologie dans les mystères de Mithra,” in *La science des dieux*, ed. Rika Gyselen (Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 249–61 is an important exception, arguing (unconvincingly, on the basis of absence of evidence) that the seven grades of initiation into Mithraism, and the idea that each fell under the protection of a given planet, were not widespread, but local ways of accommodating current ideological and philosophical trends into individual cult communities. Wolfgang Spickermann, “Mysteriengemeinde und Öffentlichkeit: Überlegungen zur Integration von Mysterienkulten in die lokalen Panthea in Gallien und Germanien,” in *Gruppenreligionen im römischen Reich*, ed. Jörg Rüpke (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 127–60, also suggests that in Germania, mithraea made an effort to accommodate local panthea—although this had little effect on the core of “Mithraism,” and was simply a way of boosting the cult’s popularity in an inherently conservative society.
- 4 On “doctrine”: Roger Beck, *The Religion of the Mithras Cult in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) offers the most nuanced account, while distancing himself from notions of “doctrine” as an all-encompassing, fully fleshed-out system of philosophy. He suggests (59) that it might more usefully apply to “doctrinal themes” established by a *colporteur* of the cult and subsequently spun by local communities from the monuments themselves. In general: Richard Gordon, “Panelled Complications,” *Journal of Mithraic Studies* 3 (1979/80): 200–227. On the addition or lack of the outer scenes as being “loquacious” or not in style, rather than substance: Beck, *Religion of the Mithras Cult*, 58, suggesting that aberrations “exemplify general Mithraic doctrine rather than local elaboration.” On Dura in particular as only local in “style”: Susan B. Downey, “Syrian Images of Mithras Tauroctonos,” in *Études Mithriaques: Actes du 2^e Congrès International, Téhéran, du 1^{er} au 8 septembre 1975*, ed. Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 135–49. On Dacian workshops and preferences for specific figural types: Gabriel Sicoe, “Lokalproduktion und Importe: Der Fall des mithraischen Reliefs aus Dakien,” in *Roman Mithraism: The Evidence of the Small Finds*, ed. Marleen Martens and Guy de Boe (Brussels: Museum Het Toreke, 2004), 285–302.
- 5 Manfred Clauss, *The Roman Cult of Mithras: The God and His Mysteries*, trans. Richard Gordon (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), xx–xi.
- 6 Robert Turcan, “Feu et sang: À propos d’un relief mithriaque,” *CRAI* 130, no. 1 (1986): 221; cf. David Ulansey, *The Origins of the Mithraic Mysteries: Cosmology and Salvation in the Ancient World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).
- 7 Robert Turcan, *Mithra et le mithriacisme* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2004), 72: “un ‘bible’ illustré.”
- 8 Turcan, “Feu et sang,” 221.
- 9 Beck, *Religion of the Mithras Cult*.
- 10 Maria Corina Nicolae, “Cult Images and Mithraic Reliefs in Roman Dacia,” *Transylvanian Review* 20 (2011): 69–76; “cult image” is itself not an unproblematic category. Richard Gordon, “Small and Miniature Reproductions of the Mithraic Cult Icon,” in *Roman Mithraism*, 259–84, looks at miniature tauroctony scenes to suggest that they may have been personal devotionals—yet another use for this type of scene.

- 11 On the fluidity of the Greek terms, Arthur Darby Nock, "Hellenistic Mysteries and Christian Sacraments," *Mnemosyne* 5 (1952): 177–213.
- 12 John Scheid, *Quand faire, c'est croire* (Paris: Aubier, 2005).
- 13 Manfred Clauss, *Cultores Mithrae* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1990); Roger Beck, "The Mysteries of Mithras: A New Account of Their Genesis," *Journal of Roman Studies* 88 (1998): 115–28, for origins; Valérie Huet, "Reliefs mithriaques et reliefs romains 'traditionnels,'" in *Les religions orientales dans le monde grec et romain*, ed. Corinne Bonnet et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 233–56, demonstrating the intentional "othering" at play in the tauroctony scenes.
- 14 Although, admittedly, mithraea are often identified primarily through the discovery of tauroctony scenes—potentially breeding a circular argument here.
- 15 Clauss, *Cultores Mithrae*.
- 16 Which is not to say that all cult activity took place in the Mithraeum itself; at Tienen, large banquets for more people than the indoor space could accommodate were held in the area around the sanctuary: Marleen Martens, "Rethinking Sacred Rubbish: The Ritual Deposits of the Temple of Mithras at Tienen," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 17 (2004): 333–53. Unfortunately, we lack groundplans for the mithraea of Dacia.
- 17 On the links between ritual, representation, and myth in mithraea: Roger Beck, "Ritual, Myth, Doctrine, and Initiation in the Mysteries of Mithras: New Evidence from a Cult Vessel," *Journal of Roman Studies* 90 (2000): 145–80.
- 18 Robert Turcan, *Mithras Platonicus* (Leiden: Brill, 1975).
- 19 Porph., *De Antr. Nymph.* 6.
- 20 Richard Gordon, "The Sacred Geography of a Mithraeum: The Example of Sette Sfere," *Journal of Mithraic Studies* 1 (1976): 119–65.
- 21 On Mithraic monuments in Syria, see Downey, "Syrian Images of Mithras Tauroctonos"; Lewis M. Hopfe, "Mithraism in Syria," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt (ANRW)* 18.4, ed. Wolfgang Haase (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1990), 2214–35 and Richard Gordon, "Trajets de Mithra en Syrie romaine," *Topoi Orient-Occident* 11, no. 1 (2001): 77–136.
- 22 Lucinda Dirven, *The Palmyrenes of Dura-Europos: A Study of Religious Interaction in Roman Syria* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 260. Yulia Ustinova, "New Latin and Greek Rock-Inscriptions from Uzbekistan," *Hephaistos* 18 (2000): 169–79, argued that Mithras was worshipped in a natural cave in Kara-Kamar by members of the Legion XV Apollinaris. The letters "I M" in an extremely fragmentary inscription are the only evidence for this and so it fails to convince the present authors.
- 23 The greater part of the final building dates back to the second building stage, which took place between 209 and 211 CE and was initiated by a centurion of the Legions IV Scythia and XVI Flavia Firma. The paintings date to a third and final stage in the life of the sanctuary, around 240 CE. Four preliminary reports of the Mithraeum have been published so far: Franz Cumont, "Rapport sur une mission archéologique à Doura-Europos," *CRAI* 78, no. 2 (1934): 90–111; Michael Rostovtzeff, "Das Mithraeum von Dura," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologe: Instituts, Römische Abteilung* 49 (1934): 180–207; Rostovtzeff, "The Mithraeum," in *The Excavations at Dura-Europos: Preliminary Report of the 7th and 8th Seasons of Work, 1933–1934 and 1934–1935*, ed. Michael Rostovtzeff, Frank Brown, and C. Bradford Welles (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939): 62–134; Franz Cumont, "The Dura Mithraeum," ed. and trans. E. D. Francis, in

Mithraic Studies: Proceedings of the First International Congress of Mithraic Studies Vol. 1, ed. John R. Hinnels (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975), 151–214.

- 24 Nicole Belayche, “L’imagerie des divinités ‘orientales,’” in *Religions orientales—culti misterici: Neue Perspektive—nouvelles perspectives—prospettive nuove*, ed. Corinne Bonnet, Jörg Rüpke, and Paolo Scarpi (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2006), 123–33, recently denied the Syrian, provincial character of these monuments and argued in favor of a variety that was determined by the hierarchy of the local community (i.e., the *pater*). There was, however, more local variety in the artistic expressions of the cult than Belayche suggests in her article. In our view, these variations are largely the result of local artistic traditions and they do not necessarily express deviant religious notions. The mithraeum from Hawarte is an exception, since the representations in this mithraeum testify to non-Mithraic influences on the ideas of this community.
- 25 Jonas Bjørnebye, “‘Hic locus est felix, sanctus, piusque benignus’: The Cult of Mithras in Fourth Century Rome” (PhD diss., University of Bergen, Norway, 2007), 13–20, https://bora.uib.no/bitstream/handle/1956/2229/Dr._Avh._%20Jonas_Bjoernebye.pdf?sequence=1000.
- 26 *Ibid.*, 98–111.
- 27 On these scenes and the vexed question whether they represent a sacred narrative, see Gordon, “Panelled Complications.”
- 28 Like the mythological scenes, the series starts at the top of the vault and reads counterclockwise. The first two signs, Aries and Taurus, have disappeared. Below are Gemini, Cancer, Leo, and Virgo. The series continues at the bottom on the right with Libra, followed by Scorpio, Sagittarius, and Capricorn. The two upper signs, Aquarius and Pisces, are missing.
- 29 Dirven, *Palmyrenes of Dura-Europos*, 271–72.
- 30 Downey, “Syrian Images of Mithras Tauroctonos,” 141.
- 31 In Dura see, for example, the so-called sacrifice of Konon and the paintings from the naos of the Temple of Zeus Theos: Maura K. Heyn, “The Terentius Frieze in Context,” in *Dura-Europos: Crossroads of Antiquity*, ed. Lisa R. Brody and Gail L. Hoffman, exh. cat. (Chestnut Hill: McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, 2011), 221–31; Frank Brown, “The Temple of Zeus Theos,” in *Preliminary Report 7–8*, 196–210.
- 32 Cf. Downey, “Syrian Images of Mithras Tauroctonos,” 143.
- 33 Interestingly, similar balls occur in a highly enigmatic scene on a relief from Jerusalem that probably originates from Syria as well: Albert de Jong, “A New Syrian Mithraic Tauroctony,” *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 11 (2000): 53–63, esp. 56, fig. 2. These balls may not represent planets.
- 34 Both Cumont, “The Dura Mithraeum,” 182–83 and Rostovtzeff, “Das Mithraeum von Dura,” 110–11, identify these figures as the Persian magi Zoroaster and Osthanes. Since they are never attested in mithraea, and no portraits of Zoroaster are known prior to the nineteenth century, this is not likely.
- 35 Richard Gordon, “Ritual and Hierarchy in the Mysteries of Mithras,” *Arys* 4 (2001): 245–73, esp. 255–58.
- 36 Rostovtzeff, “Das Mithraeum von Dura,” 87, no. 848 (211–212 CE).
- 37 The closest iconographic parallel comes from the Santa Prisca in Rome, where on the side wall on the right-hand side, the father of the community is shown enthroned while he receives offerings brought by lions: Maarten J. Vermaseren, *The Excavations in the Mithraeum of the Church of*

- Santa Prisca in Rome* (Leiden: Brill, 1965), 155, plate 59.
- 38 For “axioms,” see Beck, *Religion of the Mithras Cult*.
- 39 Rostovtzeff, “Das Mithraeum von Dura,” 190–95, plate 13; Cumont, “Rapport sur un mission archéologique,” 102; Rostovtzeff, “The Mithraeum,” 112–15, plates 14, 15; Maarten J. Vermaseren, *Corpus Inscriptionum et Monumentorum Religionis Mithriacae (CIMRM)* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1956), 1, no. 52; Cumont, “The Dura Mithraeum,” 186–92, plate 24. For a more extensive corroboration of the new interpretation proposed here, see Lucinda Dirven, “A New Interpretation of the Mounted Hunters in the Mithraeum of Dura-Europos,” in *Festschrift for Susan Downey*, ed. Maura K. Heyn and Ann Steinsapir (forthcoming).
- 40 CIMRM 1137B (Rückingen: Mithras with lasso instead of a bow); 1247A (Dieburg); 1292 (Osterburken).
- 41 In the cult room, near the southwest corner is a panel that pictures a hunting party that consists of two horsemen in Persian dress: Michal Gawlikowski, “The Mithraeum at Hawarte and Its Paintings,” *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 20 (2007): 337–61, esp. 358–60. In the vestibule of the same mithraeum, two riders that stand next to their horses flank the entrance to the cult-room: *ibid.*, 353, fig. 9. Cf. Gordon, “Trajets de Mithra en Syrie romaine,” 111, fig. 18.
- 42 On Cautes and Cautopates in general, see John R. Hinnells, “The Iconography of Cautes and Cautopates: The Data,” *Journal of Mithraic Studies* 1 (1976): 36–67; Clauss, *Roman Cult of Mithras*, 95–98.
- 43 Two mithraea from the *municipium Septimium*: one was located on the land of S. Oancea (CIMRM 1953; present location unknown), and the second, on the current Bulevardul 1 Decembrie 1918, is currently under investigation. A third has tentatively been identified within the legionary camp, though the attribution is unlikely (CIMRM 1968). In the *colonia*, a number of finds are reported from modern Partoş, presumably from an unexcavated mithraeum, although they might come from the (probably second) mithraeum currently under excavation.
- 44 Csaba Szabó, “Cultul lui Mithras in Apulum” (master’s thesis, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, 2012).
- 45 I include a relief from Vinţu de Jos (CIMRM 2000), which likely comes from Apulum.
- 46 CIMRM 2036, 2044.
- 47 Gordon, “Panelled Complications.”
- 48 Pál Király, “A Sarmizegetusal Mithraeum,” *Archaeologiai Közlemények* 15 (1886); CIMRM 2027.
- 49 CIMRM 2006/7: “To Jupiter the Unconquered Sun, the father-god, born from stone. Lucius Aelius Hylas, a freedman, for the health of both his son Horiens and his wife Apuleia, erected an image of the divine with an apse out of his vow.” Although found at Doştat, the relief is said to have come from Sarmizegetusa, a provenance likely confirmed by its medium (Bucova marble) and technique: Dorin Alicu et al., *Figured Monuments from Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa* (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1979), 115, no. 252; Sicoe, “Lokalproduktion und Importe,” 285–87.
- 50 Alicu et al., *Figured Monuments*, 101–16.
- 51 Clauss, *Cultores Mithrae*, 202–4.
- 52 Community-founders as *colporteurs*: Richard Gordon, “Who Worshipped Mithras?,” *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 7 (1994): 459–74.

- 53 Only six of the reliefs can be reconstructed with dimensions over the standard 20–30 cm size; another two are smaller (under 20 cm).
- 54 Cf. Sicoe, “Lokalproduktion und Importe.” Five reliefs of this type appear outside of Sarmizegetusa: from Ozd, Dierna, Potaissa, Banat, and—the only example outside of Dacia—from Miline, in Dalmatia.
- 55 Sicoe, “Lokalproduktion und Importe,” 287.
- 56 This stands in contrast to the phenomena seen at other sanctuaries in the Roman world, where the main statue served as a model and its own “center” for subsequent “peripheral” dedications: Matthew M. McCarty, “Beyond Centers and Peripheries, Models and Diffusions: Art in Roman Africa” in *Roma y las provincias*, ed. Trinidad Nogales and Isabel Rodà (Rome: L’Erma de Bretschneider, 2011), 439–48.
- 57 Harald W. Müller et al., “Marbles in the Roman Province of Dacia,” in *Archéomatériaux: marbres et autres roches*, ed. Max Schvoerer (Bordeaux: CRPAA-Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 1999).
- 58 Sicoe, “Lokalproduktion und Importe.”
- 59 *CIMRM* 1950; *CIMRM* 137.
- 60 Further examples: Gordon, “Small and Miniature Reproductions.”
- 61 Tim Whitmarsh, “Thinking Local,” in *Local Knowledge and Microidentities in the Imperial Greek World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1–16.
- 62 *CIMRM* 2018.



PROVINCIAL CULTS OF MARS IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Tyler V. Franconi

INTRODUCTION

Disentangling the complex identity of the Roman god Mars during the imperial period requires an examination of the mythological, propagandistic, and religious traditions that surrounded the deity and an understanding of each within its own context. Traditionally viewed as the Roman god of war, Mars had a deep history with the Roman people, stretching from the early republic through the late empire, making any single interpretation of the god potentially precarious and imprecise. Instead, an appreciation must be gained for the dynamic identities of Mars and where they fit into daily Roman life. Such an appreciation is best achieved through a careful consideration of epigraphic and archaeological data.

A detailed examination of Mars in the empire is noticeably absent, though several studies of earlier periods do exist.¹ This paper offers an overview of the main archaeological data known relating to Mars throughout the Roman Empire, with a particular emphasis on epigraphic material. By highlighting the breadth of this data, it can be seen that during the imperial period, the cult of Mars spread far outside of its traditional home in Italy and, in doing so, developed new identities within the provinces of Rome. The multiplicity of cults that developed simultaneously throughout the empire suggests a deity far more complex than a simple war god, and thus an understanding of this material radically changes popular conceptions of the role of Mars within the Roman pantheon.

BACKGROUND—REPUBLICAN TRADITIONS

As the mythological progenitor of Romulus and Remus, Mars was involved in Roman life from the very start. Mars was one of the original three main deities of Rome, the so-called Archaic Triad of Jupiter, Mars, and Quirinus,² remembered in the *flamines maiores* of the *flamen dialis* (priest of Jupiter), *flamen martialis* (priest of Mars), and the *flamen quirinalis* (priest of Quirinus). Over the course of the republican era, Mars developed two spheres of influence: agriculture and warfare. Despite their apparent opposition, both were closely tied together and linked to the calendar. Planting was finished by early March, when soldiers would depart for war. They would return to the city in October, when the harvesting season began. Both transitions—the departure and arrival—were commemorated in a series of festivals in March and October that were dedicated to Mars. The *quinquatrus* of March 19

and the *tubilustrum* of March 23 prepared the weapons and trumpets and, by extension, the soldiers themselves for their departure for war from the city of Rome. Their re-admittance to the city and subsequent purification of the soldiers was accomplished by the *armilustrum* of October 19. Mars's zone of influence was firmly outside the *pomerium* of the city, with his main temples located on the Campus Martius and outside the Porta Capena. The Salian priests annually circled the city while singing their hymns to Mars, a ritual which has been linked to purifying the military for departure and arrival.³

Mars's role in liminal zones is also reflected in several prayers specifically intended to protect the harvest. Cato (*Agr.* 21) outlines a sacrifice to Mars that would protect the fields from ruin and bring a good harvest. Similarly, the *carmen arvale* begs Mars to defend against disease and destruction, specifically by guarding the threshold.⁴ The field, like the city, was protected by Mars, though his realm was outside its borders. The liminal nature of Mars led Udo Scholz to refer to him as a "god of the outside,"⁵ and Vincent Rosivach to consider him a lustral god.⁶ To cross these borders, one had to cross Mars—this could be accomplished by those ritually purified but hopefully not by those seeking to bring ruin or disease into the farm or city.

THE IMPERIAL TRANSFORMATION OF MARS

By the time of Augustus, the boundaries of Rome had come to include a great deal more territory than the *pomerium* of the republican city. The imperial legions, in existence from the late second century BCE onward, no longer departed from Rome in March to return in October. Rather, they were permanently stationed in camps around the limits of the empire. The fields of Italy were no longer annually plagued by raiding parties seeking to destroy the harvest. In the face of these changes, the original purposes behind the rituals and worship of Mars were no longer necessary.

It is in this context that we must understand the developments of the cult under Augustus. First, Mars's identity was re-imagined in Augustan-era literature to emphasize his role as progenitor of the Roman people, alongside Venus as the progenitor of the *gens Iulii*. Virgil (*Aen.* 4.872) termed the city of Rome as "*Mavortis*," that is "of [the ancient] Mars," in order to link the divine heritage of Romulus. The Greek myth of Ares and Aphrodite was appropriated to Mars and Venus, not to conflate the identities of Greek and Roman deities, but rather to give popular allegory to the imperial lineage.⁷ The cult statue in the Temple of Mars Ultor in the Augustan forum was flanked by Venus and Divus Iulius, permanently linking the three, a scene replicated on the Algiers Relief.⁸ By building this temple in the heart of Rome, Augustus broke the tradition of Mars as a liminal protector and, in doing so, created a new mythology for the god—that of father and protector of the imperial household and the Roman Empire. Mars was no longer a "god of the outside"; instead, he took a new position at the head of the Roman pantheon.

Augustus built two temples of Mars: the Temple of Mars on the Capitoline Hill, completed in 20 BCE to house the returned Parthian standards, and the great temple in Augustus's forum, completed in 2 BCE, in memory of his victory at Philippi 40 years earlier. Augustus attributed the defeat of Caesar's murderers at Philippi and the return of the lost Parthian standards to the divine retribution of Mars Ultor. The new temple in the forum became the venue for preparation of war and point of departure for generals on campaign. Captured arms and armor from enemies were also stored in the temple. Future emperors maintained the tradition of dedicating weaponry to Mars upon victory, as can be seen in Tiberius's dedication of German weapons to Mars, Jupiter, and Augustus (*Tac., Ann.* 2.22). Caligula is said to have dedicated three swords intended for his assassination to Mars (*Suet., Calig.* 24.3), and Vitellius sent the dagger with which Otho committed suicide to the Temple of Mars in Cologne (*Suet., Vit.* 10.3). Trajan dedicated the column in his forum, its base

decorated with captured Dacian arms, on May 12, 113 CE, the date of the original dedication of the Temple of Mars on the Capitoline, and it is likely that the Tropaeum Traiani in Adamclisi, Romania, with its own inscribed dedication to Mars Ultor, was dedicated on the same day.⁹

This emphasis of the martial aspects of Mars often overshadowed other sides of the deity, and it is probably for this reason that he is remembered as a war god above all else. There is much archaeological evidence from elsewhere in the Roman world, however, for a wider range of attributes of Mars with a much broader applicability than warfare.

MARS IN THE *FERIAE DURANUM*

These instances of imperial interaction with Mars should be compared, for example, to the public festivals and holidays preserved in the *Feriae Duranum* (fig. 9.1), a papyrus dating to 225–227 CE, found during the excavation of the records room of the *cohors XX Palmyrenorum* in Dura-Europos.¹⁰ As a list of festivals observed by the Roman army, the *Feriae* is a unique document that records numerous Roman holidays otherwise unattested in many areas of the empire. Though the entirety of the year is not preserved in the document, five separate sacrifices to Mars are recorded: January 3 and January 7 to Mars Pater, March 1 to Mars Pater Victor for his birthday, March 13 to Mars possibly to commemorate the old *equirria*, and May 12 to Mars Pater Ultor on the occasion of his games, commemorating the dedication of his temple in Rome in 20 BCE. Were October not lost, we would expect other *feriae* on October 15 and possibly October 19, commemorating the ancient rituals of welcoming the army back into Rome. With five *feriae*, Mars is named more than any other deity in the document.

The *feriae* mentioned are an interesting mix of republican and imperial traditions that demonstrate a long history of public worship. Soldiers observed these festivals as part of their official military religion—that is, festivals that soldiers were obliged to observe as a group. Group observance of official Roman holidays helped integrate soldiers not only into their unit but also into the wider sphere of Roman public life.¹¹ That such rituals were being performed in Dura-Europos on the easternmost edge of the empire in the third century CE speaks to the reach of Roman religion within the military.

Mars is otherwise rarely attested in the Roman East, despite the large number of troops stationed along the frontier. In the West, Roman soldiers were actively engaged in the worship of Mars in both official and private religious contexts, resulting in a mass of evidence unparalleled in the East. That private worship seems not to have taken place in the East is indicative of the power of local religious traditions and how they interacted with soldiers' lives. What follows, therefore, largely comes from the West.

THE ROMAN ARMY AND THE CULT OF MARS

Mars was thus a central part of military religion, a claim which is supported by ample evidence for soldiers' involvement in the cult of Mars across the empire. While the *Feriae Duranum* is a unique document, the existence of particularly military cult places, epigraphic



9.1. *Feriae Duranum*, 225–227 CE, Dura-Europos. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Papyrus Collection, Yale University, P. CtYBR inv. DP 2:2.

dedications, and the votive deposition of weaponry and other *militaria* in sanctuaries add depth and complexity unknown in written documents. The reasons behind military patronage of Mars may seem clear from the martial ideals emphasized by Roman emperors, but the reality of soldiers' involvement was much more personalized.

Several instances of sanctuaries of Mars on or near Roman military sites are known. At Housesteads on Hadrian's Wall in Britain, a rectangular building south of the fort was identified as a temple to Mars Thincsus (presumably a German deity) and the Alaisiagae based on a large inscription in the doorjamb.¹² At Walldurn, an Antonine-period fort on the *limes Germanicus*, an inscription records the existence of a temple to Mars and Victoria, though it has not yet been found in excavation.¹³ At Windisch, a first-century CE legionary fortress in northern Switzerland, a temple of Mars was built in the middle of the fortress and maintained beyond the departure of the legion under Trajan.¹⁴ In Libya, a rectangular temple was found outside the fort at Bu Njem dedicated to Mars Canapphar (presumably a Libyan deity) Augustus under the Severans.¹⁵ Soldiers are also known to have restored temples in Bonn, Augsburg, and Regensburg.¹⁶

Soldiers did not leave the majority of dedicatory inscriptions to Mars, but they were still a prevalent group, accounting for 30% of the corpus. Perhaps one of the most interesting groups of inscriptions left by soldiers comes from Zoui, a Roman *statio* near the African frontier.¹⁷ Eight inscriptions were found on the site, one altar, six *cippi*, and an inscribed column capital. Four were dedicated to Mars Augustus, three to Mars Victor, and one simply to Mars. Two inscriptions contain phrases that are worth mentioning, as they perhaps shed more light on the reasons for following Mars than any other god in the empire. One *cippus* reads:¹⁸

To the god Mars and the sacred Genius of the *scholae* of the *Beneficarii*, Paconius Castus, *beneficiarius consularis* of the *legio III Augusta*, released his vow with his term of service completed.

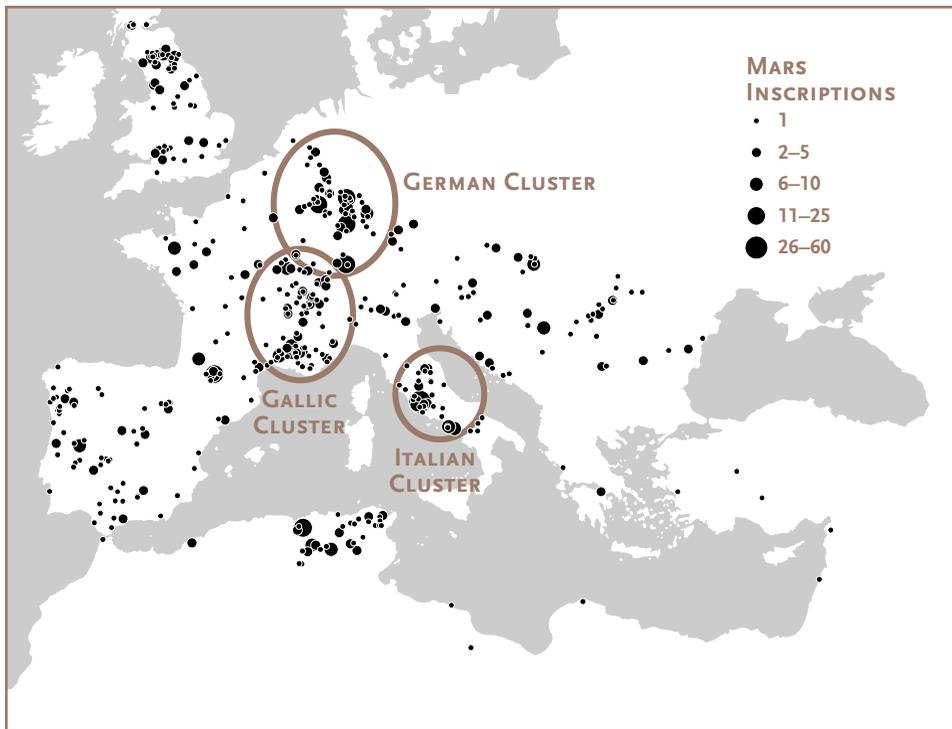
Another *cippus* reads:¹⁹

To Jupiter Optimus Maximus, Mars Victor, the helpful gods and the Genius of the *statio* Vazanitanae, Saturninus, *beneficiarius* of the *legio III Augusta*, willingly released his vow as deserved on completing his term and being promoted to Centurion of the *legio II Italica*.

As they completed their term of service at the site, they saw fit to give special thanks to Mars (and other gods); we may infer that the other inscriptions found on the site were similarly left, though none preserve such specific phrasing.

This act of thanksgiving at the end of a term can be paralleled by several other instances around the empire. A small sanctuary was built in the legionary camp of Vindonissa, modern-day Windisch, during the first century CE.²⁰ This temple remained in use after the camp was abandoned under Trajan, and votive deposition continued. One of the most interesting finds from the temple was a military diploma, dated to 122 CE, belonging to a soldier of the tenth cohort of Praetorian guards who originally hailed from Turin, Italy.²¹ Because the diploma was issued 20 years after the departure of the legion from Windisch, we must ask how this diploma ended up on the site. It is possible that it was left as a votive offering in the temple sometime after the soldier's discharge, probably toward the end of his life. If so, the dedication of the diploma invokes a similar message as the inscriptions from Zoui—thanking Mars for surviving his service.

Along with these instances, we must also consider the weapons and armor finds from numerous temples across the region. While the practice of emperors dedicating enemy weaponry to Mars was outlined above, many soldiers also chose to dedicate their own arms



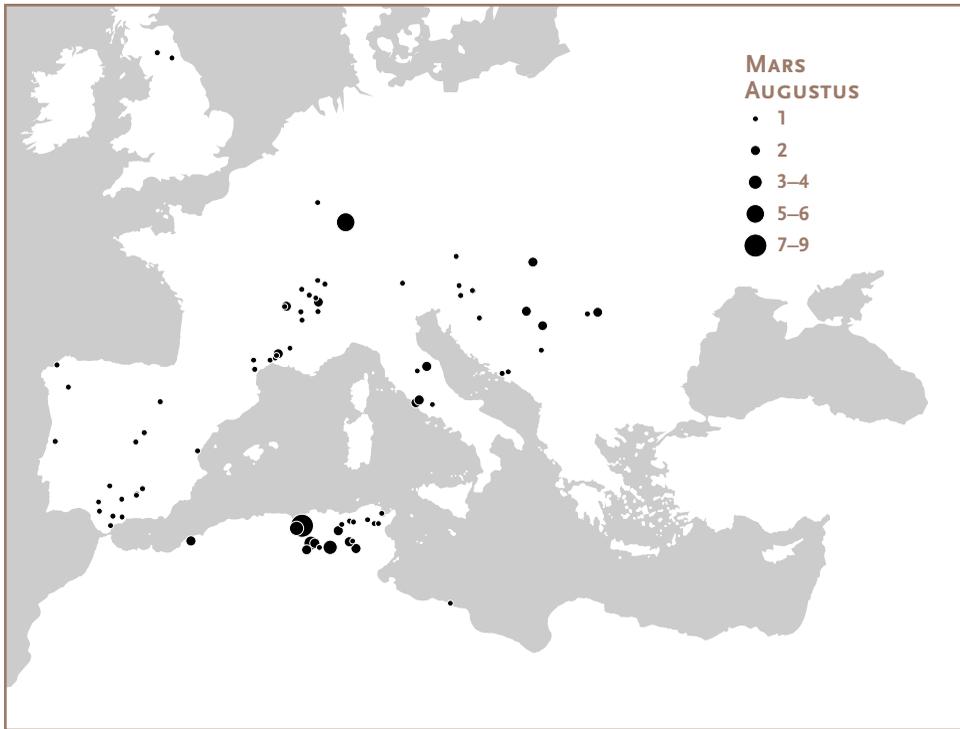
9.2. Distribution of inscriptions naming Mars in Roman Empire.

and armor to Mars in sanctuaries across the empire. Weapons and armor deposited by soldiers at sanctuary sites were intended as thanks offerings for divine protection during military service.²² The deposition of the very tools that kept soldiers safe and alive through their service was an important and meaningful acknowledgment to the end of a military career. When combined with the epigraphic evidence from Zouï and the diploma from Windisch, the practice of post-service thanksgiving appears to have been widespread (at least in the Roman West). It is tempting to see an echo of the earlier republican rituals of purification and re-entry into society in these actions. Therefore, it was not a violent god of war that soldiers followed; rather, it was a protective deity who looked after the safety of Roman troops during their service.

THE SPREAD OF THE CULT OF MARS THROUGHOUT THE EMPIRE

The Roman military was undoubtedly a major component of the distribution and dissemination of the cult of Mars throughout the empire. Because soldiers were often the first group sent into a new territory, it is unsurprising that they would act as cultural intermediaries to friendly foreigners, particularly in explaining their main deities. Epigraphy is the most useful and straightforward way to examine the distribution of the cult, with over 900 inscriptions to Mars known from over 475 locations in the empire (fig. 9.2). Most of these are from the Roman West, and over half come from the provinces of Italy, Germania Superior, and Gallia Narbonensis.²³

Soldiers accounted for only 30% of these inscriptions, demonstrating a large civilian following and involvement in cult activities. The transmission of Mars as a protective deity by the military surely influenced the uptake in worship throughout the empire, augmented in turn by official “state” religion that emphasized the connection between Mars and the emperor. This is particularly evident in the abundance of inscriptions dedicated to Mars



9.3. Distribution of inscriptions naming Mars Augustus in Roman Empire.

Augustus, the most common epithet used with Mars, with 120 examples known across the empire (fig. 9.3). The range of epithets used in inscriptions helps differentiate regional and interpersonal variations in worship as they specified the god or aspect of the god that was being contacted. Mars had no less than 106 distinct epithets, only 25 of which were Latin. While *Augustus* was the most popular, *Victor*, *Conservator*, *Pater*, and *Militarus* were also common. Many of these epithets were also used in legends on imperial coinage, which surely helped their dissemination.²⁴

The other 81 epithets were from non-Latin languages, mainly Celtic, though with some German and one Libyan example, mentioned above, as well. Inscriptions using non-Latin epithets account for about half of the inscriptions in the Gallic, German, and British provinces. The exact meaning of many of these non-Latin epithets is unknown, though it is clear that their intentions and uses varied. Some joined Mars with non-Roman deities: Lenus Mars is perhaps the best example, where the main tribal deity of the Treveri was joined with Mars. The large cult center in Trier acted as a healing sanctuary, an otherwise uncharacteristic element of the Mars myths. Others linked Mars with tribes or tribal areas—Mars Caturix was the main deity of the Caturiges in the western Alps. Still others were probably simple adjectives added to emphasize a specific aspect of Mars—Mars Loucetius has been suggested as Mars “the shining.”²⁵

These epithets have garnered great attention, particularly those that suggest the inclusion of Mars within a non-Roman pantheon or the joining of Mars with a non-Roman deity. These cases, often explained as Romanization, *interpretatio Romana*, or creolization,²⁶ were complex cultural interactions that are not necessarily so easy to categorize or explain. The exact motives for the joining of Mars with non-Roman deities, particularly in the Celtic regions of the empire, are largely lost to us. It seems probable, however, that those aspects of Mars which were emphasized as protective or fatherly were attractive to a wide range of

cultures attempting to reconcile their own indigenous traditions with those of the Roman newcomers.

It is instructive to consider the two earliest dated inscriptions to Mars from the German frontier, both of which were left by soldiers in the Julio-Claudian period.²⁷ Both inscriptions were dedicated to Mars with non-Latin epithets, Mars Loucetus and Mars Halamardus, indicating that the process of religious syncretism was already well underway and soldiers were involved from the very beginning. The integration of Mars into local religious traditions made him a sort of *genius loci*, and therefore soldiers were happy to take part in both aspects of his cult—the official state aspects as well as new, local guises.

CONCLUSIONS: PROVINCIAL CULTS OF MARS IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE

The ample evidence for worship of Mars in the Roman Empire demonstrates that Mars was a popular god with wide applicability across many provincial cultures. Augustan propaganda emphasized Mars as a deity with close links to the protection of the imperial family, the Roman military, and the Roman people. This Roman state religion was transmitted through the monuments and traditions of the city of Rome, coinage, and the Roman military. The particular adherence of the Roman military to official state religion helped ensure some commonality in worship of Mars across the empire, but interactions between the military and local societies helped nuance and differentiate regional traditions. He was particularly popular in the Celtic West, where his assimilation resulted in a multiplicity of local cult-followings of Mars, each with their own particular traditions and rituals. In this region, his assimilation resulted in a multiplicity of local cult-followings of Mars, each with its own particular traditions and rituals. It is also clear from epigraphic evidence across the empire that worship of Mars was closely related to the imperial cult and the desire to bring wellbeing to the imperial household.

The *Feriale Duranum* supplies our best evidence for official ceremonies and festivals of Mars during the High Empire. Beyond this point in history, Mars figured prominently in the propaganda of Maximian and was still incorporated into Tetrarchic iconography on the Arch of Galerius,²⁸ and we hear from Ammianus Marcellinus (24.6.17) that Julian sacrificed to Mars in 363 CE before the Battle of Ctesiphon. The closing of temples in Rome under Theodosius signaled the end of a long history of worship of Mars in Italy, but worship continued at some provincial sites beyond this point—both the temples at Lydney Hill in Britain and Martberg bei Pommern in Germany show evidence of continued usage to the late Roman period.²⁹ In all, Mars had a long history of prominence in Roman religion and owed a large part of his popularity to the diversity of interpretation available in his role of protector. This role had its roots in the mythical creation of Rome by Romulus, was re-emphasized by Augustus, and was spread by the Roman army, but the widespread adoption of and patronage to Mars can be best explained by the many diverse ways in which his role could be interpreted and fitted into individual beliefs.



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- 2 Dumézil, *La religion romaine archaïque*, 153.
- 3 Ibid., 205–45; Scholz, *Marskult und Marsmythos*, 63–77; Vincent J. Rosivach, “Mars, the Lustral God,” *Latomus* 42, no. 3 (1983): 509–14.
- 4 *CIL* 6, 2104a.
- 5 Scholz, *Marskult und Marsmythos*, 18.
- 6 Rosivach, “Mars, the Lustral God.”
- 7 Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, trans. Alan Shapiro (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 195.
- 8 Ibid., fig. 151.
- 9 *CIL* 3 suppl., 12467; Croon, “Die Ideologie des Marskultes,” 73; Robert O. Fink, Allen S. Hoey, and Walter F. Snyder, “The *Feriale Duranum*,” *Yale Classical Studies* 7 (1940): 120.
- 10 Fink, Hoey, and Snyder, “*Feriale Duranum*.” M. Barbara Reeves, “The *Feriale Duranum*, Roman Military Religion, and Dura-Europos: A Reassessment” (PhD diss., SUNY Buffalo, 2004).
- 11 Oliver Stoll, “The Religions of the Armies,” in *A Companion to the Roman Army*, ed. Paul Erdkamp (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 451–76; Ian P. Haynes, “The Romanisation of Religion in the *Auxilia* of the Roman Imperial Army from Augustus to Septimius Severus,” *Britannia* 24 (1993): 141–57.
- 12 Alan Rushworth, *Housesteads Roman Fort: The Grandest Station* (Swindon: English Heritage, 2009), 233.
- 13 R. Finke, “Neue Inschriften,” *Berichte der römische-germanische Kommission* 17 (1927): no. 200.
- 14 Victorine von Gonzenbach, “Ein Heiligtum im Legionslager Vindonissa,” *Veröffentlichungen der Gesellschaft Pro Vindonissa* 10 (1976): 302–19; Andrew Lawrence, “Neue Forschungen zum sog: Marsheiligtum im Zentrum des Legionslagers Vindonissa; Der Beitrag der Grabungen von 1972,” *Jahresbericht Gesellschaft Pro Vindonissa* (2009): 1–25.
- 15 Véronique Brouquier-Reddé, *Temples et Cultes de Tripolitaine* (Paris: CNRS, 1992): 289; René Rebuffat, “Divinités de l’oued Kebir (Tripolitaine),” *L’Africa Romana* 7, no. 1 (1990): 140.
- 16 *CIL* 13, 8019; *CIL* 03, 11889; *CIL* 03, 14370.
- 17 Emile Masqueray, “Ruines Anciennes de Khenchela (Mascula) a Besseriani (Ad Majores),” *Revue Africaine* 22 (1878): 453.
- 18 *Deo marti / genioque san/cto scolae b(ene)f(iciariorum) / paconius cas /tus b(ene)f(iciarius) cons(ularis) / leg(ionis) iii aug(ustae) cum / suis exacta sta(tione) / v(otum) s(olvit)*. *CIL* 8, 10717.
- 19 *[l(ovi)] o(ptimo) m(aximo) / [m]arti vic/[tori] diis i[u]/vantibus [ge]nioque sta/tionis vaza/nitanae / [3] saturni/nus [b(ene)f(iciarius)] leg(ionis) iii / au[g(ustae) ex]pleta / [s]tatione pr[o]/motus ad [(centurionatum?)] / leg(ionis) ii italicae / v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) a(nimo)*. *CIL* 8, 10718.
- 20 Von Gonzenbach, “Heiligtum,” 307–10; Lawrence, “Neue Forschungen,” 8–13.

- 21 *CIL* 16, 81.
- 22 Ton Derks and Nico Roymans, eds., *De Tempel van Empel: Een Hercules-heiligdom in het woongebied van de Bataven* (The Hague: Stichting Brabantse Regionale Geschiedbeoefening, 1994); Johan Nicolay, *The Armed Batavians: Use and Significance of Weaponry and Horse Gear from Non-Military Contexts in the Rhine Delta (50 BC to AD 450)* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007).
- 23 Tyler V. Franconi, “Mars across the Channel: Contextualizing Cult in the Roman Northwest” in *Religion in the Roman Empire: The Dynamics of Individualisation*, ed. Ralph Häussler et al. (Oxford: Oxbow Books, forthcoming).
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- 26 Greg Woolf, *Becoming Roman: The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
- 27 Horn, Germania Inferior: *CIL* 13, 8707; Strasbourg, Germania Superior: *CIL* 13, 11605.
- 28 Margaret S. Pond Rothman, “The Thematic Organization of the Panel Reliefs on the Arch of Galerius,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 81, no. 4 (1977): 427–54; Olivier Hekster, “The City of Rome in Late Imperial Ideology: The Tetrarchs, Maxentius, and Constantine,” *Mediterraneo Antico* 2 (1999): 717–48.
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THE FATE OF SERAPIS: A PARADIGM FOR TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE CULTURE AND ART OF LATE ROMAN EGYPT

Ann M. Nicgorski

Egyptian interactions with the Greco-Roman world began as early as the third quarter of the seventh century BCE when the pharaoh Psammetichus I opened the land to Greek mercenaries, traders, and colonists (Hdt. 2.152–54).¹ Yet it was not until after the conquest of Egypt by Alexander the Great in 332 BCE that Egypt was transformed into a much more cosmopolitan and integral part of the Mediterranean world. After his death, Ptolemy I Soter, one of Alexander's generals, succeeded to power in Egypt (r. 323–283 BCE). He established Greek as the official language and moved the capital to the newly founded city of Alexandria. Although the rulers of the Ptolemaic dynasty generally supported traditional Egyptian culture and religion, they also opened the land to broader Hellenistic influences. In 30 BCE, Egypt officially became part of the Roman Empire, when Octavian defeated Mark Antony and Cleopatra VII at the Battle of Actium. Greek language, culture, and art, however, continued to have a strong impact in Roman Egypt, and especially on the development of early Christianity in the late Roman to early Byzantine era. A fascinating path into these complex cultural dynamics is offered by the tale of the rise and fall of the cult of the syncretistic god Serapis in Alexandria, who came to be regarded as a bringer of the annual Nile flood and as a supplier of fertility and prosperity to the land. In particular, the creation and transformation of the image of the god himself, during the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, reflects the traditions of both ancient Egyptian and Greco-Roman art. Such hybrid and polysemous imagery, often referencing the key theme of abundance, also became a characteristic expression of the heterogeneous culture of late Roman Egypt, as clearly reflected in the sculpted reliefs and textiles dating from the fourth to the sixth century CE that are included in this exhibition.

The precise origin of the god Serapis remains uncertain, but his name clearly derives from Apis, the sacred bull-god of Memphis, and Osiris, the Egyptian god of the underworld.² As the hypostasis Oserapis or Osiris-Apis, this Eryp-



10.1. Apis bull, from the Serapeum, Memphis, 30th dynasty/378–341 BCE, limestone. Louvre, Paris, N 390.



10.2. Statuette of Serapis, Ostia, 1st–2nd century CE, marble. Museo Ostiense, 1125.

tian bull-deity may well have been encountered by Alexander in the vicinity of Alexandria and worshipped as Serapis (fig. 10.1).³ More certain is that Ptolemy I became a major proponent of the cult of Serapis, perhaps to help unify the native Egyptian and Greek populations.⁴ He was responsible for devising a new Hellenized image of Serapis in fully human form, that of a bearded male in the prime of his life, a hybrid image with rich syncretistic associations particularly with Zeus, Asklepios, Helios, and Hades. In Alexandria's Serapeum, built during the time of Ptolemy III (r. 246–222 BCE), there was a cult statue of Serapis attributed to a sculptor named Bryaxis (by Clement of Alexandria, *Protr.* 4.48.1–3). Generally Zeus-like in appearance, Serapis was probably seated, wearing a Greek *chiton* and *himation* and holding a scepter, with the three-headed Cerberus at his side, similar to an example found at Ostia (fig. 10.2). Additionally, in the Roman period, Serapis often had a bifurcate beard and five distinct locks falling onto his forehead.⁵ Another typical aspect of his iconography is the conical container, usually identified as a *kalathos* or *modius* (grain measure) that crowns his head, as seen in the remarkable painted icon of Serapis from Roman Egypt (fig. 10.3).⁶

Serapis became the chief god of Alexandria in the Hellenistic period, a supreme deity (like Zeus), a powerful god of healing (like Asklepios), and a god associated with the fertility of the earth (like Helios), as well as the boundary between life and death (like Hades).⁷ He was a new consort of the powerful Egyptian mother goddess Isis, and the father of her son, Harpocrates (previously Horus, son of Osiris). As such, he was a god of abundance and renewed life, who also came to be worshipped as a bringer of the annual Nile flood, which made the land prosper. One of the god's most famous attributes was the ceremonial Nile Cubit, a portable nilometer, which was housed in his temple (the Serapeum) in Alexandria. The cult of Serapis, together with Isis and Harpocrates, was extremely popular in Roman times and it spread throughout the empire, where Serapis was regarded also as an oracular god and a protector of travelers by sea, perhaps because of his association with the great port of Alexandria.⁸ It is probably because of this strong connection with the Hellenistic city of Alexandria that Serapis never achieved the same degree of popularity with the native Egyptians, who continued their devotions to the ancient god Osiris, the true consort of Isis.⁹

Beginning in the Flavian period (69–96 CE), the god Serapis was closely associated with the Roman imperial cult, as he had been earlier in the development of the Ptolemaic ruler cult. As a guarantor of power, he was one of the few deities who might appear together with the image of the ruling emperor on widely distributed imperial coinage (fig. 10.4).¹⁰ Therefore, when the first Christian emperor, Constantine the Great, ordered the transfer of the Nile Cubit from the Serapeum to an unnamed Christian church in Alexandria (c. 325 CE), he sent a powerful message severing the ancient ties with the god. The local popula-



10.3. Triptych panel with Serapis, Romano-Egyptian, c. 100 CE, tempera on wood panel. J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, 74.AP.2.

tion feared that disaster would ensue and that the Nile waters would not rise, but the inundation did in fact arrive and continued to take place regularly thereafter (Socrates, *Hist. Eccl.* 1.18).¹¹ As Christianity became more established in Egypt and in Alexandria, tensions rose and ultimately violence erupted between the worshippers of Serapis and the followers of the new Christian religion. In 391 CE pagans occupied the Serapeum in Alexandria, using it as a stronghold to launch violent attacks against Christians; they were incited to this

action by reports that Theophilus, Patriarch of Alexandria (353–412 CE), had desecrated cultic objects in a pagan temple. In this same year, Emperor Theodosius I issued a decree prohibiting sacrifices and visits to the pagan temples in Rome and Alexandria. Consequently the Serapeum and its cult statue were destroyed.¹² However, according to Sozomen's church history written around 440 CE (*Hist. Eccl.* 7.15):

It is said that when the temple was being demolished, some stones were found, on which were hieroglyphic characters in the form of a cross [i.e., *ankh* signs], which on being submitted to the inspection of the learned, were interpreted as signifying the life to come. These characters led to the conversion of several of the pagans. [...] It was thus that the Serapion was taken, and, a little while after, converted into a church; it received the name of the Emperor Arcadius.¹³

This episode is a wonderful example of a type of semantic progression that is typical in the heterogeneous religious and cultural context of late Roman Egypt. The *ankh*, the ancient Egyptian sign of life, inscribed on architectural elements from the Serapeum, was now recognized as a fluid, multivalent symbol of “the life to come,” understood and accepted by diverse, and even opposing, cultural groups. The traditional *ankh* was then transformed into the new *crux ansata*, a looped cross with a more circular (rather than tear-shaped) head, which became a potent symbol of the early Christian Church in Egypt that represented Christ's sacrifice and the promise of salvation while still testifying to the continuity of ancient Egyptian tradition.¹⁴ The *crux ansata* appears as a central motif in many works of early Christian art from Egypt, such as a fourth-century CE tapestry roundel included in the exhibition (plate 151).

This transformation and continuity of tradition from the Hellenistic to the late Roman and early Christian period is also apparent in one of the earliest known icons of Christ from Sinai, dating to the first half of the sixth century CE (fig. 10.5), an image that clearly derives its authority from its evocation of the “Zeus/Jupiter facial type,” which was shared by the Greco-Roman Serapis (fig. 10.3).¹⁵ The god Serapis (as Osiris-Apis) had originated in the form of an Egyptian bull-deity and was re-imaged in the early Hellenistic period with an idealized human form, evoking the visage of the most powerful male gods of the Greek pantheon as a way to confer authority first on the Ptolemaic rulers who promoted his cult, and then on the Roman emperors who followed. The face of Serapis, in particular, was a very ancient and potent image, whose transformation into the authoritative, yet beneficent face of Christ is another characteristic example of a semantic progression within the cosmopolitan context of late Roman Egypt. The polysemous nature of this shared facial type is perhaps what led a late fourth-century author from Alexandria to assert satirically that



10.4. Billon tetradrachm of Vespasian with bust of Serapis, minted in Alexandria, 70/71 CE. Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Dr. Sidney Peerless, 2001.87.3627.

“those who worship Serapis are, in fact, Christians, and those who call themselves bishops of Christ are, in fact, devotees of Serapis.”¹⁶

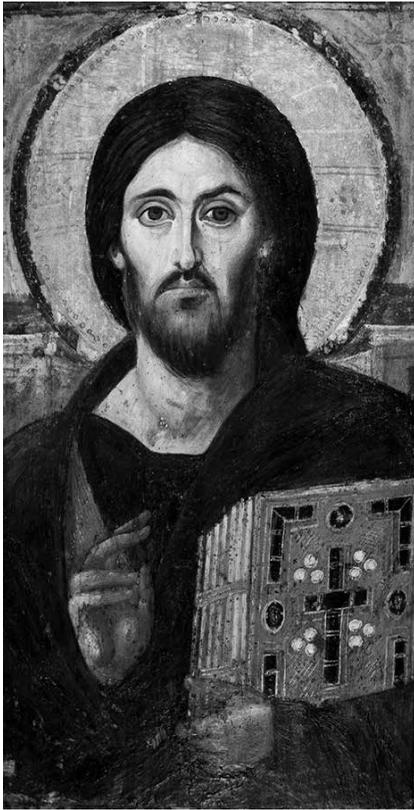
Associations with the god Serapis, his image, and particularly his face, were also an important manifestation of Roman imperial ideology in Egypt and throughout the empire. In ancient Egypt, the pharaoh was a god, i.e., the living Horus, who was identified with Osiris after death. Thus, when Alexander the Great conquered Egypt, he too was acknowledged as a divinity, as were his successors. Indeed, after Ptolemy II Philadelphus (r. 285–246 BCE) and his sister-wife Arsinoe II instituted a cult for themselves, it became the custom to regard the living Ptolemaic rulers, and then the Roman emperors, as gods.¹⁷ Only a few of these divinely regarded Roman emperors actually made visits to Egypt. The reasons for these visits were usually political or military, but often included religious or cultural expeditions. The most significant examples are Vespasian’s trip in 69 CE, Hadrian’s visit with Antinous in 130 CE, and Septimius Severus’s yearlong stay in 199–200 CE. Vespasian was in Judea in 69 CE when the prefect of Egypt, Tiberius Julius Alexander, proclaimed him emperor. Vespasian then went to Alexandria, where he made a famous visit to the Serapeum after the god himself had sent a blind man and a man with a withered hand to the new emperor in order to be cured (Tac., *Hist.* 4.81–84; Suet., *Vesp.* 10.7). Vespasian’s command of the god’s healing power, as witnessed by his successful execution of these miracles, was seen as a confirmation of his own power and divinity. These events coincided with a felicitous rising of the Nile, which also helped to legitimize his personal *auctoritas* and right to rule as the one favored by and intimately associated with Serapis, particularly among Roman soldiers and sailors across the empire.¹⁸

By the time of Septimius Severus’s yearlong sojourn in Egypt, the cult of Serapis was widely practiced in Roman society, from slaves and freedman to the emperors themselves.

Temples, objects with cultic images of Serapis, and inscriptions and literary texts from throughout the empire also attest to the cult’s broad geographic diffusion, which was partly due to the popularity of Serapis (and other Egyptian deities) among the sailors of the Roman military and merchant fleets.¹⁹ It is not surprising, therefore, that Septimius Severus, a soldier emperor from North Africa, was an enthusiastic devotee of the god (S.H.A., *Sev.* 17.3–4). Indeed, his veneration for Serapis was so great that he modeled his own image after that of the god, cultivating in his official portraiture the god’s typical bifurcate beard and curled forehead locks.²⁰ These features can be seen in the painted portrait of Septimius Severus and his family from the Fayum (fig. 5.1), where they function as intentional signifiers of his close association with Serapis, his personal heritage, *auctoritas*, *maiestas*, and right to rule, as well as his own divine status and that of his dynastic heirs. The hybrid iconography and semantic range of this remarkable imperial portrait reflects the complex, heterogeneous identities and cultures of the Roman world at the beginning of the third century CE.

IDENTITY AND ICONOGRAPHY IN LATE ROMAN EGYPT

The example of the syncretistic god Serapis and the multiple transformations and impacts of his hybrid image is instructive as we now turn to consider the similarly hybrid and pol-



10.5. The Blessing Christ, icon from the Holy Monastery of St. Catherine, Sinai, 500–550 CE, encaustic on wood panel.

ysemic iconography of the sculpted reliefs and textiles that are included in this exhibition. Although we do not know the precise context of most of these fragmentary objects, it is clear from their functions that they represent the civic and domestic realms and therefore better reflect the texture of daily life. The textiles, in particular, are mostly from garments that were worn in the home, in the communal space of the town or city, and ultimately in the grave. The intimate association of these textiles with specific individuals renders them unique and fascinating expressions of personal identities as negotiated within the very diverse and heterogeneous context of late Roman to early Byzantine Egypt. The most popular motifs of these textiles, which reference the themes of fertility and abundance, seem to intentionally focus on harmonious intersections among the various group identities, rather than potentially divisive imagery that might incite conflict and iconoclasm. In considering the significance of these diverse motifs, it will be important to keep in mind the words of Evelyn B. Harrison, that “iconography is not a code, where one symbol has one meaning, but a language, where the meaning of each word is affected by the context in which it appears, where meanings change as words do with time, and where the intensity of meaning may vary from sharply emphatic to vague and colorless.”²¹

THE HYBRID STYLES AND ICONOGRAPHY OF LATE ROMAN ART FROM EGYPT

The art of late Roman or late antique to early Byzantine Egypt (c. 250 CE–700 CE) is often referred to as “Coptic,” a term that has been used in the past to specifically denote the art of Egyptian Christians.²² However, in the most recent scholarship, the term “Coptic” is avoided because most of the artworks, and especially the textiles, cannot be clearly associated with a specific ethnic or religious group.²³ The style of this late Egyptian art, in its earliest forms, is increasingly conceptual and graphic, an organic part of general stylistic trends seen in many other regions of the late Roman and early Byzantine Mediterranean.²⁴ But there is also a distinctive quality in its lucid simplification of form that conveys a vitality unique to the visual arts of late antique Egypt. For example, this characteristic and spirited style is readily apparent in a fragmentary textile band that features dancing figures with expressive gestures in awkward combinations of frontal and profile views (plate 140). These charming figures are surrounded by plant and animal forms that are similarly stylized, yet they all still convey a very lively sense of movement and a strong engagement with the viewer, which is further enhanced by the vibrant colors.

Late Egyptian art is also remarkable for the way in which disparate cultural forms and iconography are blended and transformed into a richly varied, yet coherent style by assembling motifs and symbols which, like the ancient face of Jupiter/Serapis/Christ, can be read in diverse ways, and with varying intensities of meaning, by different viewers. These include the Egyptian, Greek, and Roman, as well as the Persian, Syrian, Armenian, and Byzantine styles and subjects that were introduced during this time as a result of trade (especially in textiles) along the Silk Road that passed through Sasanian Persia and into Egypt. Popular motifs include those that are clearly Greco-Roman in origin such as generic female busts (e.g., Tyche as seen on a textile roundel, plate 2), personifications, warriors, and riders, as well as other mythological subjects like centaurs and sea creatures, Nereids, and specific figures like Leda, Hercules, Venus, or Bacchus and his retinue of dancing maenads. These particular motifs seem to be chosen for a variety of reasons, but most often because of their association with themes popular in many of these cultures—fertility and prosperity. In some instances, however, these pagan subjects could also be assimilated to an explicitly Christian theme, as in the case of the Bacchic grapevine that came to reference the wine of the Eucharist. Yet other popular motifs are clearly Christian, as can be determined by specific evidence, such as an inscription, or by contextual analysis. These motifs include various crosses, but especially the *crux ansata*, scenes from biblical stories, angels, and both

standing and equestrian saints, who may be identified by characteristic sets of attributes. Animal motifs also abound, including lions and leopards, stags and hares, fish and dolphins, as well as various birds. In some contexts, these motifs served as specific symbols, such as the fish that represents Christ the Savior. Generally, however, these animal motifs function as part of a hybrid ensemble with allegorical connotations of abundance, wealth, and happiness.²⁵ Such ensembles also included vegetal motifs with similar connotations of the good and prosperous life, including acanthus, vines, fruits, flowers, and various trees. Ornamental motifs, such as variations of the Greek key and interlace patterns, waves, and stars, were also part of this artistic language. Such motifs were often retained from the repertoire of ancient Egyptian, Greek, and Roman art because they were believed to have the power to prevent evil or to bring good luck.

LATE ROMAN RELIEF SCULPTURES FROM EGYPT

One of the primary mediums of late Egyptian art is relief sculpture, particularly funerary stelae and elaborately carved architectural elements from tombs, houses, monasteries, churches, and other public buildings. Unfortunately much of this late Egyptian relief sculpture, found in museum collections throughout the world, is lacking archaeological information about its precise architectural context, which makes interpretation difficult. Also problematic is the fragmentary state and poor condition of many pieces. Limestone reliefs like those included in this exhibition originally featured the use of polychromy, and sometimes inlay of colored glass or stone, which was integral to their style. Thus, the original visual impact of these sculptures would have been more closely related to that of the contemporary textiles that are also part of the exhibition. The carved reliefs would have been covered with a thin layer of plaster as a sizing ground for the paint. The underlying relief sculpture would have been transformed by this paint, which would have articulated the modeling of forms, while providing more detail and adding dimension to the illusion of space.²⁶ Two distinct styles of late Egyptian sculpture are nevertheless identifiable. Early scholars thought of these styles as consecutive: an earlier “soft” style characterized by soft, plump forms, large heads with wide eyes, stylized hair, and vivacious movements, and a [later] “hard” style, more stylized, disproportionate, and stiffer, with crisp contours and deep shadows.²⁷ More recent studies, however, have shown that these styles evolved simultaneously.²⁸

An example with aspects of both characteristic styles of late Egyptian sculpture is the architectural relief fragment featuring a dove in a tangled grapevine (plate 149).²⁹ The plump dove with its large eye as well as the rounded grapes are related to the so-called “soft” style, while the surrounding curved band of interlaced vine motif is a bit more stylized, with sharper edges that are deeply undercut. The image is a popular type, related to the Bacchic iconography of the grape harvest, which finds its origin in Greco-Roman art. In the heterogeneous cultural context of late antique Egypt, such oft-repeated imagery might be read as simply decorative but could also evoke the general themes of abundance and prosperity associated with the fertility of the land, watered by the Nile River. In either case, this imagery would be appropriate in either a non-Christian or a Christian setting. In the latter, such imagery might further suggest the lush setting of Paradise or, more specifically, it might reference the dove of the Holy Spirit and the grapes for the wine of the Eucharist, representing the sacrificial blood of Christ.³⁰ Indeed, this relief is another wonderful example of how the iconographic motifs of late Egyptian art are frequently polysemous, generally focusing on the harmonious intersections among the various group identities, while exhibiting a semantic progression from the precisely symbolic via the generically meaningful to the simply decorative.

Two other architectural relief fragments feature similar iconography consisting of vegetal friezes inhabited by animals. Both depict wild animals in hunting scenes, a theme that cer-

tainly connotes the pleasures of the good life (plates 138–39).³¹ Another architectural relief fragment depicts a band of acanthus, which seems more purely ornamental, although the elegant interlaced chain of the leaves may also have had an apotropaic function (plate 145).³²

LATE ROMAN TEXTILES FROM EGYPT

The exceptionally dry conditions in Egypt have made possible the survival of many textiles, large numbers of which were haphazardly excavated in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century in cemeteries at Saqqara, Akhmim, Antinopolis, and Hawara. As these textiles were widely dispersed into museums and private collections around the world, much information was lost about their precise archaeological contexts owing to a lack of proper documentation. Dating of these textiles is therefore particularly challenging and it is usually accomplished by identifying close stylistic affinities and iconographic parallels with other textiles or works of art with more fixed dates. Scholarly consensus, however, is difficult to achieve in this regard.³³

Nevertheless, the earliest surviving textiles seem to date from the third century CE, when the custom began of burying the dead in their used clothing (e.g., tunics and mantles), wrapped in other furnishing textiles (e.g., curtains and wall hangings).³⁴ The most common textile material was linen, usually left undyed, but sometimes bleached. Wool was also used, as well as cotton (rarely) and silk, a status symbol in the early Byzantine period. Many weaving techniques were used in late antique Egypt, but the most common was plain cloth (tabby) with decorative tapestry weaving, made on a two-beam upright loom. Decorative tapestry weaving was a highly manual process, involving “covering the [linen or wool] warp with weft yarns [of dyed wool], color by color, motif by motif, as required by the design.”³⁵ Most late antique Egyptian textiles feature monochrome patterns in a dark purplish color on a light ground. This purple dye was typically made from a combination of blue and red (from indigo and madder) in imitation of the true murex purple (extracted from certain Mediterranean sea snails) that was reserved for the emperor and senior officials.³⁶ Its popularity was perhaps due to these imperial associations and the belief that it brought good luck (plate 133). Textiles with bright blue, yellow, red, and green also appear by the fourth century CE (plate 140), in part due to Persian influence, although these colors are also used in contemporary mosaics.³⁷

Most of the textiles in this exhibition are tunics or fragments from tunics, the principal Roman-style garment worn by nearly everyone in the eastern Mediterranean in the late antique period. Tunics were woven essentially in one piece, with the work starting at the sleeve end. The lengths, widths, sleeve styles, and adornments of tunics varied according to the fashions of the time and the gender and status of the wearer. The tunics also display a discrete set of ornaments including vertical bands running from the shoulders toward the hemline (*clavi*), pairs of round or square panels on the shoulders and on the front and back of the skirt (*orbiculi* or *tabulae*), as well as other bands at the neck, sleeve, and hem.³⁸ These tapestry-woven bands and panels feature a variety of images and patterns that are similar to those found in the contemporary architectural sculpture. Unfortunately, it was formerly the practice for excavators (or looters) to cut out these decorated parts from the tunics or from other textiles for easier display in private collections or museums (or for sale on the art market).³⁹

The textiles included in this exhibition demonstrate the rich variety of motifs that were common in late antique art, not only in Egypt, but also throughout the late Roman to early Byzantine world. These motifs include geometric patterns and symbols, as well as vegetal and figural designs. The most common geometric motif is the interlace, an elaborate pattern associated with the popular Hercules and Solomon knots, which were thought to provide protection and bring prosperity. A particularly interesting textile fragment features an eye-shaped ornament filled with this interlace design, an inventive combination of motifs that is

probably related to contemporary eye-shaped amulets intended to thwart the evil eye (plate 150).⁴⁰ Patterns with circles, squares, waves, and crosses are also common (plate 109).⁴¹ In addition, pairs of crosses are often overlaid or interlaced to form an eight-pointed star, which—like other apotropaic octagonal designs—may have been associated with fertility and healthy childbirth. An example of this propitious eight-pointed star motif can be seen on a textile fragment where it frames a central *crux ansata* (the distinctly Egyptian symbol of Christianity) and is surrounded by interlaced vines (plate 151).⁴² This additive ensemble of motifs drawn from different cultural backgrounds, each with its own semantic range, is blended together here in a way that expresses the harmonious intersections among the various group identities in late Roman Egypt, all centered around the shared theme of a good life, free from harm, blessed with fertility and prosperity, in addition to the promise of a renewal of life after death. This particular ensemble of motifs is also an especially good example of how iconography functions more like a language than a code, where the meaning of each motif is altered by the context in which it appears, where meanings are transformed over time, and where the intensity of meanings associated with specific motifs may vary considerably depending on the audience.⁴³

As we have already seen, grapevines are an especially popular and significant vegetal motif, associated with Bacchus and later, in Christianity, with the Eucharistic wine and the promise of everlasting life. Other common vegetal motifs include acanthus, trees and foliage, as well as various fruits and flowers. These are often presented in baskets, urns, scrolls, garlands, or chains with stylized clasps, all of which convey the theme of abundance. A wonderful example of this particular genre of characteristically hybrid vegetal iconography is a textile band (plate 152) that features a stylized acanthus scroll inhabited by hares, birds, and also pomegranates, a fruit with a multitude of blood-red seeds, which was a very old and widespread symbol of fertility and rebirth throughout the ancient world.⁴⁴ These disparate motifs, originally common in different cultural contexts, are brought together in this inventive ensemble with general connotations of fertility and prosperity. The especially resonant motif of the pomegranate, however, has a rich semantic range. For example, it might also call to mind the Greco-Roman story of Persephone (Proserpina) who returned every spring from the Underworld to regenerate the earth, while it could be read in a Christian context as a specific symbol of the Resurrection.

Birds are also very frequently represented in late antique textiles from Egypt, often inhabiting the vegetal patterns, but also as independent motifs. These include: eagles; doves, partridges, and other songbirds; ducks and other waterfowl; peacocks, quail, and roosters (plate 146). An excellent example in this exhibition is a square tapestry panel from a tunic that features four eagles and eight ducks surrounding a central image that is now mostly missing (plate 131). The eagle with spread pinions was a multivalent and widespread motif in the Roman world, popular also on amulets and coins. Eagles (and particularly eagle claws) were thought to have protective qualities, as they were closely associated with the omnipotent Roman god Jupiter. The eagle (*aquila*) was also the symbol of the Roman army and crowning element of the legionary standards. As such, the eagle's semantic range extended to association with imperial triumph and apotheosis, which largely explains its continued use in later Byzantine royal iconography. Eagles were also a common motif on late Egyptian grave stelae, where their original signification appears to have been apotropaic, as evidenced by the amulets that frequently appear encircling their necks. Such mortuary eagles may also convey a hope for Christian resurrection when they appear, with crosses in their beaks, as part of an ensemble of Christian motifs typically including, for example, the Greek letters alpha and omega.⁴⁵ Ducks too were a particularly significant and common motif of abundance, because they represented an important source of food in the scarce winter months.⁴⁶ Other game animals like desert hares were popular textile motifs for this reason as well (plates 153–54).⁴⁷ In ancient Egypt, hare amulets were commonly worn to assure fecundity or renewal,

so it is possible that the similar hares frequently depicted on late Egyptian clothing were also thought to function like charms for assuring fertility and prosperity.

Many other land animals served as textile motifs including predatory felines, especially lions (plates 40, 140, 183).⁴⁸ Lions were certainly a powerful polysemic motif with many possible associations, including the life-giving water that flowed from lion-headed spouts throughout the Roman world, as well as the protection afforded by pairs of guardian lions at city gates, or by the invulnerable hide of the Nemean Lion worn by the popular hero Hercules. The lion also became the symbol of St. Mark the Evangelist, who was believed to have brought Christianity to Egypt in the first century CE.⁴⁹ In the context of the hunt, however, the lion represented a test of courage, skill, and sheer strength, conveying heroism and royalty, as well as wealth and status. This is probably the reason why the very popular Greco-Roman subject of Hercules defeating the Nemean Lion continued to be represented in late antique art well into the Christian era. A remarkable example of this subject is a square tapestry panel from a tunic that also features two male and two female lions in the four corners, perhaps alluding to the idea of fertility that was also associated with Hercules, who was said to have fathered over 70 children (plate 40).⁵⁰

Other mythological figures and subjects also continue to be popular in this period, especially deities like Bacchus and Eros, as well as Nereids (plates 132 and 135) and centaurs.⁵¹ In the context of late Egyptian textile art, both the Nereids and the centaurs generally represent the untamed quality of the natural world. They are absorbed into the most popular imagery associated with the revels of Bacchus and his followers, where they are frequently surrounded by grapevines, often dancing in celebration of the good life, and sometimes in the company of erotes or nude boys, dolphins, hares, or birds—all part of the typically hybrid and polysemous imagery of fecundity and abundance (plate 142).⁵²

CONCLUSION

In the late antique Roman world, imagery of the good life was particularly associated with Egypt and with the Nile River, as the age-old and ongoing source of fertility and wealth, as is expressed, for example, by the mosaic floor from the Church of Saints Peter and Paul at Gerasa, c. 540 CE, which features images of the Egyptian cities of Alexandria and Memphis surrounded by date palms, the lush flora of the Nile, and an urn with flowing grapevines (plate 3). Throughout the earlier Hellenistic and Roman periods, it was the syncretic Egyptian god Serapis who had been most associated with assuring the life-giving Nile flood. He was the guarantor of the consequent fertility, wealth, and power that derived from Egypt. However, in the increasingly diverse late antique period, the once effective hybrid image of Serapis, evoking the potent facial type of Jupiter, increasingly invited dissension and even iconoclasm. Consequently, after the destruction in 392 CE of the Serapeum in Alexandria and its famous cult image, the god's popularity faded, and his powerful face was absorbed into the early iconic image of Christ. More importantly, as can be observed in the range of objects included in this exhibition, the popular hybrid imagery of abundance and prosperity continued to flourish, but within new and inventive ensembles that stressed the harmonious intersections among the diverse cultural groups of the heterogeneous late Roman to early Byzantine world. This complex world of overlapping identities included: men and women; pagans, Christians, and Jews; Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans; as well as many others, in Egypt and beyond, all of whom hoped to enjoy a good life, to escape evil and capricious fate, to be blessed with fecundity and wealth, and to experience a renewal of life and its abundant gifts after death.



- 1 John Boardman, *The Greeks Overseas: Their Early Colonies and Trade*, rev. ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980), 114–15.
- 2 Serapis may also be spelled Sarapis. John E. Stambaugh, *Sarapis under the Early Ptolemies* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 5.
- 3 Ladislav Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis bei den Griechen und Römern: Epigraphische Studien zur Verbreitung und zu den Trägern des ägyptischen Kultes* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1970), 23–24; Robert S. Bianchi, ed., *Cleopatra's Egypt: Age of the Ptolemies*, exh. cat. (New York: Brooklyn Museum, 1988), 210.
- 4 Stambaugh, *Sarapis under the Early Ptolemies*, 6–13; Naphtali Lewis, *Greeks in Ptolemaic Egypt* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986), 69–70; Brunilde Sismondo Ridgway, *Hellenistic Sculpture I: The Styles of ca. 331–200 BC* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 97; Gisèle Clerc and Jean Leclant, “Sarapis,” in *Lexikon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae (LIMC)* 7 (Zurich: Artemis, 1994), 666.
- 5 The major studies of the iconography of Serapis are Wilhelm Hornbostel, *Sarapis: Studien zur Überlieferungsgeschichte, den Erscheinungsformen und Wandlungen der Gestalt eines Gottes* (Leiden: Brill, 1973); V. Tran Tam Tinh, *Sérapis debout: Corpus des monuments de Sérapis debout et étude iconographique* (Leiden: Brill, 1983); and Clerc and Leclant, “Sarapis,” 666–92. See also Stambaugh, *Sarapis under the Early Ptolemies*, 14–26; J. J. Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 279–80; Bianchi, *Cleopatra's Egypt*, 210–11; Ridgway, *Hellenistic Sculpture*, 95–97.
- 6 David L. Thompson, “A Painted Triptych from Roman Egypt,” *J. Paul Getty Museum Journal* 6/7 (1978/79): 185–92.
- 7 Stambaugh, *Sarapis under the Early Ptolemies*, 27–59 and 75–87; Hugh Bowden, *Mystery Cults of the Ancient World* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2010), 161.
- 8 On the popularity of Egyptian cults throughout the Roman Empire, see Robert Turcan, *The Cults of the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1996), 76–129; Mary Beard, John North, and Simon Price, *Religions of Rome*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 264–66.
- 9 Bianchi, *Cleopatra's Egypt*, 209–10.
- 10 Tinh, *Sérapis debout*, 98–99; Clerc and Leclant, “Sarapis,” 686–87, 692.
- 11 Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 2nd ser., vol. 2 (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1890), 22; L. Kákosy, “Paganism and Christianity in Egypt,” in *Claremont Coptic Encyclopedia* (1991), ed. Karen J. Torjesen and Gawdat Gabra, <http://cdl.libraries.claremont.edu/cdm/ref/collection/cce/id/1500>.
- 12 These events are carefully analyzed in a recent article by Johannes Hahn, “The Conversion of the Cult Statues: The Destruction of the Serapeum 392 AD and the Transformation of Alexandria into the ‘Christ-Loving’ City,” in *From Temple to Church: Destruction and Renewal of Local Cultic Topography in Late Antiquity*, ed. Johannes Hahn, Stephen Emmel, and Ulrich Gotter (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 335–65. See also Kákosy, “Paganism and Christianity in Egypt”; László Török, *Transfigurations of Hellenism: Aspects of Late Antique Art in Egypt, AD 250–700* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 90–91; and Livia Capponi, *Roman Egypt* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2011), 57–58.
- 13 Schaff and Wace, *Fathers of the Christian Church*, 386.
- 14 See, e.g., the account of Rufinus, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 2.23 and 2.29, in which the small Serapis busts in private houses throughout the city mysteriously disappeared and were replaced with

- painted *cruces ansatae*. Emile Maher Ishaq, “Ankh,” in *Claremont Coptic Encyclopedia*, <http://ccdlib.libraries.claremont.edu/cdm/ref/collection/cce/id/140>; Euphrosyne Doxiadis, *The Mysterious Fayum Portraits: Faces from Ancient Egypt* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995), 46; Török, *Transfigurations of Hellenism*, 17–19; Gawdat Gabra and Marianne Eaton-Krauss, *The Treasures of Coptic Art in the Coptic Museum and Churches of Old Cairo* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2006), 41.
- 15 Thomas F. Mathews, *The Clash of the Gods: A Reinterpretation of Early Christian Art*, rev. ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 183–86; Mathews, “Early Icons of the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai,” in *Holy Image, Hallowed Ground: Icons from Sinai*, ed. Robert S. Nelson and Kristen M. Collins, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2006), 38, 51–52.
 - 16 Vopiscus, *Vita Saturnini* 8.2 in *Historia Augusta*, vol. 3, trans. David Magie (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1932); David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 284.
 - 17 Doxiadis, *Mysterious Fayum Portraits*, 43–44; Heinz Heinen, “Roman Emperors in Egypt,” in *Claremont Coptic Encyclopedia*, <http://ccdlib.libraries.claremont.edu/cdm/ref/collection/cceid/1671>. Capponi, *Roman Egypt*, 28–36.
 - 18 Sarolta A. Takács, *Isis and Sarapis in the Roman World* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 94–98; Barbara Levick, *Vespasian* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 68–69.
 - 19 This evidence is collected and analyzed by Takács, *Isis and Sarapis*. See also Turcan, *Cults of the Roman Empire*, 76–129; Mladen Tomorad, “Egyptian Cults of Isis and Serapis in Roman Fleets,” in *Lacqua nell’antico Egitto: Vita, rigenerazione, incantesimo, medicamento*, ed. Alessia Amenta, Maria Michela Luiselli, and Maria Novella Sordi (Rome: L’Erma di Bretschneider, 2005), 241–53.
 - 20 Septimius Severus probably first encountered Serapis at his temple by the port in the emperor’s hometown of Lepcis Magna. Anthony R. Birley, *Septimius Severus: The African Emperor* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 35, 135, 138, 200; Heinen, “Roman Emperors in Egypt.” On the portrait type, see Anna Marguerite McCann, *The Portraits of Septimius Severus, AD 193–211* (Rome: American Academy in Rome, 1968); Takács, *Isis and Sarapis*, 114–16.
 - 21 Evelyn B. Harrison, “Greek Sculpted Coiffures and Ritual Haircuts,” in *Early Greek Cult Practice: Proceedings of the 5th International Symposium at the Swedish Institute at Athens, 26–29 June, 1986*, ed. Robin Hägg, Nanno Marinatos, and Gullög C. Nordquist (Stockholm: Åströms, 1988), 247.
 - 22 The term “Coptic” derives from the pharaonic name for the city of Memphis (the house of the Ka of Ptah) via the ancient Greek name for Egypt, *Aegyptos*, which was abbreviated in Arabic as *qibt*. This was the word used by the Arab conquerors of Egypt after 641 CE to refer to the entire non-Muslim population, which at that time was mostly Christian. Thus, the word “Copt” has come to denote Egyptian Christians, while the adjective “Coptic” may be used to describe various historical and contemporary manifestations of their culture, such as language and visual art. Lucy-Anne Hunt et al., “Coptic Art,” in *The Dictionary of Art*, vol. 7 (New York: Macmillan, 1996), 818; László Török, *After the Pharaohs: Treasures of Coptic Art from Egyptian Collections, Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest, 18 March–18 May, 2005*, exh. cat. (Budapest: Museum of Fine Arts, 2005), 11–12; Török, *Transfigurations of Hellenism*, xxvi–xxvii.
 - 23 Török, *After the Pharaohs*, 11–12; Török, *Transfigurations of Hellenism*, xxv–xxvii; Gabra and Eaton-Krauss, *Treasures of Coptic Art*, xiii.
 - 24 Earlier scholarship often described “Coptic” art as a separate phenomenon from late Roman

- art, as an essentially decadent artistic tradition, exhibiting the decline of Hellenistic style, or as a form of folk art. See for example, John Beckwith, *Coptic Sculpture, 300–1300* (London: Tiranti, 1963), 5–6, 32–33; Klaus Wessel, *Coptic Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1965), 79–83; Pierre du Bourguet, *The Art of the Copts*, trans. Caryll Hay-Shaw (New York: Crown, 1971), 20–21. More recent scholarship, however, has stressed the connections between late Egyptian art and stylistic trends elsewhere in the Roman world. Hunt et al., “Coptic Art,” 819; Török, *After the Pharaohs*, 12–17; Török, *Transfigurations of Hellenism*, 9–50.
- 25 Mina Moraitou, “Animal Motifs,” in *Byzantium and Islam: Age of Transition (7th–9th Century)*, ed. Helen C. Evans and Brandie Ratliff, exh. cat. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2012), 172.
- 26 Thelma K. Thomas, “An Introduction to the Sculpture of Late Roman and Early Byzantine Egypt,” in *Beyond the Pharaohs: Egypt and the Copts in the 2nd to 7th Centuries AD*, ed. Florence D. Friedman, exh. cat. (Providence: Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, 1989), 56–59.
- 27 Gabra and Eaton-Krauss, *Treasures of Coptic Art*, 10. See, e.g., Ernst Kitzinger, “Notes on Early Coptic Sculpture,” *Archaeologia* 87 (1938): 183–93; Beckwith, *Coptic Sculpture*, 20–21; Alexander Badawy, *Coptic Art and Archaeology: The Art of the Christian Egyptians from the Late Antique to the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1978), 142–43; Hunt et al., “Coptic Art,” 821.
- 28 Török, *Transfigurations of Hellenism*, 32.
- 29 Gerry D. Scott III, *Ancient Egyptian Art at Yale* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1986), 197, no. 150; Eunice Dauterman Maguire et al., *Art and Holy Powers in the Early Christian House*, exh. cat. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 23–24. For similar examples of reliefs with doves and other birds with fruit or in vine scrolls, from the South Church at Bawit, see Émile Gaston Chassinat, *Fouilles à Baouït*, vol. 1 (Cairo: Imprimerie de l’Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1911), plates 26–31.
- 30 Friedman, *Beyond the Pharaohs*, 259; Maguire et al., *Art and Holy Powers*, 9–13; Török, *After the Pharaohs*, 110–11, no. 54; Gabra and Eaton-Krauss, *Treasures of Coptic Art*, 146–49, no. 92.
- 31 Scott, *Ancient Egyptian Art*, 179, no. 101; 197, no. 151; Török, *After the Pharaohs*, 105, 181. For similar reliefs, see John D. Cooney, *Late Egyptian and Coptic Art: An Introduction to the Collections in the Brooklyn Museum* (New York: Brooklyn Museum, 1943), 18, plate 21; Badawy, *Coptic Art and Archaeology*, 184–85, figs. 3.127–29; Von Falck et al., *Ägypten, Schätze aus dem Wüstensand*, 88–89, no. 23; Gabra and Eaton-Krauss, *Treasures of Coptic Art*, 140–41, no. 87; 191, no. 124.
- 32 Maguire et al., *Art and Holy Powers*, 3–4. This fragment is remarkably similar to the narrow exterior frieze from the South Church of the Monastery of St. Apollo, Bawit, which is now thought to date to the seventh century CE. Chassinat, *Fouilles à Baouït*, plates 41–43, 74; Jean Clédat, *Le monastère et la nécropole de Baouït* (Cairo: Imprimerie de l’Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1999), 226, fig. 228; Badawy, *Coptic Art and Archaeology*, 118, figs. 3.2–3, and 179, fig. 3.115; Gabra and Eaton-Krauss, *Treasures of Coptic Art*, 90–91, no. 60. For similar friezes from other sites, see Badawy, *Coptic Art and Archaeology*, 169, fig. 3.99; Chrysi Kotsifou, “Sacred Spaces,” in *Coptic Art Revealed*, ed. Nadja Tomoum et al., exh. cat. (Cairo: Supreme Council of Antiquities, 2010), 111–13, fig. 70.
- 33 Nancy Arthur Hoskins, *The Coptic Tapestry Albums and the Archaeologist of Antinoé*, Albert Gayet (Seattle: Skein/University of Washington Press, 2004), 25; Kathrin Colburn, “Materials and Techniques of Late Antique and Early Islamic Textiles Found in Egypt,” in *Byzantium and*

- Islam*, 161.
- 34 Anna Gonosová, “Textiles,” in *Beyond the Pharaohs*, 65; Marie-Hélène Rutschowskaya, *Coptic Fabrics* (Paris: Biro, 1990), 14–16; Angela Völker, “Late Antique and Early Islamic Textiles,” in *Fragile Remnants: Egyptian Textiles of Late Antiquity and Early Islam*, ed. Peter Noever, exh. cat. (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2005), 9–11. For examples of this funerary practice from a secure excavated context, see Béatrice Huber, “The Funerary Beds from the Monastic Cemetery at el-Ghalida (el-Kom Ahmar/Saruna),” in *Clothing the House: Furnishing Textiles of the 1st Millennium AD from Egypt and Neighbouring Countries; Proceedings of the 5th Conference of the Research Group “Textiles from the Nile,” Antwerp, 6–7 October 2007* (Tiel: Lannoo, 2009), 56–72.
- 35 Gonosová, “Textiles,” 67. For detailed discussions of weaving techniques, see Alisa Baginsky and Amalia Tidhar, *Textiles from Egypt, 4th–13th Centuries CE* (Jerusalem: L. A. Mayer Memorial Institute for Islamic Art, 1980), 19–33; Diane Lee Carroll, *Looms and Textiles of the Copts: First Millennium Egyptian Textiles in the Carl Austin Rietz Collection of the California Academy of Sciences* (San Francisco: California Academy of Sciences, 1988), 29–44; Rutschowskaya, *Coptic Fabrics*, 24–32; Eunice Dauterman Maguire et al., *The Rich Life and the Dance: Weavings from Roman, Byzantine and Islamic Egypt*, exh. cat. (Champaign: University of Illinois, 1999), 14–17; Hoskins, *Coptic Tapestry Albums*, 26–48; Völker, “Late Antique and Early Islamic Textiles,” 15–18.
- 36 Jan Wouters, “Red and Purple Dyes in Roman and ‘Coptic’ Egypt,” in *Clothing the House*, 182–85.
- 37 Rutschowskaya, *Coptic Fabrics*, 26–29; Maguire et al., *Rich Life and the Dance*, 15; Regina Hofmann-de Keijzer, “Dyestuffs in Coptic Textiles,” in *Fragile Remnants*, 29 and 31; Török, *After the Pharaohs*, 78–79.
- 38 Ludmila Kybalová, *Coptic Textiles* (London: Hamlyn, 1967), 34–36; Baginsky and Tidhar, *Textiles from Egypt*, 10–13; Gonosová, “Textiles,” 68–69; Rutschowskaya, *Coptic Fabrics*, 48–54; Maguire et al., *Rich Life and the Dance*, 10–13; Hoskins, *Coptic Tapestry Albums*, 48–50; Völker, “Late Antique and Early Islamic Textiles,” 13–17; Cäcilia Fluck, “Dress Styles from Syria to Libya,” in *Byzantium and Islam*, 160–61.
- 39 Carroll, *Looms and Textiles of the Copts*, 3–4; Hunt et al., “Coptic Art,” 826; Völker, “Late Antique and Early Islamic Textiles,” 11. See, e.g., the “Coptic” tapestry albums of the archaeologist of Antinoé, Albert Gayet, now housed at the Henry Art Gallery at the University of Washington, which were studied and published by Nancy Arthur Hoskins in 2004.
- 40 For similar eye-shaped ornaments with interlace, see Pierre du Bourguet, *Musée national du Louvre: Catalogue des étoffes coptes, I* (Paris: Éditions des Musées Nationaux, 1964), 80, 110; Rutschowskaya, *Coptic Fabrics*, 24; Maguire et al., *Rich Life and the Dance*, 56–57, no. A13; Noever, *Fragile Remnants*, 154–55, no. 91. On interlace patterns and knot motifs, see James Trilling, *The Roman Heritage: Textiles from Egypt and the Eastern Mediterranean 300 to 600 AD*, exh. cat. (Washington, DC: The Textile Museum, 1982), 104–8; Maguire et al., *Rich Life and the Dance*, 36; Maguire et al., *Art and Holy Powers*, 3–4. For an example of an eye-shaped amulet, see Maguire et al., *Art and Holy Powers*, 217, no. 136.
- 41 The small scale of this fragment suggests that it is probably from the leg axis of a tunic. Cf. Maguire et al., *Rich Life and the Dance*, 76, no. A32. On cross motifs in domestic contexts, see Maguire et al., *Art and Holy Powers*, 18–22.
- 42 On the significance of octagonal designs and the eight-pointed star as a protective symbol, see Maguire et al., *Art and Holy Powers*, 9; Török, *After the Pharaohs*, 84. For several examples of

- eight-pointed star motifs, see Von Falck et al., *Ägypten, Schätze aus dem Wüstensand*, 335–36, nos. 384a–e.
- 43 Harrison, “Greek Sculpted Coiffures,” 247.
- 44 Friedman, *Beyond the Pharaohs*, 271, no. 185. For a similarly stylized acanthus scroll, see British Museum E21789. Badawy, *Coptic Art and Archaeology*, 293, no. 4.72. Also, Cooney, *Late Egyptian and Coptic Art*, 22, plate 44; M. Maće and K. Ljapunova, *Khudozhestvennye tkani Koptskojo Egipta* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1951), 154–56, nos. 272–75, 279–80, plate 42; Kybalová, *Coptic Textiles*, 86, no. 36; Lila Marangou, *Coptic Textiles* (Athens: Benaki Museum, 1971), 12.
- 45 Elisabetta Lucchesi-Palli, “Eagle,” in “Symbols in Coptic Art,” in *Claremont Coptic Encyclopedia*, <http://ccdl.libraries.claremont.edu/cdm/ref/collection/cce/id/1791>. See also Badawy, *Coptic Art and Archaeology*, 302; Carroll, *Looms and Textiles of the Copts*, 114–15; Von Falck et al., *Ägypten, Schätze aus dem Wüstensand*, 299–300; Noever, *Fragile Remnants*, 138; Török, *After the Pharaohs*, 161; Gabra and Eaton-Krauss, *Treasures of Coptic Art*, 183. For some examples of grave stelae with eagle motifs, see Dominique Bénazeth and Marie-Hélène Rutschowskaya, eds., *L'art copte en Égypte: 2000 ans de christianisme*, exh. cat. (Paris: Gallimard, 2000), 134–35, nos. 118, 120–21, plate 27.
- 46 Maguire et al., *Art and Holy Powers*, 10.
- 47 Friedman, *Beyond the Pharaohs*, 270, no. 184. For some close parallels, see Maće and Ljapunova, *Khudozhestvennye tkani Koptskojo Egipta*, 112–13, nos. 88–90, plate 27. See also Maguire et al., *Art and Holy Powers*, 11.
- 48 A similar tunic is in the Louvre, 5940. Rutschowskaya, *Coptic Fabrics*, 14–15.
- 49 Carroll, *Looms and Textiles of the Copts*, 100; Maguire et al., *Rich Life and the Dance*, 39.
- 50 Hercules wrestles the Nemean Lion on textile fragments in the Benaki Museum (Marangou, *Coptic Textiles*, 8) and in the Kunstmuseum in Düsseldorf, 13062 (Von Falck et al., *Ägypten, Schätze aus dem Wüstensand*, 309–10, no. 351). Hercules is also shown with the lion on a textile fragment from the Coptic Museum in Cairo, 7689 (Rutschowskaya, *Coptic Fabrics*, 96). A tapestry square in the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, 11337, represents all 12 labors of Hercules surrounding a central image of Bacchus and Ariadne. See Maće and Ljapunova, *Khudozhestvennye tkani Koptskojo Egipta*, 98–99, no. 35, plate 18; Bénazeth and Rutschowskaya, *L'art copte en Égypte*, 157, no. 149.
- 51 Scott, *Ancient Egyptian Art*, 180–81, no. 104. Nereids were popular motifs, evoking the fecundity of the Nile and of the sea. For a good discussion of this imagery, see Maguire et al., *Rich Life and the Dance*, 133–34. A close parallel for the square tapestry panels of the child's tunic (plate 135) with central Nereid, Pyrrhic dancers, and hares, may also be seen on page 153, no. C11.
- 52 See Christine Kondoleon, “The Gerasa Mosaics of Yale: Intentionality and Design,” in this volume.



DACIAN RIDERS: TRANSCULTURAL EXPRESSIONS OF RELIGIOUS IDENTITY IN ROMAN DACIA IN THE MIDST OF WAR

Álvaro Ibarra

Rome had a long and tempestuous relationship with Dacia, with conflicts noted from as early as the first century BCE. Located across the Danube in present-day Romania (see map, p. v), the heart of the kingdom of Dacia was protected by the Carpathian Mountains, a geographical feature that limits invasion routes. In addition, the exceptional leadership of two Dacian kings, Burebista and Decebalus, made expeditions into the Transylvanian Plateau a difficult endeavor for the Romans. This became apparent when the emperor Domitian failed to conquer Dacia in a war that lasted from 86 to 88 CE. Subsequently, Trajan managed to defeat the Dacians over the course of two major military campaigns, from 101–102 and 105–106. The Romans occupied Dacia from 106 until the Aurelian withdrawal of 271.

The art of the Dacian occupation has perplexed scholars due to its hybridized nature. This is especially problematic in visual analysis because the Dacians did not have a native style that relied on illusionistic or figural representation. By comparison, the Greco-Roman tradition is overwhelmingly reliant on figuration. The emergence of figural art in the aftermath of Trajan's conquest seems to imply either that a new group of people took over Dacia or that the Dacians wholeheartedly adopted Roman culture. I suggest that the art produced during the Roman occupation of Dacia is not a product of hybridity, as this usually implies the equal or democratic conflation of two cultures. Instead, I believe that the occupation art is the result of a complex process of syncretic choices made by both natives and newcomers, choices that actually often pre-date the Roman conquest. I will examine the effect of syncretism in the religious imagery of occupation-era stelae in central Dacia, iconography that is oftentimes necessarily inclusive rather than dangerously exclusive in a war-torn country.

In order to begin, there are four significant corrections in interpretation that scholars must make if we hope to better understand the material culture of Dacia during the Roman occupation: 1) There was neither a Dacian genocide nor a mass exodus in 106; 2) The Dacians continued fighting with some effectiveness from 106 to 271; 3) The monotheistic Dacian cult of Zalmoxis was an aniconic mystery religion; and 4) Followers of Zalmoxis neither persecuted non-believers nor did they discourage their expressions of faith, whether these beliefs were native or foreign.

The first corrective is to challenge the belief that all post-106 material production is Roman. Needless to say, the characteristics of these recovered archaeological remains bear little to no resemblance to art from the capital—the most centralized manifestation of

Roman art. After all, we are dealing with art from the provinces, artifacts that are made by people who are only marginally Roman. The people that settled Dacia in the aftermath of the Trajanic Dacian Wars were themselves provincial Romans. Legions with a post-war presence in Dacia came from Germania, Rhaetia, Noricum, Pannonia, and Moesia, those with individuals most likely to settle in Dacia after their tour of duty.¹ These pioneers of mixed backgrounds would further complicate their identities by settling in communities populated by fellow provincial Romans and native Dacians. In such places, individuals shared ideas about aesthetics and religion among many other things. Proof of multicultural exchange can be found in architectural remains, prevailing types of pottery, and funerary monuments left behind in occupation-era settlements.

As products of a syncretic process, funerary markers can be especially multivalent. They must function within a community that professes varied religious beliefs, both polytheistic and monotheistic. In particular, the monotheistic Dacian cult of Zalmoxis would have been difficult to integrate for stela artists working with non-Dacian iconography. Nevertheless, I believe that the Dacians who continued to worship Zalmoxis in Dacia expressed their piety through the appropriation of foreign signs and symbols. Specifically, I interpret the so-called Thracian Rider type (plate 16) when it appears on Dacian monuments as a manifestation of the triumphant, resurrected Zalmoxis.

THE *TERRA DESERTA* THEORY

When discussing the post-war Dacian population, some scholars support the *terra deserta* theory—the belief that the Romans forced the Dacians out of their homeland.² Cassius Dio's account states that Dacian survivors were either conscripted or sent back to Rome to participate in triumphal games and to be sold as slaves.³ Additionally, the fourth-century writer Eutropius relates that Trajan introduced masses of people for the purpose of repopulating the conquered territory, implying the eradication of the indigenous peoples.⁴ Both texts appear on the surface to support the *terra deserta* theory. However, neither historian offers quantifiable data to suggest any kind of demographic shift in the population.

Lino Rossi is the most persistent believer in a forced Dacian exodus. He supports his view of a purely Roman Dacia by referencing the ancient texts and also through his interpretation of the final scenes on the Column of Trajan depicting the Dacians on carts and on foot moving to the right.⁵ However, these depictions do not necessarily indicate a Dacian exodus, and therefore should not be seen as evidence of a Dacian forced migration. The scene is not a Roman *topos* communicating forced migration. Rather, it is a unique and historically specific representation. Dan Ruscu presents the most compelling challenge to this traditional view by positing an alternative reading of the texts of Dio and Eutropius. He proposes that the Dacians moved their population around the region for the tactical purpose of denying the Roman army large military and/or civilian targets.⁶ Alexandru Diaconescu suggests that the unification of the Dacian state replaced ancient tribal communities with territorial units, producing the mysterious absence of Romanized Dacian aristocrats for Romans to exploit.⁷ I believe these theories are more likely accurate than wide-scale genocide.⁸

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE IN POST-WAR DACIA

Archaeology lends support to these recent views, as a comparison of pre-war and post-war material remains in Dacia shows a continued and substantial native presence in the post-war period in the persistence of native pottery and Dacian-style structures found throughout central Dacia. It also suggests a continued and active resistance to Roman culture by Dacians, challenging the typical scholarly expectation for Romanization of a province and its people. Some archaeological evidence may even suggest the Roman colonists adopted and

adapted forms of Dacian material culture in a strategic rejection of the opportunity to remain Roman (such as the adoption of timber construction and native pottery).

Archaeological evidence throughout Romania varies dramatically in scope and quality. Many of the most recently published studies rely on field surveying techniques, excavation being an expensive and time-consuming process. Nevertheless, the compiled evidence of known Roman and Dacian post-war settlements presents a complex picture that belies any claim of absolute Roman dominance. The skewed picture that favored Romanization emerged from scholars' use of Roman categories such as *colonia*, *municipia*, *vici*, and *villa*, inevitably interpreting nearly all settlements as Roman. The identification of Roman rural or urban communities largely relied on the presence of Roman fineware, stone and mortar construction, bricks, tile, and other Roman material remains. Communities that did not fit the Roman mold were often omitted from studies and labeled as anomalies not worthy of consideration.⁹

The presence of Dacian material remains at these sites was not taken into account.¹⁰ For example, at numerous *vici* in central Dacia one finds Roman-style rectilinear structures next to Dacian-style sunken dwellings. Additionally, the presence of Roman *terra sigillata*, local replica copies of *terra sigillata*, and Dacian coarseware pottery is common.¹¹ Recent archaeological investigation of small villages in southern Oltenia and southwestern Transylvania even reveal communities that existed undisturbed (without any evidence of Roman presence or contact) from the pre-Roman times through the post-conquest provincial era.¹²

The only sites possessing perceivable and even overt efforts toward Romanization are the *colonia* of Sarmizegetusa Regia Ulpia Traiana and the *municipia* of Apulum and Porolissum. In western Dacia, the colony of Ulpia Traiana replaced the former native capital. The Romans razed most of the native structures and replaced them with traditional and symbolic Roman buildings like a forum, an amphitheater, and a possible basilica. Trajan intended his colony to be the shining beacon of Roman presence in Dacia.¹³ Ultimately, Ulpia Traiana was the only location where members of the population could behave entirely like Romans. Even Apulum and Porolissum were incomplete versions of proper Roman cities, as they were originally and remained primarily the garrisons for the Roman legions in Dacia.

The settlements in the rest of Roman Dacia continued to have a diverse character throughout the occupation. The biggest identifiable difference is an increased population and urbanization made possible through the additional roads built and policed by the Roman army. The people in these newer Roman-era settlements showed a willingness to sustain hybrid communities. Beyond an apparent acceptance of Dacian material production, the immigrant population did not find it necessary to remain Roman and may have embraced more than just timber construction and cookware. Likewise, the native Dacians may have appropriated some foreign ideas, like figural representation and a taste for *terra sigillata*. However, while some Dacians settled into mixed communities in the post-war era, others chose to continue fighting Rome.

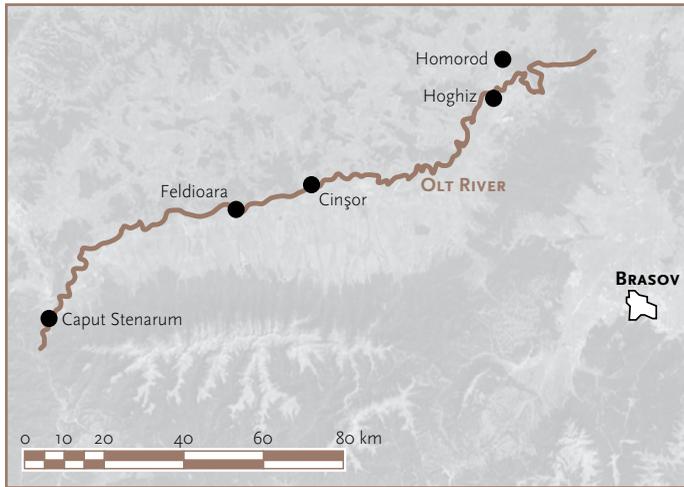
THE DACIAN RESISTANCE

Decebalus's decision to fight Rome using traditional tactics ended in disaster for the natives at the Battle of Tapae and at the siege of Sarmizegetusa Regia.¹⁴ By 106, the surviving rebels learned that they could not defeat Rome in a traditional battlefield conflict. The archaeological record following the Dacian Wars suggests that their response was to change strategy. As the rebels used tactics akin to guerrilla warfare, the Roman military strategy altered accordingly.

In contrast to Trajan's expansionist agenda, his successor Hadrian looked to consolidate the Roman Empire. The emperor built numerous defense works around the Transylvanian Plateau to aid in the conflicts against the free Dacians. After 118 CE, Hadrian abandoned

Trajanic forts in southern Banat and western Wallachia, shifting these forces to the Transylvanian Plateau in an effort to protect newly acquired gold and silver mines in the western Carpathians.¹⁵ Two major garrisons at Apulum and Porolissum policed the western side of Dacia Superior, while additional fortifications along the Upper Olt extended Rome’s military presence eastward.

Five forts along the Upper Olt were designed to defend the Transylvanian Plateau



11.1. Map of the Olt River valley in southern Transylvania showing Roman *castra*.

from an enemy embedded in the Carpathians (fig. 11.1). I posit that the free Dacians living in the southeastern and eastern Carpathians fought an increasingly successful guerrilla war against the Romans during the reign of Hadrian. The threat was significant enough to focus resources on an enemy increasingly relying on innovative and clandestine operations carried out in difficult terrain within the empire. My recent analysis of the positioning of the Hadrianic, Antonine, and Severan camps along the Upper Olt provides compelling evidence of this change in strategies, both Roman and Dacian. In brief, the line of Roman marching camps

along the Upper Olt River represents an archaeologically and chronologically verifiable effort to exert influence on the southern and eastern edges of the Transylvanian Plateau. Rome shifted its focus from pushing eastward through the plains of Wallachia to the south to securing mountain passes in southeastern Transylvania, from fighting set-piece battles to smaller operations focused on patrolling access points.

At the westernmost edge, Caput Stenarum dates to Trajan’s Dacian Wars. Its purpose is clear: to provide a stopgap at one of the few passes giving access to the Transylvanian Plateau. The cumulative viewshed for each camp (the visibility of the surrounding landscape) indicates that the objective for soldiers at Caput Stenarum was to police three major access points. The viewshed is dramatically different at Feldioara and Cinșor. Both camps are poised to defend against a threat from the south along the Olt River, across the wide plains that front the Carpathian Mountains. These two *castra* date to the reign of Hadrian and represent a posture anticipating open war—an open war that never occurred. The later camps near Hoghiz and Homorod further east were poised to defend the Transylvanian Plateau from an enemy embedded in the Carpathians—the Dacian rebels that had abandoned traditional tactics in favor of guerrilla warfare.

Ultimately, this data suggests that settlers from central Dacia to the easternmost extremes of the Transylvanian Plateau lived in a more turbulent region than previously proposed, one in which being overtly Dacian or Roman both ran risks. But religious neglect ran an even greater risk, especially for ancient cultures with strong traditions of ancestor worship. How would patrons desiring to express their religious beliefs through funerary architecture avoid endangering themselves in such a complex and threatening context? More specifically, how could followers of Zalmoxis continue worshipping their god in such a dramatically shifting cultural landscape? In order to posit an answer, we must briefly examine the Dacian cult of Zalmoxis.

THE CULT OF ZALMOXIS AND DACIAN MATERIAL CULTURE

Although this venue is not the place to tread over well-published studies on Dacian religion, it is nevertheless useful to reiterate that we know little of Dacian religious beliefs and in particular Zalmoxian practices.¹⁶ Our two most significant primary sources are Herodotus and Strabo. These historians' differing accounts allow us to decipher some of the changes that occurred, although their texts are colored by their respective Greek and Roman views and agendas. Neither relates any significant Dacian religion prior to Zalmoxis, save for a vague reference to the vulgar superstitions of barbarians. This suggests that Herodotus and Strabo judged Zalmoxian worship as superior to its antecedents.

Herodotus's description of the origins of Zalmoxis and his teachings suggests that it was a mystery cult that arrived in Dacia in the early fifth century BCE. Like many other mystery cults, that of Zalmoxis featured a charismatic leader that provided mystical revelations to followers. Initiates could also expect an idyllic afterlife. Supposedly, Zalmoxis was a Dacian who had achieved enlightenment after studying great mysteries in Egypt as a slave of Pythagoras. He returned to his homeland in order to teach his people a more enlightened path. According to Herodotus, Zalmoxis built a banqueting hall or *andreion* under the sacred mountain of Kogaionon where he imparted his knowledge to his followers during communal meals or banquets.¹⁷ The cults of Mithras, Isis, and Christ (among others) also featured ritualistic meals as part of their practice and worship.

Zalmoxis departed from his new congregation to an otherworldly place in order to achieve some undisclosed goal. His departure is likened to death, even though Herodotus tells us that Zalmoxis merely retired to an underground chamber. After three years in this "underworld," Zalmoxis triumphantly returned as proof of life after death.¹⁸ Zalmoxis may not have been a messianic figure at first, but the Dacians certainly considered him a home-grown god by Strabo's time at the turn of the millennium.

Mircea Eliade suspects that the nature of the religion could have changed over the four centuries between Herodotus and Strabo. The rituals practiced throughout the reigns of King Burebista and King Decebalus (c. 82 BCE–106 CE) appear to have revolved around asceticism, having at some point jettisoned banqueting.¹⁹ The chief ascetics were high priests who promoted vegetarianism, celibacy, and abstinence from alcohol.²⁰ It is largely Jordanes who emphasizes the political significance of the priests of Zalmoxis, specifically the influence of a certain Decaeneus over King Burebista.²¹ Whatever the extent of the priests' power, ancient accounts relate that the Dacians were still worshipping Zalmoxis as their chief deity through the end of Trajan's Dacian Wars.

Astonishingly, no direct material culture exists to trace the worship of Zalmoxis. The Dacians developed no distinctive iconography to reference this religion. There is no ritualistic architecture that can be linked to Zalmoxis in the archaeological record, no known underground *andreion* for example. And worshippers never made an effort to reify their messiah-turned-deity in sculpture or paintings, a



11.2. Detail of Dacian dragon standard, Column of Trajan, 2nd century CE.



11.3. Detail of Coțofenești Helmet, 4th century BCE. National Museum of Romanian History, Bucharest, 11420.



11.4. Agighiol Helmet, 5th–4th century BCE. National Museum of Romanian History, Bucharest, 11181.

fact that may seem odd to western Christian audiences experiencing 1700 years of imaging Jesus Christ.

This does not mean that the Dacians were averse to figural art or religious art for that matter. Perhaps the most famous Dacian work of art is the dragon standard, such as those represented numerous times on the Column of Trajan (fig. 11.2). The Dacians used a battle standard that resembled a wolf-headed serpent, a manifestation of their animist beliefs persisting through the height of Zalmoxian fervor. Indeed, Dacian warriors found strength

in this symbol and believed they embodied the ferociousness of the wolf in battle.²² Furthermore, Herodotus finds contradiction in the Dacians' practice of shooting arrows at torrential clouds that threaten their solitary, celestial god, Zalmoxis.²³ A celestial deity that cannot control its own realm cannot be all-powerful, indicating that the Dacians recognized other supernatural powers beside Zalmoxis. In this way, the Dacians may have placed Zalmoxis atop a system of belief that included lesser powers such as demons and spirits, if not outright gods.²⁴ Zalmoxians did nothing to extinguish these practices. In fact, the archaeological record appears to support a kind of *laissez-faire* approach to religion in Dacia in the multiple ritual structures found in a given Dacian community. It would therefore seem logical that this approach would trickle into material culture.

Unlike their Greek and Roman counterparts, Dacian pottery offers almost no evidence of religious preference due to its geometric patterning. Some of the most visually stunning remains are in metalwork, specifically jewelry and armor. The fourth-century BCE helmet from



11.5. Agighiol Helmet, detail.

Coțofenești features magical composite creatures along the neck guard. More significantly, on the cheek guard a warrior with dagger kneels on a collapsed ram pulling its head back, likely indicating an imminent sacrifice (fig. 11.3). The image is reminiscent of the tauroctony associated with the cult of Mithras, a composition that emerges many centuries later (see fig. 8.3). The fifth–fourth-century BCE helmet from the Agighiol Treasure (fig. 11.4) depicts a large avian creature capturing prey from both field (in its huge talons) and stream (in its beak) on the right cheek guard, no doubt invoking another animal power.²⁵ The artist also rendered a mounted warrior, or rider figure, on the left cheek guard; he wears full-scale armor and wields a spear, part of the tradition of rider iconography shared with Thrace (fig. 11.5).²⁶ The third century BCE *rhyton* from Poroina may have been used for more direct ritualistic purposes, such as the pouring of libations or as a vessel for sacred feasts. The *rhyton* is in the shape of a goat's head and depicts four women—two standing and two seated—holding aloft goat-headed *rhyta*, perhaps displaying the appropriate context for such fine drinking vessels. It may even be a representation of a Zalmoxian dining ritual, as the ancient sources create no gender distinction among the followers of Zalmoxis (fig. 11.6).²⁷



11.6. Dacian *rhyton*, 3rd century BCE. National Museum of Romanian History, Bucharest, 11335.

Although all of these works merely suggest the coexistence of various belief systems (i.e., animism, pantheism, tengriism, and polytheism) in a society deemed monotheistic by both Herodotus and Strabo, more direct evidence can be seen in the architectural remains of Dacian settlements. The native Dacian capital, Sarmizegetusa Regia, (located 40 km northeast of the post-conquest Roman capital Sarmizegetusa Regia Ulpia Traiana) contained several sacred structures despite its all-important proximity to the Zalmoxian sacred mountain, Kogaionon. This was not a phenomenon limited to the nexus of Dacian political and religious power. The Iron Age community of Tipia Ormenișului near the town of Racoș, Brașov County also featured numerous ritualistic spaces, large, non-functional structures erected on terraces with prime vistas. Not having suffered the same degree of systematic destruction as Sarmizegetusa Regia, the ruins near Racoș provide a sounder context for understanding the nature of native sacred areas. Archaeologist Florea Costea identifies four structures as having religious significance in Tipia Ormenișului due to the presence of numerous votive offerings within these buildings, including ritually split and burnt luxury pottery and iron hooks for hanging gifts



11.7. Altar-shaped monument, Apoldu de Sus, 2nd–3rd century CE.



11.8. Funerary tondo from Apoldu de Sus, 3rd century CE.



11.9. Funerary tondo from Apoldu de Sus, 3rd century CE.

to the god, coupled with the conspicuous absence of common objects. These structures are also set apart due to their lack of any other form of pragmatic or everyday functionality. Moreover, they are all oriented toward the north, a common feature of many Dacian sacred precincts.²⁸ This evidence appears to support Dacians practicing religious tolerance, or at the very least possessing a more diverse spectrum of worship outside the cult of Zalmoxis.²⁹

Alas, despite the plethora of Dacian material remains, no certain native representations of deities have emerged from the pre-Roman era. It is possible that the Dacian tradition of reifying deities was aniconic rather than non-existent through the end of the Iron Age, from the fifth century BCE through the early second century CE. I believe, however, that many Dacians who participated in post-war mixed communities adopted figuration in monuments as a way of expressing religious identity and the Romans did nothing to impede natives from such expressions.

POST-WAR FUNERARY MONUMENTS

Of any religious practice in the ancient world, it is perhaps the proper burial of the deceased that resonates the most in both the disposal of physical remains and the religious treatment of spiritual remains. The desire to appease the spirits of the dead would compel transgressive behavior, the type evidenced in the material culture associated with death. The scope of this paper does not allow for a thorough survey of all the known funerary monuments from Dacia. Instead, I will address those few found in Sibiu County because these locations are closest to the five Roman marching camps in one of the most tumultuous parts of the province. I consider the content, style, date, and site of the sculptural remains in an effort to uncover the nature of Roman and Dacian relations in the more hostile areas of the occupied province—at least as expressed through funerary iconography.³⁰

Pre-Roman burials often consisted of shallow cremation pits featuring varied deposits of pottery, arms, armor, and jewelry. The pit was covered with soil and flat stones, rendering the grave virtually invisible. There is no evidence of Dacians using conspicuous markers such as stelae until after the Roman conquest. Leticia Marinescu relates that occupation-era funerary monuments display localized variations of northern Italian forms throughout the province with a closer adherence to classical models in Sarmizegetusa Ulpia Traiana and

Apulum from the second century CE onward.³¹ As such contributions clearly occurred after Trajan's conquest, we are left to assume that the Romans cared little about provincial deviations in art and architecture from the kind of art found in Rome itself. The Roman army did not use these anomalies as proof of a non-Roman influence that needed to be eradicated; at least no archaeological evidence seems to support this theory.³²

The manipulation of Roman forms may stem from a desire to meet the expectations of both Roman and Dacian martial forces that might happen upon a given community. In that context, inhabitants had to be adept at appeasing agents from either side of the conflict



11.10. Funerary stela from Șeica Mică, 3rd century CE.



11.11. Funerary stela from Șeica Mică, 3rd century CE.

at any given time. The fact that the greatest number of funerary monuments is found near the largest Roman strongholds along the western edge of Dacia should surprise no one. The funerary altar from Apoldu de Sus in Sibiu County incorporates a Roman altar form with dentils and a dedicatory plaque combined with a unique rosette vegetal pattern and a pair of guardian lions (fig. 11.7). The remaining inscription is the generic dedication to the shades, *Dis Manibus*, found on tombstones throughout the empire. I suggest the mixture of a Roman form and Latin text with provincial iconography is divergent enough to communicate a degree of non-Romanness.

Similarly, the funerary tondi from Apoldu de Sus and Tîrnava in Sibiu County relay a benign devotion to family, Roman or otherwise. These are small round stone votive pieces featuring representations of a nuclear family, busts of a father and mother atop smaller busts of two to five children (figs. 11.8–9). Although the practice and overall composition—stylistic deviations notwithstanding—may be Roman, there is no overt statement of political allegiances being expressed in such funerary markers. If anything, Dacians might be able to read into such an image a manifestation of an idyllic afterlife, the kind promised to followers of Zalmoxis. A manifold reading is not so far-fetched considering the Roman tradition of building monuments for multiple audiences. Local patrons could take advantage of the Romans' relative ambivalence toward style and iconography in speaking to their gods or their ancestors.

A more certain manifestation of this syncretic process can be seen in two funerary structures from Șeica Mică (figs. 11.10–11). One stela contains in the lower level a representation of Attis, with the iconographic markers of the Phrygian cap and staff (fig. 11.10). The cult of Isis was certainly present in Dacia, brought by Roman settlers after the conquest.³³ The horse in the central register does not conform to the specific iconography of either Attis or Isis. The uppermost register depicts a peacock. The peacock is rare in Isian symbolism and is likely a later Roman connection. The common association between the peacock and immortality and/or resurrection makes this addition appropriate. Moreover, Dacians might

have found the Isian belief in the afterlife familiar and non-threatening. After all, the cult of Isis had Egyptian rather than Roman origins, a distant cousin to their own cult of Zalmoxis.

A second funerary stela from Șeica Mică features yet another unique mix of religious symbolism (fig. 11.11). The lowest and most damaged register appears to depict a man and a woman performing some indiscernible ritual over a tripod. The middle register shows a man behind a plow pulled by two draft animals and a smaller figure standing above. This is not a scene of a common agricultural practice, but rather a representation of an individual ritualistically marking boundaries with sacred furrows or the *sulcus primigenius*. This Roman practice was carried out many times in the provinces whenever a Roman community was founded, as a kind of display of ownership.³⁴ The small figure on a pedestal atop the draft animals is a deviation not found in Roman counterparts. Finally, the uppermost register contains a dynamic composition of a rider about to trample an enemy underfoot.

At first glance, the stela appears aggressively Roman, defiantly portraying the patron's association with Roman rituals. A Roman might read the narrative of a man that earned his land in Dacia through violence, perhaps in the Roman cavalry. This would seem a terribly risky declaration in war-torn Dacia if we consider viewership from the perspective of a Dacian rebel. The reading is made more appropriate for both a Roman and Dacian audience when we interpret the figure in the top register as the Thracian Rider rather than a Roman soldier. This is significant due to the fact that the Thracian Rider is a catch-all representation. Of the thousands of known reliefs from throughout the empire, the rider has embodied Apollo, Asklepios, Hades, Hephaistos, Heracles, Jupiter, Silvanus, and dozens of other native gods and heroes. The only way to know the identity of a particular horseman was through the inscription.³⁵ The Thracian Rider was likely familiar to the Dacians, due to his popularity along the Danube among the mixed population from the second century BCE onward—the so-called Danubian Rider.

The patron of the funerary stela from Șeica Mică was careful to leave the inscription off of the monument. Lacking specificity, the rider can be read as any laudable triumphant over any given obstacle. A Dacian might read the triumph of a Dacian hero over Roman oppressors, those that impose (however lightly) foreign practices. The Dacian might even see the rider as the triumphant Zalmoxis conquering death. After all, the rider is familiar to the natives, albeit in a different context, that of the centuries-old warrior pictured on Dacian arms and armor.

CONCLUSION

It is worth reiterating that most of these funerary monuments come from larger, more Romanized communities that contain a substantial military presence: Sarmizegetusa Regia Ulpia Traiana, Apulum, and Porolissum. It is also worth noting that Șeica Mică was within striking distance of the large garrison at Apulum. There are no known Roman funerary monuments further east, despite the presence of Roman marching camps throughout present-day Brașov. This is not due to the absence of a mixed population. Dacian pottery can be found alongside Roman remains around Feldioara, Cinșor, Hoghiz, and Homorod. I suspect that these populations hesitated to express themselves as even marginally Roman because they gained nothing from Romans too busy fighting a counterinsurgency to inspect the conspicuous consumption of locals. Moreover, they risked angering resistance fighters that continued to perforate Roman defenses decade after decade, those that expected nothing in the way of religious expressions due to aniconic traditions. For rebel Dacians, such monuments could be construed as political rather than purely religious expressions.



- 1 J. J. Wilkes, "Roman Legions and Their Fortresses in the Danube Lands," in *Roman Fortresses and Their Legions*, ed. Richard J. Brewer (London: Society of Antiquaries of London, 2000), 101–19.
- 2 L. Ellis, "'Terra Deserta': Population, Politics, and the [De]Colonization of Dacia," *World Archaeology* 30, no. 2 (1998): 220–37. In dealing with the Aurelian withdrawal from Dacia (270–275 CE), Ellis contests theories revolving around cultural and ethnic cleansing. Ellis maintains that our understanding of population demographics during and following the Roman conquest are wrong, greatly influenced by recent political history. It is contemporary politics that influenced western understanding of ancient Romania rather than sound archaeology.
- 3 Cass. Dio 65.18.
- 4 Eutropius, *Breviarium ab urbe condita* 8.6.2. Octavian used a similar strategy to populate his victory city at Nikopolis, Greece.
- 5 Lino Rossi, *Trajan's Column and the Dacian Wars*, trans. J. M. C. Toynbee (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), 20–39, 58, and 210–12. However, Rossi claims stylistic shortcomings in later material objects as proof of native artisans at work. The author makes no attempt to negotiate this discrepancy.
- 6 Dan Ruscu, "The Supposed Extermination of the Dacians: The Literary Tradition," in *Roman Dacia: The Making of a Provincial Society*, ed. William S. Hanson and Ian P. Haynes (Portsmouth: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2004), 75–85.
- 7 Alexandru Diaconescu, "The Towns of Roman Dacia: An Overview of Recent Research," in *ibid.*, 122–23.
- 8 The Romans were not averse to admitting the massacre of tens or even hundreds of thousands of people in the name of victory. Sulla killed 100,000 enemy combatants at the Battle of Chaeroneia. Titus and Vespasian may have murdered as many as a million people during the Jewish Wars. Historians cite the numbers in these two cases, unlike the known accounts of Trajan's Dacian Wars.
- 9 Ioana A. Oltean, *Dacia: Landscape, Colonisation, Romanisation* (London: Routledge, 2007), 119. See Oltean for more on the mislabeling of communities in Dacia during the Roman occupation.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 122.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 147. As much as 10–15% of the pottery found was Dacian at the settlement near Obreja. At the equivalent site of Nolsac, the recovered pottery was 55% native.
- 12 Diaconescu, "Towns of Roman Dacia," 122–28.
- 13 Oltean, *Dacia: Landscape, Colonisation, Romanisation*, 162.
- 14 See Alexandre Simon Stefan, *Les guerres daciques de Domitien et de Trajan: Architecture militaire, topographie, images et histoire* (Rome: École française de Rome, 2005) and Everett L. Wheeler, "Rome's Dacian Wars: Domitian, Trajan, and Strategy on the Danube, Part I," *Journal of Military History* 74, no. 4 (2010): 1185–227 for in-depth analysis of Roman and Dacian strategies during the Dacian Wars.
- 15 Ioana Bogdan Cătănciu, *Evolution of the System of Defence Works in Roman Dacia*, trans. Etta Dumitrescu (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1981), 21–22.
- 16 Mircea Eliade, *Zalmoxis the Vanishing God: Comparative Studies in the Religions and Folklore of Dacia and Eastern Europe*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970). See Eliade's study on the cult of Zalmoxis for an in-depth summary of its history and a thorough

- review of the major late nineteenth- to mid-twentieth-century publications on the religion.
- 17 Hdt. 4.94–96.
- 18 Hdt. 4.95.4–5.
- 19 Eliade, *Zalmoxis the Vanishing God*, 64.
- 20 Vasile Pârvan, *Dacia civilizațiile antice din Carpato-danubiene* (Bucharest: Editura Științifică, 1967), 103. Pârvan suggests this element of asceticism promulgated by a powerful priestly class may be due to exposure to Celts and their Druidic religious beliefs.
- 21 Strab. 7.3.5; Jordanes, *Getica* 11.67–68. Strabo only mentions the connection between priest and king in passing as a mutually beneficial alliance. Alternatively, Jordanes says that the Burebista gave Decaeneus kingly powers.
- 22 Eliade, *Zalmoxis the Vanishing God*, 1–20. The author summarizes the various ancient accounts and more recent folklore associated with lupine beliefs and practices around the Balkans.
- 23 Hdt. 4.94.4.
- 24 A similar phenomenon is found in the new world cult of saints. Indigenous peoples throughout the Americas used saints to replace the native pantheon of gods, leaving Christ at the head of this collective. Although never sanctioned by the Catholic Church, many native rituals and beliefs survived conversion and systematic purges.
- 25 I assume this is a reference to an animist, non-Zalmoxian practice. There is no mention of animal sacrifice or mythological beasts in Zalmoxian religion. However, there is no apparent restriction to a warrior's desire to invoke these powers.
- 26 It is especially noteworthy that the Dacians had used the rider composition in their artwork as early as the fifth or fourth century BCE.
- 27 Paul MacKendrick, *The Dacian Stones Speak* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 29. MacKendrick describes these figures as goddesses without any evidence for this attribution.
- 28 Florea Costea, "Centrul religios Pandacic de la Augustin, județul Brașov" (PhD diss., Universitatea Transilvania din Brașov, 2007), 85–110.
- 29 Kris Lockyear, "The Late Iron Age Background to Roman Dacia," in *Roman Dacia*, 33–74. In his survey of numerous Dacian Iron Age settlements, Lockyear concludes the architectural diversity reflects equally diverse communities with populations possessing varied ethnic and cultural backgrounds and divergent political allegiances. The author seeks to refute the concept of a unified Dacia during the reign of Burebista. He does not address notions of Zalmoxian monotheism in his publication.
- 30 See Leticia Țeposu Marinescu, *Funerary Monuments in Dacia Superior and Dacia Porolissensis*, trans. Nubar Hampartumian (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1982) and Carmen Ciongradi, "Burial Monuments and Their Implications," in *Roman Dacia*, 165–78 for more thorough analyses of Dacian funerary sculpture. I rely heavily on Marinescu and Ciongradi's typologies and interpretations.
- 31 Marinescu, *Funerary Monuments in Dacia*, 62–65. Marinescu acknowledges the presence of numerous native contributions to the foreign tradition of funerary markers.
- 32 Wheeler, "Rome's Dacian Wars," 1203. Wheeler's conviction that the Romans waged a religious

war against the Dacians is based on the absence of religious material objects that were never part of the Dacian religious tradition. The Romans' destruction of religious structures in hilltop or terraced locales was more likely strategic, believing these sites to be martially significant like Gallic *oppida*.

- 33 If the worship of Isis predates the Roman occupation of Dacia, there is no archaeological evidence to prove anyone practicing this religion. This does not bar the possibility that Dacian aniconic traditions extended to members of the cult of Isis.
- 34 Joseph Rykwert, *The Idea of a Town: The Anthropology of Urban Form in Rome, Italy and the Ancient World* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988).
- 35 Nora Dimitrova, "Inscriptions and Iconography in the Monuments of the Thracian Rider," *Hesperia* 71, no. 2 (2002): 209–29.



STRUGGLING TO BE ROMAN IN A FORMER ROMAN PROVINCE

Robin Fleming

Material practices are essential to the successful performance of particular identities, and objects and people thus become mutually associated in the construction of individuals and groups, and of their power to act in the world.¹

What did it mean to be “Roman” in a provincial society, when Roman material culture was no longer readily available? How did Roman ways of life, identity, burial, and status-marking change in provinces where the Roman economy had collapsed and connections to the wider Roman world were unraveling? These are pressing questions for scholars of Britain, because the diocese experienced stunning economic and political dislocations in the later fourth and early fifth centuries. Although Britain in 300 CE had been as Roman as any province in the empire, within a single generation of 400, urban life, industrial-scale manufacturing of basic goods, the money economy, and the state collapsed.² In the midst of these dislocations one of the most ubiquitous, inexpensive, and fundamental classes of Roman material culture—mass-produced, wheel-thrown pottery made within Roman Britain itself—began to disappear. So, the question arises: What did people do in the face of the Romano-British pottery industry’s collapse? And what can this tell us about the fate of *románitas* in Roman provincial societies where the state and economy imploded, and where once ubiquitous, mass-produced, everyday objects were growing ever more difficult to procure?

Elites in Britain even before the Roman conquest had had access to Roman pottery, and in the two centuries after the conquest, imported, wheel-thrown, kiln-fired, workshop-produced pottery came to be a staple, everyday item for more Romanized groups and settlements within Britain.³ By the turn of the fourth century, pottery production had expanded dramatically—both in volume and in the impressive range of pot-types made—and in this later period it was taking place on large, nucleated, rural/industrial sites within Britain itself.⁴ Pots from Romano-British kilns were ubiquitous in the early fourth century, not only because they could be purchased cheaply in local markets, but because they served as shipping containers for salt and agricultural products, and because they sat at the center of the late Roman redistributive economy and were used to move and store late Roman in-kind food taxes and rents.⁵ As a result, by the early fourth century even British peasants living in rural backwaters found themselves in possession of gray-, red-, and parchment-wares and sometimes even a fine-ware vessel or two.⁶



12.1. Locations of Romano-British communities.

The widespread adoption of Roman-style pottery by all social classes was not something that happened in Britain alone, and it is suggestive of the tectonic shifts in the ways even humble people in provincial societies came to live their lives.⁷ Pottery, of course, was one of those unconscious products of everyday life, one that crucially affected the ways people cooked, ate, stored their surplus, socialized, interacted with their betters and inferiors, and practiced rituals associated with death. The fact that late Roman pottery was part of so many (and so many kinds of different) people's daily routines is suggestive of the impact Rome had on provincial life.

Romano-British pottery, like pottery across the empire, was manufactured and distributed with the help of complex networks of clay diggers, fuel providers, kiln masters, boatmen and teamsters, merchants, villa overseers, and state provisioners.⁸ As the systems and institutions that held these groups together began to unravel,

pottery manufacturing and distribution at this level became unsustainable, and sometime in the decades on either side of 400 the pottery industry in Britain collapsed.⁹ Although a few late Roman pottery types continued to be made on a much-diminished scale and distributed locally into the middle of the fifth century,¹⁰ most people living in Britain ceased to have access to the Romano-British ceramics that had shaped the lives of their parents and grandparents. And, because so much pottery in the fourth century had been fashioned by professional potters, most households did not possess the knowledge and skills needed to produce pottery. Once production was disrupted and professional potters could no longer make a living plying their specialist trade, households without potting know-how would have to figure out how to make or procure pots for themselves.¹¹ So, the question arises: What did they do? And more importantly, what can their responses tell us about provincial *romanitas*?

In order to answer these questions, we will examine the ways three different communities in fifth- and early sixth-century Britain acquired and used pottery produced in the Roman period (fig. 12.1). A study of the reuse of old Roman pots after Roman systems of production collapsed hints at the ways some people were attempting to marshal Roman material culture to help them maintain some semblance of *romanitas* in a part of the world that was rapidly evolving into *not*-Roman, while others appear to have been turning their backs on it.

CADBURY CONGRESBURY

In the West Country, as Roman imperial institutions and structures collapsed, some households abandoned their homes and moved to ancient hillforts. These had been built long before the Roman conquest and had been abandoned for hundreds of years by the time they were resettled in the early fifth century.¹² One such place, Cadbury Congressbury in Somerset, became home to a community for much of the fifth and sixth centuries.¹³ The people who first resettled the hillfort were culturally Romano-British, but they arrived with only an impoverished, residual version of Roman material culture. Nonetheless, in their first couple of decades at the hillfort, at least some members of the community were using fast-wheel, mass-produced Romano-British pottery: the remains of at least 170 Roman pots have been found on the site.¹⁴ They also had impressive amounts of Roman glass in the form of bottles and beakers, in total a minimum of 60 glass vessels have been found there.¹⁵ The site's excavators, based on analysis of the break patterns and distribution of the glass and ceramic sherds found at Cadbury Congressbury, have argued that this material arrived at the

site whole and that it was being used for domestic purposes, in particular for high-status dining.¹⁶ The bulk of this material, however, had been manufactured 100 years or more *before* its reuse by the hillfort community.¹⁷

Although it is possible that some of this material was brought to the hillfort as cherished family heirlooms, much of it had probably been scavenged.¹⁸ The most obvious place in the fifth century where one could find large quantities of centuries-old, unbroken vessels is a closed context, that is, a place where delicate objects like these had been taken out of circulation for a time. And, the most likely closed context for glass and pottery are Roman cemeteries.¹⁹ This is because the majority of people in Britain in the second and third centuries were cremated (as were people across the empire at this time), after which their ashes were decanted into glass jars or wheel-thrown pots. These cinerary urns were then sometimes accompanied in the ground by collections of other pots and glassware.²⁰ Then, as Romano-British people moved to inhumation in the later third century (as people, again, did across the empire),²¹ they sometimes placed pots in the graves of their dead.²² So, it is likely that people living at Cadbury Congresbury in the fifth century, who continued to have access to mass-produced wheel-thrown pottery and glass vessels—classes of objects no longer made in the area in which they lived—were systematically grave-robbing in order to supply themselves with ceramic pots and glass, which they emptied of their human ash or dug out from under the bones of the dead and then used for cooking and serving food. The presence of such material at Cadbury Congresbury points to people determined to continue, as best they could, with the material culture and foodways of their forebearers, no matter the humiliations involved in procuring Roman vessels, which they felt they could not do without, but which they could no longer purchase or manufacture on their own.

The society forming at Cadbury Congresbury rapidly evolved from this final Roman phase into something quite different. The mix of people who had moved into the hillfort—refugees from defunct urban communities, villa owners and their peasants, small farmers and communities whose livings had been tied to temple complexes—had resided in different worlds before the fall, but they now lived in a new place, in a single community, and under these circumstances and in the face of economic collapse, their little society moved rapidly from Roman to something else. Within a generation of the hillfort's reoccupation, and quite possibly from its inception, some individual, family, or clique was in charge. Indeed, claiming such an impressive site in the first place may have been the way some person or group moved to assert authority in the neighborhood. By about 500, serious refortification efforts were underway and an impressive watchtower, reminiscent of late Roman military architecture, was built from timber and sod.²³ Over the course of Cadbury Congresbury's second life, as many as 200 structures were built, and this points to a pool of labor and considerable resources and organization. The buildings themselves were quite varied. None were of mortared stone, a lost art in much of fifth-century Britain, but there was a large timber longhouse, doubtless the residence of some great man and his kin. Other structures at Cadbury Congresbury, however, were closely related to the modest roundhouses of the pre-Roman Iron Age, a vernacular building style that continued throughout the Roman period in rural backwaters, and one that was now reasserting itself in the face of the deskilling of more Romanized populations.²⁴ The mix of Roman-style watch towers, longhouses, and simple roundhouses reveals a community in which some were in charge and others did as they were told.

For a 75-year period, as the stock of scavenged Roman pottery ran out, new mass-produced, wheel-thrown pottery appeared on the site. Here as elsewhere in western Britain—most famously at Tintagel in Cornwall and Dinas Powys in Glamorgan—archaeologists have recovered sherds of fifth- and sixth-century tableware and amphorae from the Aegean, the eastern Mediterranean, North Africa, and perhaps southern Spain, some of which had been used as shipping containers for wine or olive oil.²⁵ These extraordinary finds bespeak the



12.2. Plan of Romano-British Baldock marking its many cemeteries.

resumption of a small, but significant long-distance trade in which merchants and sailors found it worth their while to cross the whole of the Mediterranean and then brave the western sea routes to Britain, a round trip journey of some 10,000 km.²⁶ Whoever controlled the community at Cadbury Congresbury, in the wilds of the lost colony, must have had something Greek-speaking traders badly wanted. What they probably had was tin, a rarity in Europe, and a commodity known in late antiquity as “the British metal.”²⁷ In return for this, and whatever else they had worth trading, a thin trickle of Roman ceramics and foodstuffs once again came into the hands of some of the hillfort’s inhabitants. Infrequent though these contacts

may have been, this exchange allowed the most important members of the community to reassert their *romanitas* and to underscore their superior position within the society of the rebuilt hillfort with the aid of Roman ceramics. During great feasts and celebrations held in their timber hall, they ate beef taken from the large herds of cattle they now controlled, dined on Roman tableware, and drank rare, Greek wine.²⁸ This was hardly the good life as described by classical authors during Rome’s Golden Age, but it was the continuation of a political style centuries old by Roman Britain’s fall, a social strategy of marking one’s grand status by connecting oneself to Rome and things-Roman.



12.3. Beaker from the California cemetery. Museums Resource Centre, Hitchin, Herts, BAL 13633.8872.

BALDOCK “CALIFORNIA” CEMETERY

Our second group of Roman pot-seekers lived some 200 km to the east of Cadbury Congresbury, in northern Hertfordshire. In the fifth century a few people were still living in and around the now defunct Roman small town of Baldock, a once lively place with a hardworking population of craftsmen and traders, and the site of an important local shrine that had attracted pilgrims and other travelers.²⁹ Although Baldock was no longer an urban settlement in 400, a few people residing in the area continued to bury their dead in a couple of its many Roman cemeteries, including the one known as “California”³⁰ (fig. 12.2), which had served as a burial site since the second century CE.³¹ Unlike Cadbury Congresbury, there is little evidence here for steep social hierarchy or impressive wealth, and none of the households using the cemetery in the post-Roman period seem to have been very well off.

During the Roman period, a number of quintessentially Romano-British funerary rites had been practiced at California, including postmortem decapitation and hobnail-boot

burial.³² Most of the dead during the Roman period were placed in the ground in nailed coffins, and a number were accompanied in their graves by domestic fowl and mass-produced, wheel-thrown pots, many of them color-coated beakers and bowls. These pots were often smashed at the feet of the dead before the sealing of the grave.³³

After 400, as pottery and iron production faltered in the region,³⁴ the community burying at California carried on, as best it could, with time-honored Romano-British funerary traditions.³⁵ Domestic fowl and coffins (although some now partially or wholly fastened with wooden dowels rather than iron nails) continued to play starring roles in funerals; and post-mortem decapitations and hobnail-boot burial persisted,³⁶ as did the placing of pots (often broken during the burial ritual) at the feet of the dead. One of California's fifth-century graves contains a stunning provision—an *extremely* worn fourth-century color-coated beaker that had to have been at least a half-century old when buried (fig. 12.3). Unlike the ceramics at Cadbury Congresbury, this pot had not come from a closed context. Much of its slip-coat had rubbed off from long years of use, and its rim and base were nicked and worn with age.³⁷ Although this is exactly the same kind of little color-coated beaker favored by mourners burying at California in the fourth century, the appearance of the one in the fifth-century grave is startlingly different, because although seconds were sometimes used in fourth-century burials, pots as hard-worn as this never were.³⁸ This pot is an extraordinary survival, an heirloom carefully husbanded by people determined to carry on funerary practices in which their families had participated for generations, rituals, with the collapse of industrial-scale pottery production, that must have required determination and the careful preservation of whatever pots they had left.

Several other post-400 graves at California included hand-built pots. One grave contained a small, lopsided pot made to look like a fourth-century, wheel-thrown, flanged, rimmed Nene Valley dish: this is yet another pot that was so worn when placed in its grave that most of its color-coated slip had disappeared (fig. 12.4).³⁹ A heavily used, genuine fourth-century Nene Valley color-coated dish was buried in another late/post-Roman cemetery nearby, this one at Welwyn Hall (fig. 12.5).⁴⁰ Here, too—judging from the very worn condition of this fourth-century pot—was a cemetery where Roman burial traditions continued past circa 400.⁴¹ It shares



12.4. Dish from the California cemetery. Museums Resource Centre, Hitchin, Herts, BAL 1.1193.



12.5. Dish from Welwyn Hall, Herts. Mill Green Museum and Mill, Hatfield, Herts, HAT 165.70.1153.



12.6. Pot from the California cemetery. Museums Resource Centre, Hitchin, Herts, BAL 1.3633.8873.



12.7. Bowl-jar from the Welwyn Hall cemetery, Mill Green Museum and Mill, Hatfield, Herts, HAT 165.1153.68–72.

the fabric, slip-coat, and shape of the flanged California dish, and clearly represents the kind of pot the maker of the California piece was attempting to replicate. Unlike the Welwyn Hall pot, however, which was wheel-thrown in the fourth century, the California bowl was hand-built in the fifth. Another California grave contained a little bowl with a rimmed lip and a foot, to give it the look of a wheel thrown pot (fig. 12.6).⁴² Probably what the maker had in mind was a Hadham-ware bowl-jar, a ceramic type that had been locally mass-produced in the fourth century. It is, however, hand-built, made by a person who had a clear idea of what a pot should look like, that is, it should look like a wheel-thrown pot, but who had not mastered all the techniques that had been used by professional potters a generation or two earlier (fig. 12.7). So here, again, is evidence of someone in the

fifth century attempting to create a well-known Romano-British pot type, someone who knew what it should look like but did not have mastery over the techniques and technologies that stood behind its earlier inspiration.

At some point in the late fifth or early sixth century, the last of the surviving late Roman pots in northern Hertfordshire broke, and both Roman pots as grave goods and as models for new pots disappeared. There is some evidence that people making pots in northern Hertfordshire in the very late fifth or sixth century were still carrying some Roman notions in their heads about what made a pot a pot, but that they had begun to take on board ideas held by immigrants new to the area, “Anglo-Saxon” settlers who were coming from across the North Sea.⁴³ At Pirton, Hertfordshire, for example, part of a late fifth- or early sixth-century pot has been found that points to the development of a new, hybrid potting tradition. The sherd was decorated in a way similar, but not identical, to what could be found on contemporary “Anglo-Saxon” pottery, but the fabric of the pot was Romano-British.⁴⁴

BARROW HILLS

Eighty-five km to the west of Baldock, at Barrow Hills, in Radley, Oxfordshire, a third community was also using old Roman ceramics. Like the people at Cadbury Congresbury they seem to have been scavenging for pots, but unlike them, they were only interested in smallish, late Roman color-coated wares, the kinds of pots favored by the people burying at California.⁴⁵ The people of Barrow Hills had many nearby sources for Roman pottery. The ruins of a modest villa lay only 300 m from their settlement,⁴⁶ and the region in which they lived was thick with deserted Romano-British kilns, which had once produced copious amounts of color-coated ware, and would, in the fifth and sixth centuries, still have



12.8. Base of a pot from the Barrow Hills, Radley settlement. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, Barrow Hills, Radley, 1225/B1, 1467.

been places marked by large dumps of pottery wasters.⁴⁷ One such dump, at nearby Lower Farm, in Nuneham Courtenay, when recently surveyed, measured something on the order of 80 x 15 m.⁴⁸ The impression gained from inspecting the Barrow Hills ceramics, however, is that many of them were coming from closed contexts because they retained their polished surfaces and unbroken edges, therefore a far cry from those worn little pots used in fifth- and early sixth-century funerals in and around Baldock. There were a number of sources for buried pottery in the neighborhood. Indeed, small,

whole, color-coated drinking beakers accompanied some of the fourth-century Romano-British dead laid to rest in a cemetery located at the very edge of the Barrow Hills settlement,⁴⁹ and similar vessels, as we have seen in our examination of the California cemetery, could be found in many other late Roman cemeteries.⁵⁰ There were also a number of late Roman ritual deposits of color-coated vessels in the neighborhood.⁵¹ In short, there were many promising places around Barrow Hills for people to poke around when they went looking for old Roman pots.

Unlike their contemporaries at Cadbury Congresbury and Baldock, California, the people at Barrow Hills did not use the pots they were collecting for cooking or dining or in their funerary rites: they were not even using them as pots. Instead, they were only interested in the bases of old Roman pots, which they collected by breaking off or chipping away the body of the pot from its foot-ring base (fig. 12.8).⁵² Not all Roman pots had footed bases, but it is clear that the people of Barrow Hills were selecting for pots that did.⁵³ In total, archaeologists recovered 75 modified Roman pot bases during their excavation of the Barrow Hill's settlement, and they constitute *the* most common artifact-type by far recovered from the site.⁵⁴ The curious pottery-collecting habits of the people of Barrow Hills were shared by other groups living in the Thames Valley as well as in eastern England.⁵⁵ So what were the people at Barrow Hills and elsewhere doing with Roman pot bases? In order to answer this question, we need to turn our attention to the kind of brooches women were beginning to wear a couple of generations after 400 in the region in which Barrow Hills lies.

Saucer brooches were the most common type of brooch worn by women in the Thames Valley in the fifth and sixth centuries.⁵⁶ They were worn by women in matching pairs, one on each shoulder.⁵⁷ Although the craftsmen who made them worked hard to create identical sets, Tania Dickinson has pointed out that it is likely from the small differences found in pair-designs, that each brooch was cast from a different mold, most likely made using the lost-wax method.⁵⁸ Two wax blanks would be made, and then the metalworker, to the best of his ability, would carve the same relief design into each wax disc, which in turn would be covered with clay, fired, the wax poured out and the melted copper-alloy poured in to make two, nearly identical cast brooches.

Although the relief decorations on each brooch in a pair differ slightly, the three diameters (of the decorative field, the rim-to-rim, and back base), vary hardly at all, as Dickinson has shown, usually by less than 1 mm,⁵⁹ and the angles of the rims of each pair are nearly identical. In short, the wax templates not only included the decorative center of each brooch, but their rims as well, which come, essentially, in three forms: angular, flared, or "acutely upturned"⁶⁰ (see figs. 12.9a–c). This suggests that the wax blanks for each pair had, themselves, been made with the same template. So how were metal smiths making their matched wax templates? With curated and modified Roman pot bases, most of which have



12.9a. Angular rimmed saucer brooch. British Museum, London, 1964.7.2.394.



12.9b. Flared rimmed saucer brooch. British Museum, London, 1929.7.15.1.



12.9c. "Acutely upturned" rimmed saucer brooch. British Museum, London, 75.310.204.



12.10a. Angular modified Roman pot base. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, Barrow Hills, Radley, 125/B1, 1467.



12.10b. Flared Roman modified pot base. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, Barrow Hills, Radley, 3578/B2, 1484.



12.10c. "Acutely upturned" modified Roman pot base. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, Barrow Hills, Radley, 3288/A1, 1479.

the same angular, flared, or acutely upturned profiles as saucer brooches, and whose dimensions are very much the same as these brooches (see figs. 12.10a–c).

CONCLUSIONS

Each of the three communities of Roman pot users we have examined responded differently to the disappearance of mass-produced Romano-British vessels and treated residual Roman material culture in its own way. Old Roman ceramics and glassware at Cadbury Congresbury were used by elites to maintain and underscore social distinctions that were one of the hallmarks of the late Roman period across the empire, and they used scavenged Romano-British pots until new supplies of Mediterranean tableware arrived in the late fifth century. By the looks of it, elite members of the community at Cadbury Congresbury were determined to invoke *romanitas* whenever and however they could, even in the face of economic collapse, and they were able to maintain foodways and dining practices that evoked those of the Roman past, and then carry on with them, once they reestablished links with the Roman Mediterranean, and could tap into supplies of newly made Roman pottery. The hardworking people settled in and around the dying Roman small town of Baldock husbanded long-ago made pots in order to carry on Romano-British funerary traditions that were important to them, and some people in the area continued to make pots that were meant to look like Roman pots, but which were made using techniques that were different from the ones standing behind the fourth-century wares they were attempting to imitate. In the same period, people living in a new settlement at Barrow Hills, some of them probably immigrants, and others indigenes, perhaps the servile population attached to the nearby deserted Roman villa at Barton Court Farm—never met a Roman pot they did not want to break, and they used the late Roman fine wares they collected not to carry on old, Roman ways, but to make brand-new kinds of material culture, unknown during the Roman period.

So, to answer the questions with which this paper began, we can see a variety of responses in Britain to the disappearance of Roman material culture in the fifth and early sixth centuries. People of differing social statuses and resources continued to search for and use mass-produced Roman pots, but their engagement with, procurement, and use of Roman material culture varied from neighborhood to neighborhood and community to community. This, in turn, hints at a great variety of ways local groups and households must have thought about, perpetuated, or turned their backs on Roman ways as Britain moved from Roman to something else.



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- 2 Robin Fleming, "The Rise and Fall of Late Antique Britain: The Second to Early Fifth Century," chap. 1 in *Britain after Rome: The Fall and Rise, 400 to 1070* (London: Penguin, 2010).
- 3 Guy de la Bédoyère, *Pottery in Roman Britain* (Princes Riseborough: Shire Books, 2000); Paul Tyers, *Roman Pottery in Britain* (London: Routledge, 2003); Steven Willis, "The Romanization of Pottery Assemblages in the East and North-East of England during the First Century AD: A Comparative Analysis," *Britannia* 27 (1996): 214, 219; Martin Pitts, "Regional Identities and the Social Use of Ceramics," in *TRAC 2004: Proceedings of the 14th Annual Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference, Durham 2004*, ed. James Bruhn, Ben Croxford, and Dimitris Grigoropoulos (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2005), 50–64.
- 4 Michael Gordon Fulford, "The Location of Romano-British Pottery Kilns: Institutional Trade and the Market," in *Roman Pottery Studies in Britain and Beyond: Papers Presented to John Gillingham, July 1977*, ed. John Dore and Kevin Greene (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1977), 301–16; Vivian G. Swan, *Roman Pottery in Britain*, 4th ed. (Princes Riseborough: Shire Books, 1988); Mark Whyman, "Late Roman Britain in Transition, AD 300–500: A Ceramic Perspective from East Yorkshire" (PhD diss., University of York, 2001), 153–55, 170.
- 5 There are spirited arguments between those who believe that market forces stood behind the widespread adoption of Roman pottery, and scholars who argue that the demands of the late Roman state and landlords are the explanation. It seems likely to me, however, that both sides are partially correct, since there is evidence for each of these forces in the archaeological record. See, for example, Jeremy Evans, "Crambeck: The Development of a Major Northern Pottery Industry," in *Crambeck Roman Pottery*, ed. Peter R. Wilson (York: Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 1989), 43, 78; Whyman, "Late Roman Britain in Transition"; Nick Cooper, "Searching for the Blank Generation: Consumer Choice in Roman and Post-Roman Britain," in *Roman Imperialism: Post-Colonial Perspectives*, ed. Jane Webster and Nick Cooper (Leicester: School of Archaeological Studies, University of Leicester, 1996), 86–88; James Gerrard, "Pots for Cash? A Critique of the Role of the 'Free Market' in the Late Roman Economy," in *TRAC 2001: Proceedings of the 11th Annual Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference, Newcastle 2001*, ed. Martin Carruthers et al. (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2002), 13–23; Steve Roskams, "The Hinterlands of Roman York: Present Patterns and Future Strategies," in *The Coloniae of Roman Britain: New Studies and a Review*, ed. Henry Hurst (Portsmouth: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 1999), 45–72. For the "market" forces standing behind the distribution of inexpensive, low-status metal objects, see Melissa L. Ratliff, "Globalisation, Consumerism and the Ancient Roman Economy: A Preliminary Look at Bronze and Iron Production and Consumption," in *TRAC 2010: Proceedings of the 20th Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference, Oxford 2010*, ed. Dragana Mladenovic and Ben Russell (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2011), 37–38.
- 6 Mike McCarthy, *The Romano-British Peasant: Towards a Study of People, Landscapes and Work during the Roman Occupation of Britain* (Oxford: Windgather, 2013), 115; Cooper, "Searching for the Blank Generation," 85, 89; Richard Hingley, *Globalizing Roman Culture: Unity, Diversity and Empire* (London: Routledge, 2005), 105–9.
- 7 Roman E. Roth, "Towards a Ceramic Approach to Social Identity in the Roman World: Some Theoretical Considerations," in "Romanization?," supplement 1, *Digressus* (2003): 37–41; Greg Woolf, "The Unity and Diversity of Romanisation," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 5 (1992):

- 349–52. Similar developments could be found across the late Roman world—each province’s products, although bearing distinctive local traits, nonetheless fit very much within empire-wide potting traditions (Whyman, “Late Roman Britain in Transition,” 140–41; Michel Bonifay, “Ceramic Production in Africa during Late Antiquity: Continuity and Change,” in *Technology in Transition, AD 300–650*, ed. Luke Lavan, Enrico Zanini, and Alexander Sarantis [Leiden: Brill, 2008], 143–58; Rob Collins, *Hadrian’s Wall and the End of Empire: The Roman Frontier in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries* [London: Routledge, 2012], 64).
- 8 Mark Jackson and Kevin Greene, “Ceramic Production,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Engineering and Technology in the Classical World*, ed. John Peter Oleson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 501–4 and Andrew I. Wilson, “Large-Scale Manufacturing, Standardization, and Trade,” in *ibid.*, 396–402.
 - 9 For explanations for why this happened, see Jeremy Evans, “The End of Roman Pottery in the North,” in *The Late Roman Transition in the North*, ed. Tony Wilmott and Peter Wilson (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 2000), 41; Whyman, “Late Roman Britain in Transition,” 357–62.
 - 10 For the continuation of calcite-gritted fabrics in Yorkshire, see Whyman, “Late Roman Britain in Transition,” 362; Evans, “Crambeck,” 74–80. For the continuation of a fabric dubbed SEDOWW in Dorset, see James Gerrard, “Finding the Fifth Century: A Late Fourth- and Early Fifth-Century Pottery Fabric from South-East Dorset,” *Britannia* 41 (2010): 293–312.
 - 11 Nicholas J. Cooper, “The Roman Pottery,” in *The Archaeology of Rutland Water: Excavations at Empingham, 1967–73 and 1990* (Leicester: Leicester Archaeology Monographs, 2000), 97.
 - 12 Leslie Alcock, *Dinas Powys: An Iron Age, Dark Age and Early Medieval Settlement in Glamorgan* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1963); Ian Burrow, *Hillfort and Hill-top Settlement in Somerset in the First to Eighth Centuries AD* (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1981); Leslie Alcock, *Cadbury Castle, Somerset: The Early Medieval Archaeology* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995); Philip Rahtz et al., *Cadbury Congresbury 1968–73: A Late/Post Roman Hilltop Settlement in Somerset* (Oxford: Tempus Repartum, 1992).
 - 13 Rahtz et al., *Cadbury Congresbury*, 227–31.
 - 14 *Ibid.*, 147–54, 230.
 - 15 *Ibid.*, 131–39.
 - 16 *Ibid.*, 230; Ian Burrow, “Roman Material from Hillforts,” in *The End of Roman Britain: Papers Arising from a Conference, Durham 1978*, ed. P. J. Casey (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1979), 212–29. A more recent taphonomic study of the site has confirmed Rahtz’s arguments (Ewen Campbell, *Continental and Mediterranean Imports to Atlantic Britain and Ireland, AD 400–800* [York: Council of British Archaeology, 2007], 103).
 - 17 Rahtz et al., *Cadbury Congresbury*, 131–39, 228.
 - 18 *Ibid.*, 132–33, 137, 228. Annette Haug has usefully defined heirlooms as objects which are about the remembrance of the relatively recent past, and are, therefore, objects that cannot be more than three or four generations old (“Constituting the Past—Forming the Present,” *Journal of the History of Collections* 13 [2001]: 112). Allen and Fulford have gathered ethnographic evidence concerning the typical longevity of pots in twentieth-century, ceramic-dependent cultures. They record that bowls tend to survive one to two years and medium cooking pots for seven to ten years. Large cooking pots and storage vessels last between 15 and 20 years (J. R. L. Allen and

- M. G. Fulford, "The Distribution of South-East Dorset Black Burnished Category I Pottery in South-West Britain," *Britannia* 27 [1996]: 25).
- 19 Rahtz et al., *Cadbury Congresbury*, 228, 230.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 147–48.
- 21 Nicholas Cooke, "The Definition and Interpretation of Late Roman Burial Rites in the Western Empire" (PhD diss., University College London, 1998), 240–41.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 228.
- 23 For the buildings, see Rahtz et al., *Cadbury Congresbury*, 230–37.
- 24 Rachel Pope, "Roundhouses: Three Thousand Years of Prehistoric Design," *Current Archaeology* 222 (2008): 14–21. For a discussion of the deskilling of the population in fifth-century Britain, see Fleming, "Recycling in Britain after the Fall of Rome's Metal Economy," *Past and Present* 217 (2012): 3–45.
- 25 Campbell, *Continental and Mediterranean Imports*, 14–26, 128.
- 26 *Ibid.*, 122–28, 132.
- 27 Roger David Penhallurick, *Tin in Antiquity: Its Mining and Trade throughout the Ancient World with Particular Reference to Cornwall* (London: Institute of Metals, 1986), 237. Byzantine interest in sources of tin along the Atlantic seaboard is witnessed by a late sixth-century Byzantine coin found in an early medieval tin mine at Abbaretz in Brittany (Leon Fleuriot and Pierre-Roland Giot, "Early Brittany," *Antiquity* 51 [1977]: 114; Campbell, *Continental and Mediterranean Imports*, 76).
- 28 Rahtz et al., *Cadbury Congresbury*, 237, 241–42; Campbell, *Continental and Mediterranean Imports*, 103.
- 29 Keith J. Fitzpatrick-Matthews and Gilbert R. Burleigh, eds., *Excavations at Baldock 1978–1994: Fieldwork by G. R. Burleigh* (Letchworth Garden City: North Hertfordshire District Council and North Hertfordshire Archaeological Society, 2010), 15–16, 37–43.
- 30 For detailed information on this cemetery and its finds, see Fitzpatrick-Matthews and Burleigh, *Excavations at Baldock 1978–1994*, Gilbert R. Burleigh and Mark Sterns, "Baldock Roman Burial and Burial Practice," in Archive Report, North Hertfordshire Museums (1992) (hereafter referred to as "Baldock Archive Report"); Gilbert R. Burleigh and Keith J. Fitzpatrick-Matthews, *Excavations at Baldock, Hertfordshire, 1978–1994: Vol. 1, An Iron Age and Romano-British Cemetery at Wallington Road*, North Hertfordshire Museums Archaeology Monograph 1 (2010): 14–21 and Appendix 2; Fitzpatrick-Matthews, "Collapse, Change or Continuity? Exploring the Three C's in Sub-Roman Britain," in *TRAC 2009: Proceedings of the 19th Annual Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference, Michigan and Southampton 2009*, ed. Alison Moore et al. (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2010), 135–49; Fitzpatrick-Matthews, "Defining Fifth-Century Ceramics in North Hertfordshire," unpublished paper presented at the Roman Pottery in the Fifth-Century AD Day-Conference (Newcastle, 2012); and Burleigh and Fitzpatrick-Matthews, *Draft Catalogue of Burials in the California Late Roman Cemetery* (forthcoming). I am grateful to Keith Fitzpatrick-Matthews for allowing me to see ceramics taken from the California cemetery, and for generously sharing with me a mountain of unpublished material on Baldock.
- 31 Fitzpatrick-Matthews and Burleigh, *Excavations at Baldock 1978–1994*, 45.
- 32 For a general discussion of burial in Roman Britain, see Robert Philpott, *Burial Practice in Ro-*

- man Britain: A Survey of Grave Treatment and Furnishing AD 43–410* (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1991). For a comparison of burial traditions in different regions, see Cooke, “Late Roman Burial Rites.” For a brief summary of burial practices in the Baldock cemeteries, see Gilbert R. Burleigh, “Some Aspects of Burial Types in the Cemeteries of the Romano-British Settlement at Baldock,” in *Römerzeitliche Gräber als Quellen zu Religion, Bevölkerungsstruktur und Sozialgeschichte* (Mainz: Institute für Vor- und Frühgeschichte der Johannes Gutenberg-Universität, 1993), 41–49.
- 33 For examples of late Roman burials at California with smashed pots, see Burleigh and Fitzpatrick-Matthews, *Draft Catalogue of Burials*, nos. 642, 1005; for a late Roman burial with fowl, no. 1198; for late Roman coffined burials, nos. 632, 642.
- 34 Fleming, “Recycling in Britain,” 3–45.
- 35 These people may have used old Roman pots in their daily lives as well, but if they did, we cannot see them, because any fourth-century sherds from pots, broken while in use in the fifth century, would simply appear to archaeologists as residual.
- 36 For examples of fifth-century coffined burials, see “Baldock Archive Report,” nos. 1318, 1422, and 3632; and Burleigh and Fitzpatrick-Matthews, *Draft Catalogue of Burials*, 1413. For post-Roman examples of coffins fastened with wooden dowels, see Burleigh and Fitzpatrick-Matthews, *Draft Catalogue of Burials*, nos. 1175, 1361. For examples of fifth-century hobnail-boot burials, see “Baldock Archive Report,” nos. 1132, 1413, 1422 and Burleigh and Fitzpatrick-Matthews, *Draft Catalogue of Burials*, no. 1267. For an example of fifth-century decapitation burials, see “Baldock Archive Report,” no. 1318, and Burleigh and Fitzpatrick-Matthews, *Draft Catalogue of Burials*, no. 643.
- 37 This pottery can be found at Museums Resource Centre, Hitchin, Herts. They are BAL 1.1132 and BAL 1.3632.
- 38 Mill Green Museum, Hatfield, Herts, HAT 165.42.190.
- 39 “Baldock Archive Report,” no. 1187.
- 40 Museums Resource Centre, Hitchin, Herts, BAL 1.1193; Mill Green Museum and Mill, Hatfield, Herts, Box 72, HAT 165.1153.70.9. I am grateful to Julie Godden who made it possible for me to examine the grave goods excavated from the Welwyn Hall cemetery at the Mill Green Museum and Mill.
- 41 Tom McDonald, “Welwyn Hall, Welwyn, Hertfordshire: An Archaeological Excavation,” Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust, Report no. 138 (1995, unpublished), 10; Tom McDonald and Andrew Pearson, “Excavations at Welwyn Hall, Welwyn, Hertfordshire,” Archaeological Solutions Ltd., Research Archive Report (2012, unpublished), 14–30. I am grateful to Isobel Thompson for sending me a copy of this report.
- 42 Museums Resource Centre, Hitchin, Herts, BAL 1.3632.
- 43 For a detailed discussion of the post-Roman fabrics at Baldock, see Fitzpatrick-Matthews, “Defining Fifth-Century Ceramics.” He describes the post-Roman pottery from Baldock as follows: “In most cases, the vessels were handmade but finished on a turntable, although one type (perhaps the latest) lacked the wheel finish. [...] Where forms can be recognised, they are late Roman or, in at least one case, early medieval in character.”
- 44 David Went and Gilbert Burleigh, “An Archaeological Assessment on the Route of the Humber-side to Buncefield Pipeline, Pirton, Hertfordshire,” North Hertfordshire District Council, De-

- partment of Engineering and Leisure, Field Archaeology Section (1990, unpublished), 8; Keith J. Fitzpatrick-Matthews, "Archaeological Data, Subcultures and Social Dynamics," *Antiquity* 69 (1995): 590 and "Collapse, Change or Continuity," 141 and fig. 6.
- 45 They collected these wares almost exclusively, rather than the much more ubiquitous Roman coarse wares and large storage jars, which make up the bulk of pottery finds on late Roman sites (Paul Booth, "Roman Pottery," in *Excavations at Radley Barrow Hills, Radley, Oxfordshire, Volume 2: The Romano-British Cemetery and Anglo-Saxon Settlement*, ed. Richard Chambers and Ellen McAdam [Oxford: Oxford University School of Archaeology, 2007], 36–37; Roberta Tomber and John Dore, *The National Roman Fabric Reference Collection: A Handbook* [London: Museum of London Archaeology, 1998], 176 and plate 147). At Cadbury Congresbury a variety of types of pots—gray wares, black wares, red wares, color-coats, and mortaria were all represented (Rahtz et al., *Cadbury Congresbury*, 148–51).
- 46 Chambers and McAdam, *Excavations at Radley Barrow Hills*, 7.
- 47 Paul Booth and Grace Edgeley-Long, "Prehistoric Settlement and Roman Pottery Production at Blackbird Leys, Oxford," *Oxoniensia* 68 (2003): 258–61.
- 48 Paul Booth, Angela Boyle, and Graham D. Keevill, "A Romano-British Kiln Site at Lower Farm, Nuneham Courtenay, and Other Sites on the Didcot to Oxford and Wootton to Abingdon Water Mains, Oxfordshire," *Oxoniensia* 58 (1993): 210.
- 49 Chambers and McAdams, *Excavations at Radley Barrow Hills*, 29–31.
- 50 Aside from coins, in Oxfordshire the only ubiquitous grave good in late Roman cemeteries is pottery, generally drinking vessels, especially beakers of Oxfordshire color-coated ware (Paul Booth, "Late Roman Cemeteries in Oxfordshire: A Review," *Oxoniensia* 66 [2001]: 34).
- 51 Paul Booth, Jeremy Evans, and Jonathan Hiller, *Excavations in the Extramural Settlement of Roman Alchester, Oxfordshire, 1991* (Oxford: Oxford Archaeological Unit for English Heritage, 2002), 103, 377 and fig. 7.57.
- 52 Booth, "Roman Pottery," 37–38.
- 53 The bases of footed bowls were preferred at Barrow Hills, as well as at other nearby communities where Roman pot bases were being modified, including Sutton Courtenay and Audlett Drive (John Moore, "Excavations at Oxford Science Park, Littlemore, Oxford," *Oxoniensia* 66 [2001]: 189). At Oxford Science Park, bowls, dishes, mortaria, and flagons were being collected (*ibid.*, 186, 188).
- 54 Chambers and McAdams, *Excavations at Radley Barrow Hills*, 257.
- 55 Reworked, mostly color-coated pot bases have also been found on early medieval sites in Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Northamptonshire, Norfolk, and Oxfordshire (C. L. Matthews and Sonia Chadwick Hawkes, "Early Saxon Settlements and Burials on Puddlehill, near Dunstable, Bedfordshire," *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 4 [1985]: 67; Michael Farley, "Saxon and Medieval Walton, Aylesbury, Excavations 1973–4," *Records of Buckinghamshire* 20 [1976]: 164–65; P. T. Marney and Robert John Williams, "Roman Pottery from Saxon Contexts at Pennyland," in *Pennyland and Hartigans: Two Iron Age and Saxon Sites in Milton Keynes*, ed. Robert John Williams [Aylesbury: Buckingham Archaeological Society, 1993], 243–45; Catriona Gibson with J. Murray, "An Anglo-Saxon Settlement at Godmanchester, Cambridgeshire," *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 12 [2003]: 156; Paul J. Drury and Nicholas Wickenden, "An Early Saxon Settlement within the Romano-British

- Small Town at Heybridge,” *Medieval Archaeology* 26 [1982]: 22–23; Donald F. Mackreth, “Orton Hall Farm: A Roman and Early Anglo-Saxon Farmstead,” *East Anglian Archaeology* 76 [1996]: 165, 189–90).
- 56 For a general discussion of these brooches, see Tania M. Dickinson, “Early Saxon Saucer Brooches: A Preliminary Overview,” *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 6 (1993): 11–44.
- 57 Tania M. Dickinson, “Material Culture as Social Expression: The Case of Saxon Saucer Brooches with Running Spiral Decorations,” *Studien zur Sachsenforschung* 7 (1991): 60.
- 58 Tania M. Dickinson, “Ornament Variation in Pairs of Cast Saucer Brooches: A Case Study from the Upper Thames Region,” in *Aspects of Production and Style in Dark Age Metalwork: Selected Papers Given to the British Museum Seminar on Jewellery, AD 500–600*, ed. Leslie Webster (London: British Museum, 1982), 34–35.
- 59 *Ibid.*, 23, 30, and table 2. It has previously been suggested that the templates for some, especially those with a convex profile, were made on lathes, and some, perhaps, from rounds of leather (Dickinson, “Discussion,” in *Excavations at Mucking, Volume 3: Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries*, ed. Sue Hirst and Dido Clark [London: Museum of London Archaeology, 2009], ii, 482; Dickinson, “Translating Animal Art: Style I and Anglo-Saxon Cast Saucer Brooches,” *Hikuin* 29 [2003]: 177).
- 60 For the basic profiles of saucer brooches, see Arthur MacGregor and Ellen Bolick, *A Summary Catalogue of the Anglo-Saxon Collections (Non-Ferrous Metals)* (Oxford: Ashmolean Museum Publications, 1993), 42.



DISPLAYING ROMAN BRITAIN IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM

Nancy Netzer

Between 43 CE, when the emperor Claudius invaded Britain, and 411 CE when the intruders withdrew from the island, the Roman army imposed on the existing Iron Age culture of Britons. Artifacts from that 368-year period continue to be mined by scholars, in conjunction with a more limited number of ancient texts by authors like Julius Caesar, Tacitus, and Cassius Dio that describe ancient Britons and the Roman occupation of their land, to piece together the story of daily life, politics, warfare, and the built environment in the province of Britannia. This remote province lay on the empire's western edge, outside the established circle of Mediterranean trade. The question of how the culture of the indigenous Celtic-speaking peoples melded with the Roman to shape customs and material goods unique within the empire has yet to be fully explored. The most prominent and geographically diverse assemblage of Britannia's material evidence, and thus one of the key sources for pursuing this inquiry, is found, not surprisingly, in the British Museum, the country's largest national repository, in which the glory of the collection redounds to the state.¹

Currently, most of the Romano-British² artifacts are housed in the Museum's Room 49 (fig. 13.1) within a building that enshrines a mere 8 million objects around which the institution weaves a narrative from an Anglocentric perspective in which Roman Britain plays a minor role.³ The following necessarily streamlined review of the growth of the relevant collections and their presentation over the Museum's more than 250-year history reveals that their evolution mirrors class struggles within British society and international rivalries as well as the maturing of the academic disciplines of archaeology and art history, changes in scholars' assessments of Britannia's role in the Roman Empire, and public perceptions of how the Roman Empire serves as a model for Britain's emerging empire. The stories that the current installation tells are many and have evolved considerably since the first Romano-British works entered the collection in the eighteenth century.

ROMANO-BRITISH ARTIFACTS IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM, 1753–1900

The British Museum began life in 1753 as a latter day “cabinet of curiosities” founded upon the collection of about 71,000 objects assembled by the physician Sir Hans Sloane.⁴ Among them were at least two-dozen modest Romano-British specimens, including fragments of mosaic pavements found on the site of St. Paul's Cathedral,⁵ ceramics,⁶ glass,⁷ steatite,⁸ and small metalwork⁹ of the type represented by Plates 62–65.¹⁰ Over the course of the nineteenth century, the institution mutated into a museum of antiquities and works of art.



13.1. Room 49, "Roman Britain" in the British Museum as seen from Room 50, "Britain and Europe 800 BC–AD 43."

Acquisition and installation of its classical collections played a key role in shaping this transformation and in presenting the development of art in antiquity as an evolutionary progression, a "chain of art" in which the rise and fall of civilization could be charted link by link.¹¹ By the mid-nineteenth century, the British Museum had secured, largely through the initiative of the country's foreign-based diplomats and aided by the nation's navy in the Mediterranean, a large and celebrated collection of classical art, the primary emphasis of which was marble sculpture.¹² Among this assemblage, works of art from Greece were viewed as the supreme accomplishments, while those from Rome, many copies of Greek originals, were regarded as embodying the inescapable decline of civilization.

The lion's share of the British Museum's Roman holdings in the nineteenth century was purchased from the estate of Charles Townley (1737–1805). Educated at the Jesuit Douai College, Townley began collecting antiquities on his first trip to Italy in 1768. He continued buying robustly and piecemeal, largely from his home in England through a number of British dealers in Italy. Eventually he opened his London house, packed with antiquities, as a private museum and gathering

place for connoisseurs and antiquarians interested in the classical world.¹³

When Townley's Roman marbles reached the British Museum in 1808, they were displayed in a series of rooms in an addition to Montagu House that had been conceived to show off the celebrated Egyptian collection. Indeed, monumental Egyptian sculpture, viewed at the time as a less sophisticated precursor to that produced by the Greeks, filled the addition's principal gallery; smaller rooms held Townley's marbles, so-called Campana terracotta reliefs and Roman funerary monuments. The latter sat in niches reminiscent of *columbaria* in Roman catacombs. Creating such a *mise-en-scène* had its roots in eighteenth-century installations and became a preferred mode of display for funerary artifacts in the early nineteenth century.¹⁴ From the outset the installation of the Townley marbles was intended to convey, subliminally, the country's power by suggesting analogies between the burgeoning British Empire and the esteemed Roman.¹⁵

Few Romano-British objects found their way into the British Museum during its early years and none of them seems to have been integrated into the Townley display. In 1774, Hugh Smithson, the first Duke of Northumberland, presented the young institution with an unadorned third-century altar found at the site of the Roman military base at Corbridge. Its significance lay in its Greek inscription attesting to the presence of a priestess of an eastern cult in Britain.¹⁶ At the time, general opinion maintained that Britain's artistic products under the Romans were inferior to those made on the Continent, just as the nation's present state of art was regarded as lacking the excellence of its Continental counterparts. Simply put, in the eighteenth century and during times of great international rivalry in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars, the British climate and character were denounced as having destined the country to the status of "cultural backwater."¹⁷ On the whole, the province of Britannia was viewed as a remote military outpost. It seemed logical that the Museum's trustees would not choose to sully the displays with such provincial material. Rather, they focused on competing with national museums across Europe to acquire the types of Greek and non-provincial Roman antiquities that had for centuries been markers of imperial success and status.

Trustee priorities seem not to have been challenged by some impressive Roman artifacts that had been unearthed in Britain as early as the eighteenth century. For example, an enameled cup from a villa at Rudge in Wiltshire, and a splendid silver serving platter

(*lanx*) decorated in relief with gods and goddesses from Corbridge had been excavated in 1725 and 1735 respectively. Although they remained in the Duke of Northumberland's collections at Alnwick Castle, their quality was known from drawings and engravings in early publications.¹⁸ Indeed the Rudge Cup, a souvenir, beautifully decorated in enamel and probably made to commemorate a high ranking officer's visit to five forts at Hadrian's Wall, is deemed so important now that it appears in replica in Room 49's current installation.¹⁹ There, it has been installed to provide context for more recent finds of comparably decorated cups from Braughing and Staffordshire.²⁰ The Corbridge Lanx finally acquired in 1993 now commands a prominent position in Room 49 (fig. 13.2).

Among the British Museum's earliest nineteenth-century gifts of Romano-British material were a limestone relief unearthed at Great Chesterford representing the gods of the week²¹ and a square ornamental floor mosaic from the third century found during excavations on the site of the Bank of England (1806).²² By 1853 the mosaic had clearly garnered enough attention through its display in the Museum to inspire the Copeland & Garrett factory to adopt its design for a tile.²³

In 1808 another, more significant, Romano-British mosaic joined the collection. This was a section of the great fourth-century floor depicting Orpheus charming the world with his lyre from a Roman villa originally discovered in 1695 at Woodchester in Gloucestershire.²⁴ The site was rediscovered in 1793 and recorded in detail by the engraver and one of the first archaeologist/antiquarians of Roman Britain, Samuel Lysons (1763–1819).²⁵ Although he was president of the Society of Antiquaries, the principal repository for British antiquities at the time, Lysons chose to present the work to the British Museum in the same year that Townley's collection of classical marbles, large bronzes, and terracottas made its way to the institution. One might speculate that the impressive quality (and size and fame of the original) of the Woodchester pavement inspired him to offer it as an aesthetic equivalent to Townley's Italian antiquities.

Other fragments of fourth-century mosaics showing a sea god and Orpheus (a popular theme in Britannia) from a large villa in Withington followed in 1812²⁶ along with three stone altars carved with standing gods that had been excavated at Kings Stanley in 1781.²⁷ A remarkable group of eight third-century bronze statuettes of Roman gods unearthed at Southbroom in the early eighteenth century and rendered in the indigenous style, thereby epitomizing the complex blending of cultures, came into the collection in 1811.²⁸ In 1813 the Earl of Ashburnham donated a fine first-century bronze statuette of Nero (fig. 13.3) with silver and copper plating said to have been found at Barking Hall in Suffolk.²⁹ A few other Romano-British early arrivals to the Museum's collection came in 1814 with the second purchase of smaller antiquities from Charles Townley's estate. Among the coins, engraved gems, and pottery was a military hoard from the late first or early second century discovered in 1796 at the site of a Roman fort at Ribchester in Lancashire. The prize in this lot, a two-piece visor helmet, was the subject of Townley's sole publication.³⁰

Around this time, Romano-British artifacts had begun to attract attention with the publication of four volumes between 1813 and 1817 by Lysons and Richard Smirke entitled *Reliquiae Britannico-Romanae* with 156 engravings of works found in Britain. Despite



13.2. Case with Corbridge Lanx and Mileham silver dish.



13.3. Bronze head of Hadrian, bronze hand, statuette of Nero, and coin of Nero. Case behind with bronzes collected by A. W. Franks.

vessels, and leather shoes excavated in 1801 at Southfleet in Kent.³⁴ Part of a second-century mosaic pavement from Threadneedle Street in London arrived in 1841.³⁵ And, one of the great trophies, an over-life-size bronze head of Hadrian (fig. 13.3) dredged from the Thames in 1834 entered the collection in 1848.³⁶

Several of these works seem to have been displayed in various places within the Museum, including an “ethnographical room” where they kept company with Mexican, Hindu, Islamic, and Chinese artifacts.³⁷ None of the Romano-British objects, however, seems to have impressed the German art historian Gustav Waagen (1794–1868) when he catalogued the “treasures of art” in Great Britain in 1835 and, again, in 1850. Going room by room through the British Museum, Waagen devotes several pages to describing the Townley marbles and other antiquities including examples from medieval Britain, and virtually ignores the Romano-British collection.³⁸ In 1850 the Museum’s Keeper of Antiquities since 1826, Edward Hawkins (1780–1867), purchased a hoard of first- and second-century Roman gold and silver jewelry and other objects from a pagan shrine, which had been unearthed presumably near Backworth by Hadrian’s Wall in about 1811.³⁹ At the time, however, Hawkins viewed these Romano-British artifacts as “isolated” and “amusing” specimens in need of others for comparison in order to create an instructive display like that of Danish antiquities installed in the Danish National Collection in Copenhagen more than three decades earlier.⁴⁰

With the establishment of the British Archaeological Association in 1843, local excavations throughout the country attracted popular interest, encouraging amateurs as well as the professional members of the Archaeological Institute, founded in 1845, to pressure the British Museum to stop neglecting British antiquities and, instead, to serve as their repository.⁴¹ Thus, when Hawkins appointed the archaeologist and collector Augustus Wollaston Franks (1826–97) in 1851 to a new post as assistant in the Department of Antiquities, the latter’s mandate was to augment its British collections and establish a gallery for British antiquities. Franks’s task would not be easy as these materials still garnered little interest among the trustees and academics in general. In his handbook of antiquities in the British Museum of 1851, William Sandys Vaux deemed the newly installed gallery with “Anglo-Roman” objects “too insufficiently arranged to admit of classification and description.”⁴² In the same year, British archaeology went unrepresented in the Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace.⁴³

the absence of an active acquisition policy in this area, significant Romano-British donations trickled into the Museum’s collection over the next three decades. In 1824 the classical scholar and collector Richard Payne Knight (1750–1824) bequeathed the treasure of highly decorated silver vessels discovered at Capheaton, Northumberland, in 1747³¹ as well as a very fine bronze oil flask in the shape of a sleeping child slave found at Aldborough.³² A large square silver dish of fourth-century date entered the collection shortly after it was excavated at Mileham in Norfolk in 1839 (fig. 13.2).³³ In 1836 the Reverend George Rashleigh presented the Museum with a child’s sarcophagus and an assortment of metal objects, glass ves-

At the same time, Franks began by adding works like a Roman sarcophagus found at Binstead in Hampshire, complete with its contents,⁴⁴ another decorated sarcophagus of a boy,⁴⁵ a local tombstone from Blackfriars with a carved head of the deceased,⁴⁶ fourth-century pewter tableware from a hoard found at Icklingham,⁴⁷ and recently discovered fragments of a fourth-century floor mosaic from a villa at Abbots Ann.⁴⁸ In 1852 he received a large inscribed tombstone of one Aulus Alfidius born in Athens⁴⁹ and pieces of a monumental tomb⁵⁰ (fig. 13.4) reused in a fourth-century bastion of London's Roman town wall, which with the subsequent discovery of more fragments, reconstruction, and interpretation of the inscription would turn out to be of great significance.

By 1855 some of the large stone monuments and mosaics (cropped to squares of similar size and hung in a line to decorate empty space between the sculptures and the high ceiling) from Britannia kept company with Townley's marbles in the Museum's long gallery to the west of the front hall.⁵¹ The British sculptures were segregated on the opposite side of the room below windows that lighted their Mediterranean counterparts on the other side. There were additional local mosaics hung in the northeast staircase and 37 cases of Romano-British artifacts must have occupied a large portion of a "British and Medieval Room."⁵² A few years later, Franks made his largest purchase of Romano-British material, which still forms the core of the Museum's collection from this period.

Since about 1835, the pharmacist and amateur archaeologist Charles Roach Smith (1807–90) had been recording, describing, and collecting Roman and medieval objects uncovered during commercial excavations for wider streets, buildings, railways, bridges, sewers, and water pipes as part of London's redevelopment in the first half of the nineteenth century. Rescuing relics of the past, he often purchased artifacts, most of little artistic merit, directly from workmen at the site. By 1855 he had amassed several thousand Romano-British objects, primarily metalwork, sculpture, pottery, and coins, which he offered to the British Museum for purchase. After much debate in the House of Commons and haggling over price, the Trustees bought the collection in 1856.⁵³



13.4. Tomb of Gaius Julius Alpinus Classicianus.

Franks appreciated both historical and aesthetic values among the objects from Roach Smith. Displaying national pride, he singles out one of the ornamental plaques as "probably the finest enamel of the Roman period now preserved."⁵⁴ The purchase also brought him a bronze hand⁵⁵ (fig. 13.3) that may have been from the colossal statue of Hadrian whose head came to the Museum eight years earlier. With the addition of Roach Smith's collection, Franks now had a critical assemblage of Romano-British objects around which to build an independent department and to begin shaping a visual narrative, especially concerning the activities of the Roman army throughout the country and buildings and provincial life in London in particular.

The Museum formally separated Romano-British antiquities from the Greek and Roman in 1860 when they appointed Franks keeper of British, medieval, and ethnographic collections.⁵⁶ Such a separation is not surprising, especially as much of the Romano-British material was late antique and therefore outside the foci of the Museum's Roman collections from the Mediterranean. Perhaps more importantly, the division between those pursuing inter-

ests in the archaeology of Greece and Rome and that of Britain had deep roots embedded in class distinctions dating back to, at least, the seventeenth century. Having read the classics in Greek and Latin, rich aristocrats, the likes of Townley and Smithson, traveled to Italy on the Grand Tour where they purchased antiquities to decorate their London townhouses and country villas to reflect the splendor of their antique counterparts. They funded lavish catalogues of their collections. Without the requisite means to travel abroad, middle-class, “lesser” men, like Roach Smith, were forced to pursue their passion for archaeology in land close to home. Thus, clergymen, academics, pharmacists, doctors, gardeners, and former military officers collected Romano-British antiquities in more modest homes where display space was limited. With more archaeological and historical rather than artistic interest, they focused on gathering the trappings of daily life in towns and suburban villas and on apparatus of the military in an effort to document how the Romans administered an empire similar to their own.⁵⁷ Until his retirement in 1896, Franks expanded Romano-British holdings, encouraging donations and buying works from these local antiquaries. An outlier in this group would be Queen Victoria, who in 1866 donated a grave box made of tiles found at Windsor.⁵⁸ Franks purchased many works personally and gave them to the Museum, including an outstanding assemblage of bronze statuettes now displayed together with a tribute to him in Room 49 (fig. 13.3).

THE ROMANO-BRITISH COLLECTION IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

In 1899 much of the Romano-British collection was confined to storage to make room for the Waddesdon Bequest.⁵⁹ Some works remained on view in cases in the Central Saloon on the upper floor, but it was not until after the First World War in 1918 that a new “Room of Roman Britain” opened in renovated space at the top of the main staircase.⁶⁰ Many of the larger stone monuments and mosaics remained downstairs in the Roman gallery⁶¹ and some of the latter still hung in the northeast staircase. By this time the collection had a new keeper, O. M. Dalton, who oversaw the writing of a guidebook to the new installation by his deputy Reginald Smith. The 136-page *Guide to the Antiquities of Roman Britain in the Department of British and Mediaeval Antiquities*, published in 1922 (the equivalent of modern wall text, extended labels, and audio guide in one) describes the contents of 57, seemingly densely packed, cases in the new gallery on the upper floor as well as the Romano-British stone monuments and mosaics downstairs and on the staircase. It offers a glimpse at how the collections were laid out, viewed, and interpreted by their keepers.⁶² Some grave groups were kept together in their own cases, citing their importance as aids to establishing dates for contemporaneous objects. Several cases and a shelf along the wall were dedicated to artifacts of burial; together they constructed a story of gradual transition from cremation to inhumation and from pagan to Christian religious beliefs.⁶³ One might suspect that this emphasis on death in the installation reflects a current national preoccupation after the war that took so many British lives.

For the most part, however, objects were grouped in the traditional manner, by type. Artifacts like sculpture, jewelry, glass, Samian ware, pottery, building materials, milestones, and stamped ingots were clustered, often configured in a proposed chronological sequence, to tell their respective accounts of technique, workshop locations, importation, and stylistic development. For example, lead pigs were arranged in chronological order according to their inscriptions to flesh out the story of Roman mining in Britain.⁶⁴ Fragments of wall paintings and mosaics served as evidence for envisioning interior decorative schemes in Britannia’s villas and houses.⁶⁵ The guidebook’s text emphasizes context for each find and the reproduction and decipherment of inscriptions. The latter, especially, enhance the picture of military organization. A proposed development of brooches was carefully chroni-

pled.⁶⁶ And, arms and armor merited detailed drawings and generous descriptions in the guide, calling attention to any native “Keltic” characteristics.⁶⁷

That the outstanding statuette of Nero (fig. 13.3) serves as the book’s frontispiece belies the focus of its text (and the installation) on the objects’ archaeological context and historical significance. Such emphasis is not surprising. Superseding antiquarian study of the material in the eighteenth century, scientific archaeology had emerged by the mid-nineteenth century. About the same time, art history, concerned with issues of style, aesthetic value, and iconography, began to take shape as an academic discipline, but archaeology always seems to have had the upper hand and to have commanded more respect in the British academy. Boundaries between the two fields of inquiry in organizing and interpreting museum collections have never been clearly drawn.⁶⁸

Notwithstanding the inclusion of a number of artistically fine works in the Romano-British collection, the guide’s lengthy introduction relies principally on ancient texts, chiefly Tacitus, to rehearse the history of the Romans in Britain. The author makes scant reference to the collection’s artifacts, specifically only to coins and inscriptions. The former serve to amplify notions of cultural and stylistic progress engendered through contact with the Romans; the latter are used to endorse acceptance of Roman deities and their identification with native gods and heroes, the emperor’s divinity, and personified virtues.⁶⁹ Inscriptions on tombstones and military diplomas are mined for details concerning distant origins of the troops stationed in Britannia, an explicable preoccupation in 1922 when the British held the largest empire in history and for an author declaring: “the Roman history of Britain is mainly military.”⁷⁰

Two passages epitomize how the keepers viewed the collection and the messages it professed:

The Romans left little of permanent value behind them in this country. Their system of government, their laws and institutions, religion, language and writing, science and learning were all but ruined in the next two centuries, and had to be slowly and painfully re-introduced for the benefit of our Anglo-Saxon forefathers. Compared with the continent, the material relics of their occupation in Britain are meagre and unattractive.⁷¹

What happened to Early British art can only be imagined. It had nothing in common with the somewhat debased classicism of the provinces, but, in competition with it, did not become extinct. Traces revealing its master of curve [i.e., Celtic La Tène motifs] can be detected here and there. [...] Under the chilling influence of Rome, native talent declined and only blossomed again when its roots were transferred to the free and sympathetic soil of Ireland. [...] The human figure was never a strong point with the Keltic artist, but such work as the stone head from Towcester, Northants, [fig. 13.5] must be attributed rather to a clumsy pupil of the Roman school than to a degenerate British craftsman.⁷²

This mindset leaves an imprint on descriptions of even the most finely executed objects. For example, the Roman armor of the statuette of Nero mentioned above is highlighted while its style is dismissed as “provincial rather than purely classical” and “probably Gaulish.”⁷³ Displayed in the same case was the colossal bronze head of Hadrian, which is dismissed as “well-modeled and executed” but “not quite successful as a portrait.”⁷⁴ In evaluating a superior statuette of Mars with an elaborate inscription indicating its local production, the author opts to label it “of unusual quality for Britain”⁷⁵ rather than see it as a signal that attribution criteria require rethinking. The elaborate silver handles of the Capheaton treasure

are assigned to either Egypt or Gaul.⁷⁶ And, the artistic value of the mosaic pavements is for the most part dismissed as “owing to the want of variety and quality in the raw material” never reaching “a high level.” Townley’s fragment from the Woodchester villa is set apart, however, as of “more than ordinary merit.”⁷⁷ Only local enamelwork garners praise. The plaque singled out by Franks at the time of its acquisition is distinguished as the most important enamel in the collection.⁷⁸ The prevailing message conveyed by the 1918 installation seems to have been that the material evidence of Roman Britain, especially artifacts bearing inscriptions, serves as a handmaiden to classical textual accounts of the period and that “Romano-British art” might well be regarded as an oxymoron.

Martin Henig has pointed out that after 1961 such denigration and dismissal of Romano-British art should have come to an end.⁷⁹ That year, in a groundbreaking exhibition, the classical archaeologist Jocelyn Toynbee selected, displayed, and catalogued nearly 200 of the finest works of “art” from Roman Britain in collections throughout the country.⁸⁰ At least a dozen came from the British Museum, including a few early discoveries, like the Ribchester Helmet,⁸¹ Corbridge Lanx⁸² (fig. 13.2), silver skillets from the Capheaton and Backworth treasures,⁸³ a bronze lamp in the form of a sleeping child,⁸⁴ and the statuette of Mars, whose high

quality confounded the author of the 1922 guide.⁸⁵ Toynbee gets around the problem presented by the latter by proposing a “provincial, probably Gaulish” immigrant craftsman working in Britain. In general, she resists attributing any work of high artistic merit to British craftsmen, establishing instead an aesthetic hierarchy in assigning origin. The very finest examples like the Corbridge Lanx she sees as imports from the Mediterranean by high-ranking Roman officials. In this category, she also places the second-century marble bust from Lullingstone villa⁸⁶ and the most splendid of the fourth-century decorated silver vessels, the large round dish and several small dishes and platters from the treasure unearthed at Mildenhall in the early 1940s. For the Mildenhall pieces, she even goes so far as to propose the possibility of a “Roman studio.”⁸⁷

Fine works of her second tier, the Backworth and Capheaton examples, and the scalloped bowls from the Mildenhall hoard she attributes to Gaulish craftsmen. A bronze head of Claudius found in the River Alde in Suffolk, she assigns to a “well-trained Gaulish artist who had never seen the Emperor in the flesh.”⁸⁸ Similarly, a bronze head of a Celtic god from a hoard found at Felmingham Hall appears “provincial, perhaps Gaulish.”⁸⁹ The bronze lamp

of a sleeping child betrays the “sensitive hand of a gifted continental artist.” To her mind, the painter of the well-executed second-century floral painted frieze from a house in Verulamium (St. Albans), excavated in 1956 and a unique example from Roman Britain, must have “come from abroad.”⁹⁰

Only the colossal stone head of the underworld goddess from Towcester (fig. 13.5), maligned in the 1922 guide and described by Toynbee as having a “fierce, quasi-barbaric quality”⁹¹ and the crown and diadem from the Hockwold temple treasure with “crudely drawn”⁹² repoussé figures are deemed assignable to local craftsmen. For an “unpretentious, homely” bronze statuette of a plowman with oxen, she acknowledges a liminal position “worked with taste and sincerity, perhaps in Gaul, if not actually in Britain.”⁹³ These works and several spectacular treasures unearthed in more recent decades have contributed to redressing some balance between art historical and archaeological narratives in Room 49,



13.5. Limestone head of an underworld goddess from Towcester, Northamptonshire.

which unites nearly all of the Museum's Romano-British holdings, including the monumental stonework and mosaics. Room 49, titled simply "Roman Britain" without classifying its contents, reshuffles some artifacts, which by this time have emerged victorious from their struggle within the institution to achieve status as valued national patrimony.

ROAMING IN THE PROVINCE OF BRITANNIA: ROOM 49 TODAY

Entering the British Museum through the grand neoclassical portal on Great Russell Street, the visitor imbibes the supreme importance of the classical tradition. This was the scenario scripted by the building's trustee commissioners in the mid-nineteenth century. Educated in Greek and Latin and ancient history, these aristocratic men had admired ancient edifices on their Grand Tours. For them the Roman Empire brought civilization to the native, barbaric Britons. It is not unexpected then that many of the imposing rooms on the main floor have always been dedicated to Greek and Roman antiquities, many of them monumental sculptures, with the grandest space allocated to the Parthenon marbles. Nor does it surprise, given the historical context, that Romano-British antiquities are located on the "upper" floor, on the opposite side of the building.⁹⁴ Echoing the distance between Britannia and Rome, the gallery is about as far as possible from those housing the products of the imperial capital. Moreover, the method of display, interpretive strategies, and messages imparted in Room 49 (fig. 13.1), which was last reinstalled in the 1990s, are equally distant from the commodious presentation of Roman marbles as revered works of art downstairs. Formal installation principles prizing balance, symmetry, and the creation of grand vistas for key objects, embraced downstairs, are here given little regard in favor of a stronger instructional narrative.

Sandwiched between Room 50, "Britain and Europe 800 BC–AD 43," and Room 41, "Sutton Hoo and Europe, AD 300–1100," Room 49 is the largest and most densely packed in the enfilade lining the east side of the building. Room 50 trumpets the skill and wealth of the large indigenous British societies that the Romans were to encounter with impressive objects like the Battersea Shield⁹⁵ and the Great Torc from Snettisham⁹⁶ decorated with Celtic curvilinear motifs.

Whether the visitor enters "Roman Britain" from medieval Europe to look back in time at a more restricted geographic area or from the Iron Age in Europe to move forward chronologically to view changes brought on by the Roman conquest in Britain alone, s/he reads the same introductory text. It picks up sequentially from Room 50 orienting visitors by identifying Claudius as the emperor who invaded Britain in 43 and marking 100 as the date by which England, Wales, and some of Scotland had been conquered. The panel goes on to credit the Romans for building towns, roads and villas, making Latin the official language, and introducing Roman law and money, thereby reinforcing the time-honored theory that the empire civilized savage Britons. The text ends with an enticement to visitors to explore the adjacent Room 41, newly installed in 2014, by declaring the collapse of the province "in the early fifth century as continental peoples from beyond the frontiers invaded." Buried in the short text is one sentence hinting that traditional understandings of Romans engendering cultural progress have been revised in Room 49: "A 'Romano-British' culture developed as new settlers from across the empire mixed with the local population."

Further into the gallery, a short wall text entitled "Roman Britain: The Nature of the Evidence" reveals more about principles underlying the display. It explains that Britain appears first in ancient texts of the Roman period, but, unlike the introduction to the 1922 guide, cautions visitors that the historical outline of the province derived from such sources is incomplete and often biased. The text proceeds to laud archaeology for its crucial role in revising and expanding the picture of Roman Britain. Thus, it divulges that the predominant organizing principle for the thousands of objects in the room centers on categorizing



13.6. Mildenhall Treasure (Great Dish on right).

conveys the message that Roman-Britons produced (although, oddly, no mention of its attribution is found on its accompanying label) and erected monumental statues of the emperor that looked like those in other public spaces throughout the empire.

Filling a long case near the gallery's entrance from medieval Europe is a magnificent lineup of the Mildenhall tableware (fig. 13.6). The silver dishes decorated with Bacchic themes and spoons, some bearing Christian symbols, conjure up images of wealthy owners and their guests with multiple religious affiliations, contemplating both pagan gods and Christ as they ate. Countering older notions of lack of refinement in the remote province and flaunting national pride, the silver's shimmering glare of opulence impresses upon the visitor that high quality personal possessions were imported to Britannia for use by persons of wealth and high status. Given their origin and quality, these are clearly works that could have been claimed, and indeed might have been had they been unearthed earlier, for the Roman galleries downstairs.

The other two must-sees are not aesthetic attractions as signaled by their presentation. The significance of the ink writing tablets discovered beginning in 1973 at the Roman military post at Vindolanda (fig. 13.7) stems from the texts written on them, which reveal new

the various types of knowledge of Romano-British culture they offer. Sometimes blurring distinctions between art history and archaeology, the installation juxtaposes cases designed to highlight aesthetic achievement with others conceived to display visual evidence of life in the province.

Four must-sees called out on the introductory panel epitomize this interpretive duality. Two of the four, the Mildenhall Treasure and the Hadrian bronze head, are of high aesthetic merit and are shown off fittingly in well-lighted spacious cases. Raised on a block to eye level surrounded by his presumed hand and the statuette of Nero, Hadrian, now usually assigned to a local workshop,⁹⁷ occupies a large case in the center of the room (fig. 13.3), which

information about the daily life of garrisoned soldiers in Britain and about Latin cursive script in about 100 CE.⁹⁸

The large stone tomb (fig. 13.4) exhibits a rare confluence of material evidence and textual sources. This is the reconstruction mentioned above from fragments discovered in London's Roman town wall, first in 1852 and subsequently in 1885 and 1935, to reveal the name on the inscription as Gaius Julius Alpinus Classicianus. He is known from Tacitus's account as an aristocratic Gaul who became Roman finance minister (*procurator*) in Britain in 61 CE following a failed local rebellion and restored peace to the province.⁹⁹ Commissioned, according to the inscription, by



13.7. Case with a Vindolanda tablet.

his wife, the tomb is presumably of local manufacture and provides evidence that foreigners associated with the Roman administration in Britannia had the wherewithal to erect grand monuments for themselves.

In addition to the four works featured on the wall text, a few others are enshrined in positions of prominence. The central medallion of a mid-fourth-century mosaic from a villa floor at Hinton St. Mary (fig. 13.8) excavated between 1963 and 1964 takes pride of place in a large case near the center of the room.¹⁰⁰ That it bears the earliest known mosaic picture of Christ elevates it, according to the accompanying text, to “one of the most important early Christian remains from the Roman Empire.” Indeed it is one of the works chosen by director Neil MacGregor recently for his highly popular *A History of the World in 100 Objects*.¹⁰¹

Nearby in a dedicated large case are the fourth-century Corbridge Lanx (fig. 13.2) shown upright on a riser with the Mileham silver dish lying beside. Although the Lanx depicts a scene at the shrine of Apollo, labels explain that at least one other piece from the hoard (melted down long ago) bore Christian symbols, again reinforcing current understanding that elites in Roman Britain maintained multiple affiliations.¹⁰²

Other displays in Room 49 expand knowledge of local workshops and the enduring legacy of pre-Roman local culture. Confronting the visitor immediately upon entering Room 49 from the medieval gallery, atop a high pedestal, sits the stone head of an underworld goddess unearthed at Towcester (fig. 13.5). Blending indigenous characteristics, like spiraled locks of hair, with the flatness and exaggerated features of Roman theater masks, the colossal head announces a distinctive Roman provincial artistic identity for Britannia, an important, albeit understudied, theme that, alas, is not developed throughout the installation.

Several other long cases dedicated to precious-metal hoards excavated over the last few decades, present many spectacular late antique works. Stylistic consistency among the silver tableware and magnificent jewelry found in 1979 near Thetford in Norfolk suggests it is the product of one local workshop where skill and creativity matched the best produced in the empire.¹⁰³ Unearthed in 1992 the Hoxne Hoard, comprising more than 15,000 gold and silver coins, jewelry, and silver tableware, tells a similar story.¹⁰⁴ It presents some exquisitely crafted unique objects that expand the canon, like a silver handle in the shape of a tigress and a gilded silver pepper pot taking the form of a bust of a grand Roman lady. The latter recently achieved fame as another of MacGregor’s 100 objects and hence serves as a magnet for visitors.¹⁰⁵ The hoard of silver vessels and plaques decorated with *chi-rho* found at Water Newton in 1974 adds to the room’s narrative the earliest known assemblage of Christian church silver from anywhere in the empire. Votive plaques offered to a hitherto unknown Celtic goddess Senuna from the Ashwell Hoard discovered in 2002 provide new insights into ritual practices in Roman Britain. An outstanding second-century limestone head from a cult statue of Mercury unearthed at Uley in 1978 reveals unequivocally that some local craftsmen could produce works in indigenous stone in the finest Greco-Roman style.¹⁰⁶ For the most part now enshrined as works of art, providing a counterpoint to the archaeological focus of the gallery’s installation, these recent finds, however, still elicit little detailed analysis of their aesthetic properties in the accompanying texts. Works are not juxtaposed to explore regional styles within the province, nor are objects of similar type from other parts



13.8. Case with the Hinton St. Mary mosaic.



13.9. Case with Romano-British glass describing glass making techniques.

of the empire introduced in the gallery to make instructive comparisons that would highlight characteristics of British provincial styles.

Many of the more recent discoveries allow the installation to add a chapter to its story that would have been impossible (and perhaps unimaginable) 50 years ago, that is of lavish living and conspicuous displays of wealth in personal adornment and decoration of villas by the elite class during the last century of Roman rule in Britain.¹⁰⁷ They also reveal that at least some members of this ruling class embraced paganism and Christianity as compatible.

Among the hundreds of other artifacts stacked on the gallery's walls, and in rows of long cases and on platforms, older examples tend to be clustered at the entrance from the Iron Age gallery; third–fourth century works are closer to the door leading to medieval Europe. Myriad exceptions to this chronological layout emanate from the largely thematic groupings of objects which tell more archaeological and historical stories. Groupings of artifacts from three cremation burials of various dates are gathered to instruct on the nature of archaeological evidence; one from St. Albans

reveals that Roman goods and customs were present in Britain before the military conquest in 43; another from Elsenham discovered in 1990 demonstrates the context for dating to the second century an extraordinary small box with millefiori enamel,¹⁰⁸ and by extrapolation others like it made in the Rhineland and Low Countries. Displayed in abundance, Roman coins, often hoards of military pay found primarily in the new Roman towns, indicate use restricted to urban areas.

A wall case with first- to third-century gold and silver hoards from Backworth, Capheaton, and Hockwold, all possibly religious treasure, are less showy than the extravagant pieces across the room from the last century of Roman rule. Many of the small bronze artifacts, occasionally elaborately decorated with enamel, are displayed as military apparatus. Even a finely crafted statuette of Mars inlaid with silver is touted on its label only for its “characteristic warlike attire.”¹⁰⁹ Large cases labeled “Warfare,” “The Roman Army,” “Role of the Army in Britain,” and “Legionary Soldiers” gather arms and equipment as material evidence of the daily life and exploits of the military, on the one hand reinforcing old stereotypes of the province's culture, and, on the other, demonstrating how the army introduced new methods of warfare over its nearly four centuries of occupation.

Many stories relying on evidence conveyed by the more modest objects assembled in the nineteenth century told in the 1918 installation are retold here in revised form in individual cases dedicated to groupings of materials like glass (fig. 13.9), coinage, pewter, Samian ware and other pottery (fig. 13.10), lamps, and building materials, and themes like pagan religions, Christianity, eating and drinking, mother-goddesses, preventive medicine, language and literacy, and jewelry.



13.10. Case with Romano-British pottery and Samian ware.

The latter narrative especially has been much enhanced by the unearthing of a mid-second-century jeweler's hoard at Snettisham in 1985.¹¹⁰ This hoard allows an arrangement of the Museum's vast collection of jewelry to demonstrate the co-existence of Greco-Roman and native traditions in jewelry manufactured locally, with examples in precious metals favoring the former and those of more mundane materials more likely preserving indigenous styles.

CONCLUSION

The result of collecting activities which grew in tandem with the vicissitudes of excavations over nearly three centuries, Room 49's abundant and varied artifacts, many of which can be put to use to illuminate various themes, offer unusual opportunity to construct a complex and detailed story of life in Roman Britain. This brief review of the history of the collection within the Museum and the academic, social, and political forces that influenced its interpretation reveals the roots of many of the stories now told in Room 49. On the whole, the arrangement for the objects conceived in 1918 has died hard, with the result that Room 49 still privileges many of the same themes. This in turn may explain to some extent why in regard to issues of style and attribution of origin the installation has not fully explored and embraced implications of recent discoveries. Several of these finds, like the Uley head of Mercury, highlight how even Toynbee's attributions and denigration of local craftsmanship might benefit from comprehensive rethinking according greater appreciation for indigenous production and its unique characteristics. And, careful analysis combined with well-chosen juxtapositions of objects (especially comparing examples from different hoards like Hoxne and Water Newton) might well yield valuable new insights into localization, regional styles, and workshop practices.¹¹¹

National museums usually seize the opportunity to build identity and broadcast a nationalistic message in galleries with local objects. In the case of Room 49, a prevailing, albeit statistically unfounded, sense that the English descend from Anglo-Saxons who outnumbered the native British population¹¹² coupled with a lack of esteem for local Roman craftsmanship inhibits the Museum from realizing the full potential of this collection in this regard. Reluctance to re-evaluate the quality of local productions in a comprehensive manner and over time may be a vestige of the perceived social inferiority of those who first collected and studied this material and of reverence paid to production in the capital by Britons seeking to model their empire on Rome's. Now that Britain no longer administers a vast empire, the Museum should find itself freer to look at the objects for what they are and to highlight the uniqueness of local responses to classical themes and styles, the question with which this exhibition and collection of essays grapples. Although Room 49 imparts a remarkable volume of information about the production, use, and uncovering of material evidence for Roman Britain, the installation still leaves room for fuller appreciation and examination of the aesthetics spawned by the encounter of the symbolic and abstract curvilinear indigenous styles, so conveniently laid out in Room 50, with the naturalistic, illusionistic, and narrative traditions brought by the Romans.¹¹³ The display also would benefit from an exploration of growing evidence for a continuum of some stylistic traditions from Iron Age to Romano-British to Anglo-Saxon metalwork displayed in Room 41.¹¹⁴ As it is, one struggles in the current installation to piece together a coherent picture of the variety of Romano-British styles and of how those styles might have developed over the nearly four centuries of Roman rule. Indeed, such critical reappraisals are crucial to understanding what it meant to be Roman in the province.



- 1 Works in the British Museum are referred to in this essay by their accession numbers that begin with four digits referring to their year of acquisition. Objects with accession numbers beginning SLAntiq, SLMisc, and SLRings came to the British Museum at its founding from the collection of Sir Hans Sloane. Information on each object and additional bibliography may be found on the British Museum collection database: https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/search.aspx. The author thanks Gail Hoffman, Robin Fleming, and Kate Shugert for comments on earlier drafts of this essay.
- 2 This essay uses the term “Romano-British” as does the British Museum to classify objects made between 43 and 411 CE found in the areas of Great Britain formerly occupied by the Romans.
- 3 The English view their ancestry as predominantly Anglo-Saxon, obscuring their Celtic and Roman past. For discussion and the history of this perception supported by assumptions of racial superiority see Bryan Ward-Perkins, “Why Did the Anglo-Saxons Not Become More British,” *English Historical Review* 115 (2000): 513–33.
- 4 On Sloane’s collection see Arthur MacGregor, ed., *Sir Hans Sloane: Collector, Scientist, Antiquary, Founding Father of the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1994) and Robert Anderson, “British Museum, London: Institutionalizing Enlightenment,” in *The First Modern Museums of Art: The Birth of an Institution in 18th- and Early-19th-Century Europe*, ed. Carole Paul (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2012), 47–59 (with additional bibliography).
- 5 SLAntiq.85 and 163.
- 6 SLAntiq.4, 5, 114, 118, 392, 394, and 446.
- 7 SLAntiq.23.
- 8 SLAntiq.1130.
- 9 SLAntiq.33, 299, 331, 375, 380, 513, 522, and 524; SLMisc.1455; and SLRings.86, 94, and 115.
- 10 For discussion of the relationship of these objects to Roman Britain see Nancy Netzer, “The ‘Celtic’ Bronzes from Dura-Europos: Connections to Britain,” in *Dura Europos: Crossroads of Antiquity*, ed. Lisa R. Brody and Gail L. Hoffman, exh. cat. (Chestnut Hill: McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, 2011), 283–94.
- 11 For discussion see Ian Jenkins, *Archaeologists and Aesthetes in the Sculpture Galleries of the British Museum 1800–1939* (London: British Museum, 1992), 9–11, 56–74.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 13–29.
- 13 On Townley and his collection see B. F. Cook, *The Townley Marbles* (London: British Museum, 1985), and more recently, Ilaria Bignamini and Clare Hornsby, *Digging and Dealing in Eighteenth-Century Rome*, 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 1:326–31 and his letters in vol. 2. Johann Zoffany’s well-known painting of Townley in his library surrounded by his sculptures and fellow antiquarians provides an idea of how the collection was installed in his house (Towneley Hall Art Gallery and Museum, PA/Oil 120). See also watercolors in the British Museum by William Chambers of the installation in Townley’s dining room and entrance hall, 1995.0506.8–9 (Vicky Coltman, *Classical Sculpture and the Culture of Collecting in Britain Since 1760* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009], plates 22 and 23).
- 14 Jenkins, *Archaeologists and Aesthetes*, 103–10, esp. figs. 34–37.
- 15 The installation of the Townley collection in 1846 is described in Henry Ellis, *The Townley Gallery of Classic Sculpture in the British Museum*, 2 vols. (London: Nattali and Bond, 1846).

- 16 1774,0715.1.
- 17 Sarah Scott, "Britain in the Classical World: Samuel Lysons and the Art of Roman Britain 1780–1820," *Classical Receptions Journal* 6, no. 2 (2014): 295n3 with additional bibliography, doi:10.1093/crj/clt030.
- 18 John Horsley, *Britannia Romana* (London: John Osborn and Thomas Longman, 1732), 192n74. On the cup and its provenance see most recently Lindsay Allason-Jones, "The Rudge Cup," in *The First Souvenirs: Enamelled Vessels from Hadrian's Wall*, ed. David J. Breeze (Kendal: Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society, 2012), 23–36. A print of the Corbridge Lanx after a drawing by William Shaftoe was published in 1736 by Gerard van der Gucht. The platter's decoration suggests a date in the fourth century and origin in the Mediterranean, North Africa, or Asia Minor. It was found in the bank of the River Tyne at the Roman garrison town of Corbridge near Hadrian's Wall where other silver vessels, possibly from the same hoard, were discovered in the eighteenth century.
- 19 1964,1007.1 is an electrotype copy.
- 20 1870,1201.1 and 2005,1204.1. For discussion of the significance of this group of objects see Breeze, *First Souvenirs*.
- 21 1803,0402.1 donated by Thomas Brand Hollis. Probably from a Jupiter column base excavated at Great Chesterford.
- 22 1806,1115.1.
- 23 1993,0510.1.
- 24 1808,0227.1. The rest of the floor remains beneath what is now a churchyard, and has been uncovered several times since 1880. It was first drawn in 1722.
- 25 Drawn and reproduced by Lysons in several publications including *An Account of the Remains of a Roman Villa Discovered at Woodchester* (London: T. Bensley, 1815).
- 26 1812,0613.1 donated by Henry Brooke.
- 27 1812,0208.1–3 donated by Rev. W. Hawker. Two other altars from the same site were already in the collection, 1805,0704.1–2.
- 28 1811,0309.1–8 gift of Alderman Combe.
- 29 1813,0213.1 probably found at Baylham Mill near Ipswich.
- 30 1814,0705.1. Charles Townley, *Vetusta Monumenta* 4 (1815): 1–12. Townley bought the Ribchester Hoard from its finder Joseph Walton who lived nearby. The cache of mainly cavalry equipment, possibly belonging to a single soldier, probably was placed in storage beneath a barack floor in about 120 CE.
- 31 1824,0482.60–65. The vessels date to the late second or early third century.
- 32 1824,K/unknown.0.c.
- 33 1840,1111.1.
- 34 1836,0213.2, 8–12, 14–20.
- 35 1841,0508.27 donated by Edward Moxhay.
- 36 1848,1103.1.
- 37 David Masson, *The British Museum: Historical and Descriptive* (Edinburgh: W. and R. Chambers,

- 1850), 43–48, indicates there were 13 cases labeled “various British and medieval antiquities temporarily deposited in this room.” See also Jenkins, *Archaeologists and Aesthetes*, 121.
- 38 Gustav Waagen, *Treasures of Art of Great Britain*, vol. 1 (London: J. Murray, 1854), 74–86, singles out bronzes and armor from the “Paldon Hills” (Polden Hill) and “Stanwich” (Stanwick) acquired in 1846 and 1847 respectively as “Brittano-Roman”; these hoards are largely Iron Age.
- 39 1850,0601.1–16.
- 40 T. W. Potter, “Later Prehistory and Roman Britain: The Formation of the National Collections,” in *A. W. Franks: Nineteenth-Century Collecting and the British Museum*, ed. Marjorie Caygill and John F. Cherry (London: British Museum, 1997), 130–31.
- 41 For discussion see Arthur MacGregor, “Antiquity Inventoried: Museums and ‘National Antiquities’ in the Mid-Nineteenth Century,” in *The Study of the Past in the Victorian Age*, ed. Vanessa Brand (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1998), 125–37.
- 42 W. Vaux, *Handbook to the Antiquities in the British Museum* (London: Murray, 1851), iv; Dafydd Kidd, “Charles Roach Smith and His Museum of London Antiquities,” *British Museum Yearbook* 2 (1977): 126.
- 43 Potter, “Later Prehistory and Roman Britain,” 130–31.
- 44 1852,1229.8 donated by Henry Long.
- 45 1853,0620.1 donated by Rev. Thomas Hill. Found in Haydon Square, London.
- 46 1855,0804.21. The fragmentary Latin inscription reveals that the deceased was a military policeman (*speculator*) seconded from the *legio II Augusta* presumably to London.
- 47 1853,0411.1–19 purchased from the surgeon, apothecary, and collector Edward Acton of Grundisburgh in Suffolk.
- 48 1854,0623.1–3 donated by Thomas Best.
- 49 1852,0806.3 donated by W. J. Hall. The Latin inscription reads: “Aulus Alfidius Olussa, of the Pomptine voting tribe, aged 70, born at Athens lies here; in accordance with his will his heir set [this] up.”
- 50 1852,0806.1 donated by W. J. Hall.
- 51 Jenkins, *Archaeologists and Aesthetes*, 121 and 129 with photographs of the gallery from c. 1875 and c. 1905 reproduced as figs. 46 and 47 respectively.
- 52 *Synopsis of the Contents of the British Museum*, 62nd ed. (London: Woodfall and Kinder, 1855) lists the “Anglo-Roman Antiquities,” mosaics, stone monuments, and pigs of lead (along with their donors) in the Roman Gallery (85–88) and the contents (with donors) of 37 cases in a “British and Medieval Room” containing Romano-British artifacts displayed principally by material or place of excavation (260–61). Reginald A. Smith, ed., *A Guide to the Antiquities of Roman Britain in the Department of British and Mediaeval Antiquities* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1922), 13 indicates that the stones and mosaics were still in the Roman Gallery 67 years later.
- 53 Kidd, “Charles Roach Smith,” 105–35; Francis Henry Wollaston Sheppard, *The Treasury of London’s Past: A Historical Account of the Museum of London and Its Predecessors, the Guildhall Museum and the London Museum* (London: HMSO, 1991), 10–20; and MacGregor, “Antiquity Inventoried,” 134–36.

- 54 1856,0701.1380. Kidd, "Charles Roach Smith," 116.
- 55 1856,0701.18 found on Lower Thames Street.
- 56 Edward Miller, *That Noble Cabinet: A History of the British Museum* (London: Deutsch, 1973), 299–306, 366. For economic reasons, these diverse collections initially were placed in the Department of Oriental Antiquities. Finally, in 1866 a new department, British and Medieval Antiquities, was created with Franks as its head. In 1969 it was divided into two further departments, Prehistoric and Romano-British Antiquities and Medieval and Later Antiquities.
- 57 For discussion of this division see Martin Henig, *The Art of Roman Britain* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 174–89; and Henig, "A House Divided: The Study of Roman Art and the Art of Roman Britain," in *Archaeology and Ancient History: Breaking Down the Boundaries*, ed. Eberhard W. Sauer (London: Routledge, 2004), 134–50.
- 58 1866,0222.1.a–e.
- 59 Three hundred objects from Renaissance Europe bequeathed by Ferdinand de Rothschild. Smith, *Guide to the Antiquities*, v.
- 60 For a map of the upper floor galleries in 1911 see Henry C. Shelley, *The British Museum: Its History and Treasures* (Boston: L. C. Page, 1911), 274. The rooms now occupied by the British collections, Rooms 49 and 50, then housed the ethnographic collections, many of which were moved to the Museum of Mankind in 1967. During the Second World War the galleries at the top of the staircase containing the Romano-British collection were badly damaged and required rebuilding; the collection was not re-installed until the 1960s (Miller, *That Noble Cabinet*, 346, 355).
- 61 Like the Southfleet tombstone of Aulus Alfidius, Binstead sarcophagus, Kings Stanley altars, and the Woodchester, Withington, and Abbots Ann mosaics mentioned above.
- 62 Smith, *Guide to the Antiquities*.
- 63 *Ibid.*, 97–102.
- 64 *Ibid.*, 28.
- 65 *Ibid.*, 129.
- 66 *Ibid.*, 50–60.
- 67 *Ibid.*, 77–83.
- 68 For discussion of the role of museums in shaping the disciplinary boundaries of archaeology and art history see Christopher Whitehead, *Museums and the Construction of Disciplines: Art and Archaeology in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Duckworth, 2009).
- 69 Smith, *Guide to the Antiquities*, 3–4 with a list of examples from the British Museum collection.
- 70 *Ibid.*, 5–6, 75–77.
- 71 *Ibid.*, 10.
- 72 *Ibid.*, 11. The colossal stone head of an underworld goddess (1903,1121.1 donated by Sir J. Fermor-Hesketh) was found at Towcester, Northamptonshire. The head, datable to the second or third century, may have been a finial from a funerary monument (J. M. C. Toynbee, *Art in Roman Britain* [London: Phaidon, 1962], no. 48).
- 73 Smith, *Guide to the Antiquities*, 87.

- 74 Ibid. He explains: “The forehead is too low, the ears are too oblique, the back of the head too prominent, and the beard too closely cut.”
- 75 Ibid., 89. The bronze (OA.248) was discovered before 1774 at Foss Dyke, Lincolnshire.
- 76 Ibid., 90–93.
- 77 Ibid., 127–29.
- 78 Smith, *Guide to the Antiquities*, 94–96. Concerning the figure of a cock with green and yellow enameled feathers in the collection, the author also offers the amusing, unsubstantiated observation: “Addiction to cock-fighting [in Britannia] may account for the popularity of enameled brooches representing the bird.”
- 79 Henig, “A House Divided,” 136–37.
- 80 Toynbee’s *Art in Roman Britain* was followed two years later by the author’s more comprehensive publication on the development of arts during the four centuries of Roman occupation, *Art in Britain under the Romans* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964). Organized by the Council of the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, the exhibition *Art in Roman Britain* was shown at Goldsmith’s Hall in London in the summer of 1961.
- 81 Toynbee, *Art in Roman Britain*, no. 101.
- 82 Ibid., no. 108.
- 83 Ibid., nos. 105 and 109.
- 84 Ibid., no. 55
- 85 Ibid., no. 16. Based on the Celtic names of the dedicators and the Roman name of the craftsman in the inscription, Toynbee believes “the figurine may have been cast in Britain for British patrons by an immigrant artist.”
- 86 On long-term loan to the British Museum from the Kent County Council (ibid., no. 10). The bust was excavated with another in the basement of the Lullingstone villa in Kent.
- 87 Of the style of the large dish, Toynbee says: “It is carried out in a vigorous, free, and naturalistic style and so fully in the classical tradition that the possibility of its execution in a British workshop, as was once suggested, seems to be wholly excluded” (ibid., 170).
- 88 1965,1201.1; Toynbee, *Art in Roman Britain*, no. 1. On loan from D. M. E. Holland at the British Museum since 1950 before it was purchased in 1965, the head was found in 1907 at the River Alde at Rendham, near Saxmundham, Suffolk.
- 89 1925,0610.1; Toynbee, *Art in Roman Britain*, no. 43. The second–third century Felmingham Hall (Norfolk) hoard consisting of bronze statuettes buried in a pottery jar was probably a temple hoard and provides material evidence of the combination of classical and indigenous Celtic traditions in Roman Britain. The hoard was purchased from Charles Maurice Jickling in 1925.
- 90 Toynbee, *Art in Roman Britain*, no. 169. On loan to the British Museum from the Earl of Verulam and the Gorhambury Estates and displayed on the wall in Room 49.
- 91 Ibid., no. 48.
- 92 1956,1011.1–2; Toynbee, *Art in Roman Britain*, no. 128.
- 93 1879,0710.1 donated by Augustus Wollaston Franks; Toynbee, *Art in Roman Britain*, no. 54.
- 94 For floor plans of the building see http://www.britishmuseum.org/visiting/floor_plans_and

- _galleries.aspx.
- 95 1857,0715.1 found in the River Thames at Battersea Bridge, London. Datable between 350 and 50 BCE, the bronze cover for a wood shield was made for display.
- 96 1951,0402.2 found at Ken Hill, Snettisham, Norfolk in 1950 during plowing. Datable to about 75 BCE, the torc is one of the most elaborate and complex gold objects from antiquity.
- 97 See Thorsten Opper, *Hadrian: Empire and Conflict*, exh. cat. (London: British Museum, 2008), 80; and Henig, *Art of Roman Britain*, 84.
- 98 Hundreds of wood writing tablets were purchased by the British Museum from the Vindolanda Trust over the past several decades as they were unearthed. The oldest surviving handwritten documents in Britain, the Vindolanda tablets contain the handwriting of more than 100 individuals. See <http://vindolanda.csad.ox.ac.uk> and Greene in this volume.
- 99 For discussion see R. D. Grasby and R. Tomlin, “The Sepulchral Monument of the Procurator C. Julius Classicanus,” *Britannia* 33 (2002): 41–75.
- 100 1965,0409.1 purchased from W. J. White. Only the central medallion from the large floor in the collection has been chosen for exhibition. Four male busts, possibly evangelists, and hunting scenes surround the medallion of Christ. Another section of the floor shows a pagan subject, a central medallion showing Bellerophon mounted on Pegasus spearing the Chimera.
- 101 Neil MacGregor, *A History of the World in 100 Objects* (London: British Museum, 2010), no. 44.
- 102 See Mattingly in this volume for discussion of religious affiliations of inhabitants within the Roman Empire.
- 103 Inscriptions on several objects in the Thetford Treasure reveal use by pagans, unusual at this late date. Anti-pagan legislation in the last two decades of the fourth century may explain its concealment.
- 104 The Hoxne Hoard was concealed after 407/8 when the Romans were losing control of Britain.
- 105 MacGregor, *History of the World*, no. 40.
- 106 1978,0102.1. See Ann Woodward and Peter E. Leach, *The Uley Shrines: Excavation of a Ritual Complex on West Hill, Uley, Gloucestershire, 1977–79* (London: English Heritage and British Museum, 1993).
- 107 For discussion of the economy supporting Britannia’s “new rich” in the fourth century see Robin Fleming, *Britain after Rome: The Fall and Rise, 400–1070* (London: Penguin, 2010), 6–17.
- 108 1991,1201.1.
- 109 1871,0601.1, second century, found at Earith, Cambridgeshire. Purchased through Rollin and Feuarent.
- 110 Found at Snettisham, Norfolk in the same village as an Iron Age hoard and datable by coins to the mid-second century. See Catherine Johns, *The Snettisham Roman Jeweller’s Hoard* (London: British Museum, 1997).
- 111 Several of the conclusions concerning local workshops of Martin Henig, “Workshop, Artists and Patrons in Roman Britain,” in *Ateliers and Artisans in Roman Art and Archaeology*, ed. Troels Myrup Kristensen and Birte Poulsen (Portsmouth: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2012), 113–28 might do well to be explored in the installation.
- 112 See Ward-Perkins, “Why Did the Anglo-Saxons Not Become More British,” 522–23.

- 113 The collection would lend itself to an empirical exploration of questions recently posed by scholars concerning the inadequacies of applying the model of “Romanization” to the material evidence from Roman Britain. For discussion see Jane Webster, “Creolizing the Roman Provinces,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 105, no. 2 (2001): 209–25, Catherine Johns, “Art, Romanisation, and Competence,” and Jane Webster, “Art as Resistance and Negotiation,” in *Roman Imperialism and Provincial Art*, ed. Sarah Scott and Jane Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 24–51, 9–23.
- 114 For discussion see Netzer, “The ‘Celtic’ Bronzes,” 285–86, 289; Lloyd Laing, *European Influence on Celtic Art: Patrons and Artists* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2010), 15–18; and Fraser Hunter, “Celtic Art in Roman Britain,” in *Rethinking Celtic Art*, ed. Duncan Garrow, Chris Gosden, and J. D. Hill (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2008), 129–45.



ROMAN PROVINCIAL COINAGE

William E. Metcalf

AUTHORITY

In a famous passage of a debate between Agrippa and Maecenas, probably fabricated by the third-century historian Cassius Dio, Maecenas counsels Octavian as follows:

None of the cities should be allowed to have its own separate coinage or system of weights and measures. They should all be required to use ours.¹

This suggestion, if it was ever made, was not acted upon, and as a consequence the Roman world developed the most diverse system of coinage of any empire in history.

The line of thinking represented in the quote was already contrary to past Roman practice, for provincial coinage had begun to develop over a century before and reflected the general Roman tendency to leave in place institutions that functioned successfully. For example, when the Romans emerged victorious over Perseus in the Third Macedonian War (167 BCE), large silver tetradrachms bearing the king's image and a wreathed reverse (plate 69) were replaced by new ones bearing the legends of the Macedonian districts (*merides*) into which the new province was subdivided and a representation of Artemis on the obverse (plate 70). The cistophoric coinage of Asia, named for the obverse image of the *cista mystica* containing a snake, and featuring a bow case surrounded by snakes on the reverse, had been introduced in the 160s BCE and was changed even less. After Rome inherited the Pergamene Kingdom in 133 BCE there is no outward change in the coinage: in 121/0 C. Atinius adds his signature, but there is no further change until the 50s BCE, when governors' names appear regularly on coins of five of the traditional mints (plate 19). Base-metal coinage was left everywhere to follow its own course.

Still, it was (as the Agrippa-Maecenas debate recognizes) the emergence of Augustus, his administrative reforms, and his settlement of veterans that wrought significant changes, without ultimately suppressing the local coinages. What came to represent the authority for coinage was embodied in the imperial bust; how provincial cities got the right to use it seems to have varied from time to time and province to province. In Spain, for example, it was common to cite PERM(ISSV) CAES(ARIS) AVG(VSTI), "by permission of Caesar Augustus"; in Africa (and in one case also in Syria) the formula is "by permission of the proconsul," who is named. At a second level, authorization came from the governing body of the city; this may explain the occasional "pseudo-autonomous" issues that bear the bust

of the personified *synklētos* (senate) or *boulē* (council), or even the *dēmos* (people at large). The establishment of veteran colonies in Spain led to many coinages that were authorized by local decurions or *duoviri* (the municipal equivalent of consuls) under Augustus and Tiberius before ultimately dying out under the emperor Gaius (“Caligula,” r. 37–41 CE). These were struck with Roman denominations, foreshadowing the later period in which the mint of Rome itself met local currency needs in the western provinces.

The East was another matter. Extensive silver coinages, mostly deriving from Hellenistic issues, are known. Alexandria coined only sporadically during the Julio-Claudian period,

but it had an abundant and almost continuous coinage thereafter until the end of the third century, when the reform of Diocletian standardized the coinage of the empire. Syria and Cappadocia employed traditional denominations, struck mostly at Antioch and Caesarea respectively. Syria has a unique type of base-metal coinage, with a large “S C” in an oak wreath, presumably referring to the mechanism (*Senatus consultum*) by which the coinage was authorized; but there were also occasional silver issues from Cyprus, Amisus in Pontus, Tarsus in Cilicia, and Antioch in Syria, as well as transformed *cistophori* in Asia. A strong case for imperial involvement can be made for the *cistophori* of Hadrian, which were produced at about 20 mints in the province of Asia. By this time the old format of *cista mystica* and bow case with snakes had long been abandoned, and the coins (equal by weight to three denarii) resembled nothing so much as overgrown denarii. Hadrian restored their Hellenic character, drawing on local types for inspiration (plates 20–21). These are useful for us, as they help to identify the mint cities. In addition, some coins were produced at Rome itself and consigned to the province. This phenomenon can be observed periodically at Caesarea in Cappadocia and Alexandria in Egypt under Severus Alexander (r. 224–226, 227–228 CE); at Antioch under Philip I (r. 244–249 CE) these coins are marked *MON VRB* to distinguish them from those produced locally (plates 66–67).² All this suggests control of the provincial silver at Rome.

In the East there were relatively few colonies, including Alexandria in the Troad, Antioch in Pisidia, Mallus in Cilicia, and Berytus and Heliopolis in Syria; those there were used Latin inscriptions and generally looked back to Rome for their selection of images (wolf and twins, legionary standards, etc.). But the vast majority of mints were cities, “free” or not; as many as 400 of these struck during the Severan period.

CIRCULATION

In a famous study done over a half-century ago, Jones showed that the range of circulation was limited.³ Jones looked at excavation reports and charted the coins found by city. Naturally, local coinage predominated, with “foreign” coin occurring with some frequency within 50 miles of its issuing authority, but hardly at all beyond 150. His observation has been borne out by subsequent finds, and exceptions to the general rule look for explanation. At



14.1. Uncertain copper denomination of Iulia-Gordus, Lydia, second half of 2nd century CE. Yale University Art Gallery, Ruth Elizabeth White Fund, 2004.6.2874.



14.2. Uncertain copper denomination of Sebaste, Phrygia, c. 2nd century CE. Yale University Art Gallery, Ruth Elizabeth White Fund, 2004.6.610.



14.3. Uncertain copper denomination of Tripolis, Lydia, Trajan, 98–117 CE. Yale University Art Gallery, Ruth Elizabeth White Fund, 2004.6.402.

Dura-Europos, for example, there is a surprising abundance of coins from Amasia in Pontus, approximately 650 miles distant (518 in a single deposit). Such anomalies are normally explained by troop movements.⁴

MOTIVES FOR STRIKING

It is seldom possible to say exactly why cities struck coins. Certainly there is no evident correlation between coinage and the imperial presence, nor can these coinages, whatever their variety, have amounted to enough currency to have had an impact on military expenditure, a commonly used rationale for striking of imperial coin. The very act of coinage conferred a certain prestige, but more than that it could be profitable. We know that the *trapezitai* (lit. bankers, but also money-changers) worked as agents of the governing authority, which had a stake in their profitability; when coins had to be exchanged for local currency, the city profited, and as time went on this became an increasingly important consideration for cities whose ambitions outstripped their financial resources. In addition, some coinages indicate that they result from benefaction: whether they were made to recognize a local donor, or whether he or she provided a subvention for the coinage itself, is open to discussion on a case-by-case basis.

But separate from the question of prestige is one of identity: cities projected their self-image not only for the benefit of others, but also as a kind of self-definition. The vitality of the coinage provides not only a wealth of historical information but also an insight into the prevailing local mentality and the relationship of the cities to Rome. There were literally hundreds of mints producing coins: their peak came during the very Severan period in which Dio wrote, and perhaps the words he made Maecenas utter reflect one line of thought during his own time. If so, once again it failed, and the cities continued coining in their own right: some 160 mints were active during the period from Valerian and Gallienus (253 CE) to that of Aurelian (270–276 CE), under whom the tradition finally peters out.

The typical provincial issue bears the head or bust of the ruler on its obverse, though over time this side included more and more members of the imperial house; alternatively there could be representations of the *boulē*, the *synklētos* (fig. 14.1), the *dēmos* (fig. 14.2), or a locally-venerated deity (Zeus, Hera, Artemis, Asklepios, etc.) on coins traditionally called “pseudo-autonomous.” There was no real question of autonomy, and while the emperor can hardly have been concerned to oversee a local coinage, most scholars believe that the permission of the provincial governor was sought. Locally the coin might be dated by an era of the city or of Rome, or by the tenure of the *strategos* (lit. general, but the chief magistrate), the *grammateus* (secretary), or *archiereus* (high priest). And coins could be dedicated, usually with a formula such as the one from Smyrna *Polemon sophistes anethēke* (“Polemo the Sophist dedicated [sc. it]”—the coinage?). In one case the die engraver Theodoros even signs his obverse die (fig. 14.3).

For the most part the reverse images concentrate on local deities, their monuments, and in some cases local festivals. Nor were the cities immune to competition with one another: the rivalry between Nicaea and Nicomedia for primacy in Bithynia has been detailed by



14.4. Copper *assarion* of Corinth, L. Verus, 161–169 CE. Yale University Art Gallery, promised gift of Ben Lee Damsky, ILE2013.17.204.



14.5. Uncertain copper denomination of Abydos struck by Septimius Severus, 193–211 CE. Yale University Art Gallery, Ruth Elizabeth White Fund, 2006.23.1.

Robert,⁵ but other cities relentlessly insist on indications of status—the titles *metropolis* (mother city), *neokōros* (warden of an imperial temple—see plate 34) are common, and many claimed to be *prōtos* (first). Others highlighted monuments: Corinth shows the Acrocorinth (fig. 14.4), Ephesus the Temple of Artemis (plate 33), and so on. Virtually all found a place for their local deities—again, Ephesus displayed the archaic *xoanon* of Artemis (plate 24), Sardis the primitive idol of Demeter/Kore (plate 31), Aphrodisias her cult image of Aphrodite. In many cases we would otherwise have no idea of the appearance of these figures.⁶

Local myth, too, had its place. Both Abydos and Sestos showed Hero in her tower and Leander swimming the Dardanelles to his death (fig. 14.5). Hercules, always popular, was the subject of many reverse types; one, shown as Plate 36, comes from Temenothyrae in Phrygia. This small town also showed a slice of religious life, with a representation of a gigantic figure of a cult image being towed during a *pompa*, or procession around the city usually carried out on an annual schedule (plate 32).

Local events prompted many images. Games were a common theme; these drew tourists to the city, and presumably created a need for currency to exchange that was met by celebratory types. Such games bore traditional names, such as Olympia or Pythia, but occasionally commemorated events (Aktia, after the battle of Actium) or Severia (for the Severan dynasty), and normally showed a prize crown or even the victor crowning himself. A visit from the emperor was of surpassing importance; when the emperor Caracalla came to Pergamum to obtain a cure at the shrine of Asklepios, the healing god, the visit was observed with a large and varied series of medallion-like coins, huge in scale and ambitious in their representations (plate 34).

In sum, the provincial coinage shows the Roman Empire at its most varied, and shows it from a perspective not provided by coins of the mint of Rome, where the authority for striking was very much top-down. The local coinages were created at local initiative, with local money, and displayed themes dictated locally. They thus provide a unique insight into provincial mentalities, often exercising them far from Rome itself.⁷



- 1 Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, trans. Earnest Cary (Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library, 1924), 52.3.9.
- 2 On this see Hans Roland Baldus, *MON(eta) VRB(is) ANTIOXIA: Rom und Antiochia als Prägestätten syrischer Tetradrachmen des Philippus Arabs* (Frankfurt: B. Peus, 1969).
- 3 Tom B. Jones, “A Numismatic Riddle: The So-Called Greek Imperials,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 107 (1963): 308–47.
- 4 Alfred R. Bellinger in *The Excavations at Dura-Europos: Preliminary Report of the 7th and 8th Seasons of Work, 1933–1934 and 1934–1935*, ed. Michael Rostovtzeff, Frank Brown, and C. Bradford Welles (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939), 414–15.
- 5 Louis Robert, “La titulature de Nicée et Nicomédie: La gloire et la haine,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 81 (1977): 1–39.
- 6 Léon Lacroix, *Les reproductions des statues sur les monnaies grecques: La statuaire archaïque et classique* (Liège: Faculté de philosophie et lettres, 1949); David J. MacDonald, *The Coinage of Aphrodisias* (London: Royal Numismatic Society, 1992); Lisa R. Brody, *Aphrodisias III: The Aphroditite of Aphrodisias* (Mainz: Von Zabern, 2007).
- 7 There are a number of general works dealing with the provincial coinage. One of the best, not yet available in English, is Peter Robert Franke, *Kleinasien zur Römerzeit: Griechisches Leben im Spiegel der Münzen* (Munich: Beck, 1968). There is also Kevin Butcher, *Roman Provincial Coins: An Introduction to the Greek Imperials* (London: Trafalgar Square, 1968). The best recent treatment is Christopher Howgego, Volker Heuchert, and Andrew Burnett, eds., *Coinage and Identity in the Roman Provinces* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). The most notable collection is that of Hans von Aulock published by the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut in the *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum Deutschland* (18 fascicules, 1957–68, with an index published in 1981).



THE GERASA MOSAICS OF YALE: INTENTIONALITY AND DESIGN

Christine Kondoleon

The mosaics selected for this exhibition reflect significant trends in the cultural landscape of the Roman and Byzantine Near East, most especially of the fifth and sixth centuries. While they are small parts of larger compositions, they are representative as synecdoches, parts of a wider scene of artistic achievement and a broader cultural landscape. They come from domestic and ecclesiastical settings, and as such tell us about the aspirations of individuals and families, and about the faith of their communities. The fragments each reveal a different response to the cultural landscape as well as the rich diversity of mosaic production in this region. As the population of the late antique Near East moved steadily toward Christianity from the fourth through the fifth centuries the tendency to avoid figural representation entirely led to the development of geometric and floral designs. Many of these designs were further enriched with filling motifs that often referenced the natural world, such as baskets of fruit or a vine laden with grapes. However, aniconic austerity expressed most purely in geometric designs and in some cases required by zealous church leaders was difficult to maintain for a population raised on mythological narratives. As a result, the period was also especially fertile in yielding a variety of imagery for new contexts and meanings. Perhaps the most unusual and compelling images to evolve in this formative period are the cartographic mosaics highlighting the cities of Palestine and Egypt. These cityscapes are part of a widespread movement toward complex schemes set out on the pavements of religious buildings. It is easy for modern viewers to miss the intentionality of these mosaics and to mistake them as merely decorative. Written words set in mosaic make clear that the pavements carry messages. Indeed, there was a proliferation of largely Greek inscriptions throughout the early churches of Syria and Palestine (comprising modern-day Jordan, Israel, and the West Bank). Messages were embedded on floors in domestic as well as ecclesiastical settings, as exemplified by the labels identifying the two figures in a mosaic from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (plate 182). Antioch, the capital of Roman Syria and one of the great centers of early Christianity, provides ample evidence of the use of Greek labels accompanying mythological figures, and during the fourth through the sixth centuries labeled personifications increasingly replaced pagan narratives.¹

Ancient Gerasa (modern Jerash in Jordan) is the springboard for our discussion of what mosaics can reveal about the plurality of art in this transitional period. Because Yale University, together with the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem and the American Schools of Oriental Research, was involved in the exploration of Jerash in the 1920s and 1930s, the collection of the Yale University Art Gallery includes many fine mosaics from the site. At



15.1. Colonnaded streets at Gerasa, 1931.

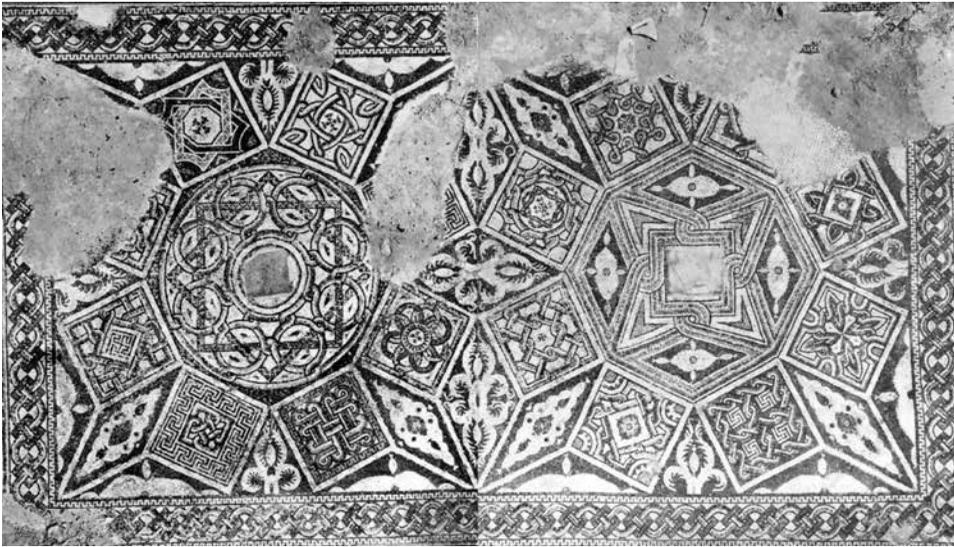
first glance Gerasa, noted for its temples placed along colonnaded streets (fig. 15.1), the oval forum framed by Ionic columns, its theater, hippodrome, baths, and fountains, presents a model Roman polis. It is the best preserved of the 10 cities that formed the Decapolis, the customary appellation for a group of cities in Roman Judaea and Syria. The discovery of more than 12 churches and chapels with extensive decorations and mosaics from the fifth through the seventh centuries offers an alternative profile for this strategic ancient hub. Our challenge is to assess the developments in the urban center in light of the flourish of rural life in the surrounding countryside where similar ecclesiastical

structures and mosaic compositions were produced. In other words, the churches of Gerasa belong to a much wider provincial phenomenon of burgeoning Christian influence and growth before the time of the Persian invasions of 614 and Muslim conquest of 636, but even into the Umayyad period (661–750). The mosaics survive in remarkable numbers to tell a story about art, faith, and community at a time of transition, a time from the era of Constantine's conversion in 312 to the foundation of the Dome of the Rock in 692.

In contrast to the Roman template of urbanism and impressive masonry buildings seen in Gerasa, the villages of the region built their churches on a small scale.² Sometimes this was because they were private chapels, but mostly the country churches were embedded in domestic and agrarian structures so as to blend into the fabric of the village. They do not dominate as earlier temples once did but rather appear to respond to the human needs of ordinary country folk—all were welcome and had a place within the sacred walls. The mosaics and their dedicatory inscriptions speak to a universality of message and an impulse toward a communal concept of nature and the cosmos. The mosaics of Gerasa, while they exist in an urban environment and decorate monumental churches, are exactly in keeping with developments in rural Palestine and Syria. They exemplify broader trends—exuberant geometric designs and a hesitation to include figural motifs of any kind, declarations of benefactors and church leaders in the form of inscriptions and portraits of founders, and innovative displays of the topography of the Holy Land.

Geometric patterns, especially interlace or rope work, were popular in Roman art from the third century onward, however they take on an innovative exuberance in the fifth through seventh centuries throughout the Mediterranean and in Europe. The braiding of geometric shapes, such as squares, circles, and octagons, created intricate knot work designs that may have been thought to have magical properties.³ In the same period, there are many textiles—only those from Egypt survive—that reveal a strong preference for knotted designs on clothing; the same is true for jewelry, and these all bear a strong resemblance to the interlace designs used for mosaic floors (see Nicgorski in this volume).

As James Trilling summarizes, “Interlace is eye-catching and confusing, and its traditional association with doors, windows, religious symbols, and the beginnings and ends of books, all of which were foci of supernatural attack and defense, suggest that its popularity depended not just on its decorative properties but on its success as a functional extension of apotropaic knotting.”⁴ It is useful to consider the broader history of interlace when we narrow our focus on the design of the Yale fragment (plate 4). It is a rectangular panel



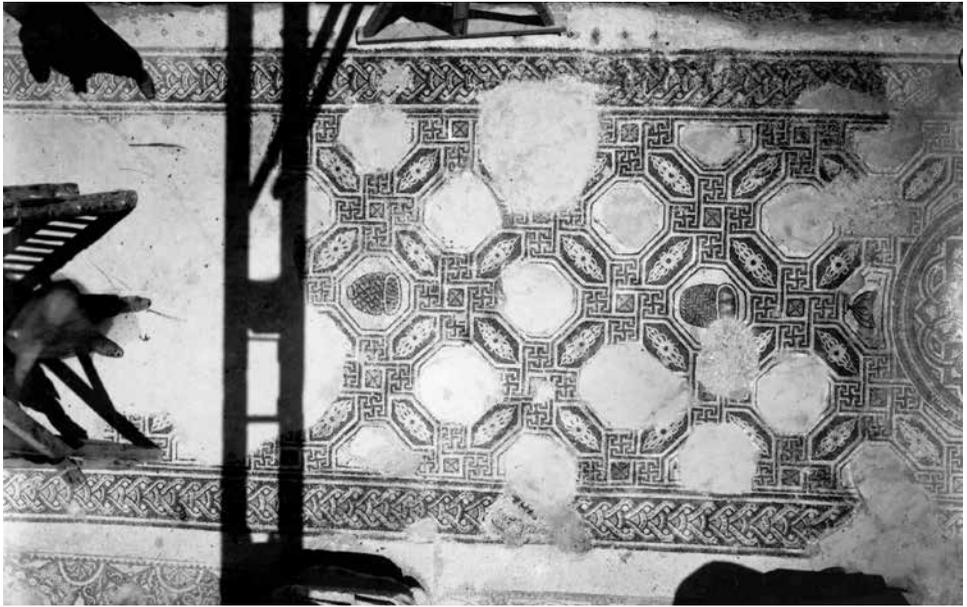
15.2. Mosaic floor from the Church of Bishop Paul (Procopius Church), south aisle, c. 526 CE. Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-British School Excavations at Gerasa, 1929.418. See plate 4 for additional image.

executed in bold red and white tesserae with two large octagons, and adjacent squares and lozenges filled with a variety of interlace patterns. While the pattern of octagons, lozenges, and squares was widely used from the Roman through the early Byzantine periods, mosaicists from the East display a special talent for knot work patterns, and the Yale panel is exceptionally dense and inventive.⁵

The Yale interlace panel was located at the eastern end of the south aisle of the Church of Bishop Paul (fig. 15.2), also called the Procopius Church, because of an inscription in the nave (plate 5) that names the main benefactor Procopius and gives the date of 526 CE. There are a great variety of geometric patterns decorating all parts of the building with only occasional insertions of recognizable motifs. There is no attempt to unify the decoration or to integrate the parts of the church, comprised of a nave and two aisles ending in three parallel apses, through its ornamentation. For example, the north aisle is paved with single field of octagons and small hexagons (fig. 15.3), while the south aisle is broken up into at least two parts; at least half of it does not remain. If we accept that knots had apotropaic power, then it is conceivable that the Yale interlace fragment, located near the sacred area of the apses, was singled out for the intricacies of knotting devices. Yet, this is not the case on the eastern end of the north aisle, so the difference in treatment does not obviously support a selection for presumed protective powers.

In general, the decoration of the Procopius Church follows the concept of “carpet” floors, an apt term fully explored by Ernst Kitzinger.⁶ From the late fourth century into the fifth century, church mosaics throughout the Mediterranean indicate a preference for geometric designs over any figural compositions. Patterns had the advantage of being adaptable to the creation of liturgical and commemorative architecture with new shapes (octagons, polylobed shapes, multi-ringed circles, cruciforms) and expandable to accommodate larger or smaller groups depending on congregational needs. For example, the same pattern of octagons, squares, and lozenges with equally complex fillers was used for a very differently configured space in the southeast corner in the Church of the Prophets, Apostles, and Martyrs, dated by inscription to 464/65 CE in the eastern quarter of Gerasa.⁷

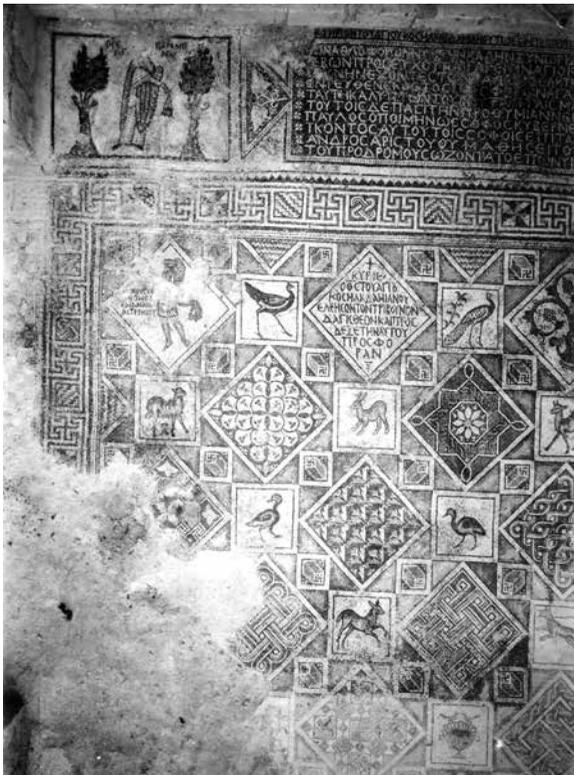
Geometric compositions also had the distinct advantage of not inviting pagan associations. The Yale mosaic from the south aisle reflects a specific moment in the unfolding story of artistic responses to shifting faiths, from paganism to Christianity. Amidst the prevailing



15.3. Mosaic floor from the Church of Bishop Paul (Procopius Church), north aisle, c. 526 CE (in situ).

taste for dense all-over geometry, there are occasional motifs alluding to the natural world. Several survive in the Procopius Church: a bird, a cypress tree, woven baskets, and a chalice (fig. 15.3). Undoubtedly there were more, but the original investigators noted episodes of intentional destruction of figural motifs.

In his initial publication of the Gerasa expedition, Carl Kraeling observed, “animate objects of some sort may have occupied the center of each octagon, since both have been destroyed and patched with marble.”⁸ Images of people, animals, and plants in church mosaics were deliberately damaged—only the offensive parts were removed and the damage was repaired by mixing cubes taken from the excerpted parts. Whether these physical erasures were due to the Edict of Yazid II in 721 and Islamic rule, or more likely, to self-censorship by Christians in an environment increasingly hostile to figural representation, cannot be known. In addition to the attitudes of Muslim and Jewish neighbors, the sermons of zealous Christian clergymen indicate that some endowed even such seemingly innocuous motifs as birds and plants with pagan associations. Probably most of the physical damage was done in the eighth century.



15.4. Mosaic floor from the Church of Saints Cosmas and Damian, 533 CE (in situ).

But before these episodes of expurgation, there was a period during which

nature was celebrated inside the church especially in the later half of the fifth century and throughout the sixth century. Plants and animals are scattered about many church pavements. The best surviving example of this flourish of nature from Gerasa is the undamaged—inexplicably this mosaic was left unharmed—nave pavement of the Church of Saints Cosmas and Damian dated to 533 CE. A large carpet contains smaller regular squares filled with a variety of isolated birds (peacocks, ducks) and quadrupeds (a dog, a hare, a ram, a gazelle) and larger diagonal squares filled with intricate geometric designs (fig. 15.4). The composition almost seems to be balancing aniconic decoration with figuration, a visual dialogue of the two trends in church decoration at the time of its production. The presence of the aquatic birds and fish alongside the nave set in a panel between the columns, suggests that the mosaicists wanted to represent all living creatures from the air, earth, and sea.⁹ The nave mosaic of the Church of Saints Cosmas and Damian offers an insight into how to contextualize the lost filling motifs of the Yale panel—most likely a vase or basket similar to ones found in the north aisle of the Procopius Church. While these filling motifs were sparsely used and simple in form, the faithful gathered in the church were schooled to see them as parts of a larger vision of the natural world, as references to Creation.

The natural world is also referenced in the panel with a vine scroll mosaic set immediately adjacent to the Yale mosaic that probably covered the remaining length of the south aisle of the Procopius Church (fig. 15.5). One of the squares nearest to the sanctuary of Saints Cosmas and Damian features a vine with three grape clusters, perhaps an oblique reference to the Trinity.¹⁰ The use of vines laden with grapes and filling motifs related to wine making and drinking, such as baskets sometimes filled with grapes, Greek drinking cups (*kantharoi*), and amphorae, hint at the process of adaptation and absorption of pagan imagery. For centuries such designs had specific Dionysiac connotations, but starting in the fourth century in the churches of the Byzantine East, wine imagery may be associated with the Christian Eucharist. A Greek inscription from the Gospel of John (15:1), “I am the true vine,” accompanies a panel with a vine laden with grapes on a fourth-century mosaic in the nave of the Basilica of Chrysopolitissa in Paphos, Cyprus.¹¹ The biblical identification makes clear that explanations were often needed in a time of an emerging Christian art. In the same panel with the vine and quote from the Gospel of John is another inscription, a dedicatory one on behalf of Hesychios who wanted to offer thanks to God. This modest insertion of thanks placed near to the symbolic vine is one of the earliest interventions of a personal message as part of church decoration.

By the fifth and sixth centuries it was very popular for the donors and the church leaders who supervised the building projects to leave records of their benefactions and accomplishments in the form of mosaic inscriptions usually set close to the sanctuary. At the top of the nave pavement, closest to the sanctuary of the nave at Saints Cosmas and Damian are



15.5. Mosaic floor from the Church of Bishop Paul (Procopius Church), south aisle, c. 526 CE (in situ).



15.6. Mosaic floor from the Church of Saint Theodore, c. 496 CE. Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-British School Excavations at Gerasa, 1932.1736.

two mosaic panels with a male and female figure in devotional attitude—these are the portraits of the donors Theodore and his wife Georgia. The figures remind us that individuals were personally involved in the creation and decoration of these churches. We can recall the pious frontal faces and open praying gestures when we consider yet another mosaic fragment from the Procopius Church that made its way to Yale University (plate 5). This one comes from the east end of the nave and is a *tabula ansata* of white letters against a red background that reads:

Under Paul, Bishop most beloved of God and holy, was completed the sacred church from benefactions of himself and Saul, most pious deacon and canon-resident, Procopius the very devout being in charge, in the 589th year the month of October, the fifth [?] year of the Indiction.¹²

There are many such messages of thanksgiving and devotion written with tesserae throughout the region. They serve as a legacy of the individuals who were the leaders and benefactors of their respective communities and they evidence a civic pride in church building and decoration. The practice was widespread and inclusive of all elements of church furnishings and appointments as evidenced by a great number of liturgical silver items (lamps, patens, reliquaries, chalices) that bore the names of donors along with prayers. For example, a sixth-century silver chalice from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston bears a Greek inscription that reads: “I, Sarra prayed and made [this] offering to the First Martyr [Saint Stephen].”¹³

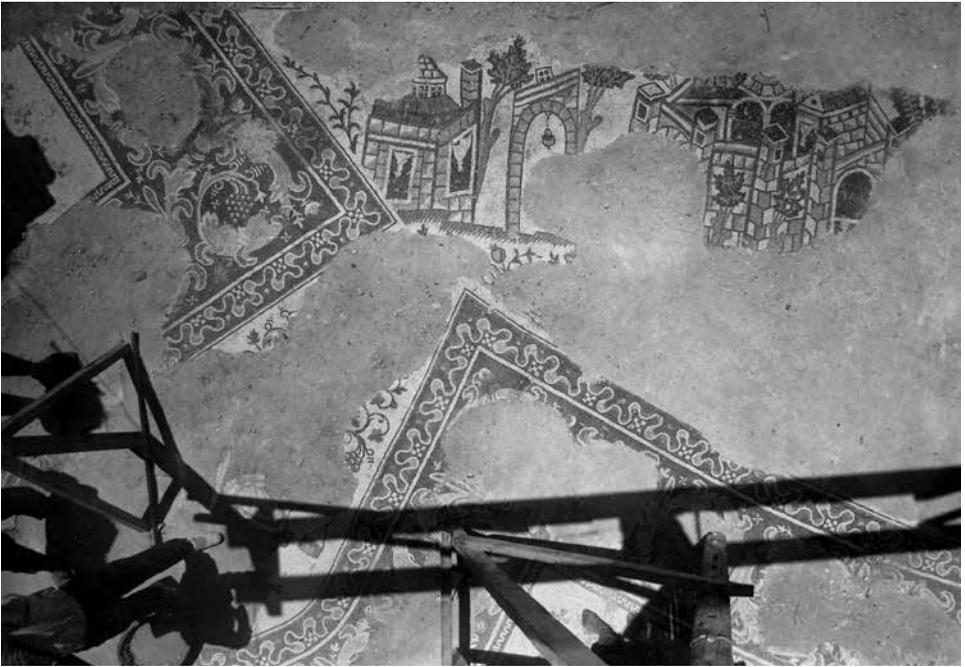
Although 120 inscriptions are preserved from the site of Gerasa¹⁴—none offers any specifics about beliefs or how the donors felt about the pressing ecclesiastical debates of their time; we simply know when and who dedicated the churches and mosaics and the pride they took in doing so. Mosaic inscriptions, however, can inform us about the function of certain spaces within the churches. For example, another Yale mosaic (fig. 15.6) from a room near the Church of Saint Theodore built in 496 CE as part of the cathedral complex of the city reads: “I am the most happy place of the second order of the male hymn-singers.” Most likely it identifies a room that was used for the choir. Messages inscribed in tesserae and on the stone of the buildings signal to modern viewers how directly church decoration addressed the faithful.

There can be little doubt that literal and visual cues were meaningful and very much a part of the experience of these sacred spaces. This perception informs how we view the masterfully restored Yale mosaic from the nave of the Church of Saints Peter and Paul (plate 3). Despite the discovery of three inscriptions on the pavements, none offers an internal date, but Kraeling has recommended a date of about 540 CE.¹⁵ While the section that survives at Yale is only part of a larger nave pavement, it seems to preserve the key part of the central design, namely the dedicatory inscription framed by a cityscape of Memphis and Alexandria. The inscription in the form of a *tabula ansata* is set almost as if a banner or title at the top of the panel with the cityscape below surrounded with trees.¹⁶ The inscription mentions that Bishop Anastasius, who in another mosaic is identified as “of the four cities,” supervised the church dedicated to Apostles Peter and Paul and decorated it with silver and stone. Below the cities is part of a design of lotus buds, which clearly was part of a larger scheme containing Nilotic birds and plants. The whole nave pavement was once framed by a lush acanthus. At the top of the fragment, above the inscription, is a large amphora with vine shoots emerging from it. The sequence is on axis with the apse and should be viewed as a unified composition, albeit of individual parts. The approach to the composition is an additive one; in other words, it can be understood as a sum of its parts.

The regional artists relied on their viewers, the gathered faithful, to comprehend the meaning of the whole, but no inscriptions, sermons, or letters survive to offer irrefutable proof of meaning. The local artists employed elements of design that were well known, and they were inventive in their combinations. We are left to ponder why the cities of Alexandria with its famous Pharos (lighthouse) and Memphis are set in a garden of fruit-bearing trees and along the banks of the Nile represented by the lotus buds below. It should be noted that the Alexandria cityscape includes a domed building with a cross on top, clearly a church. Perhaps it is intended as a diagram of Paradise. As discussed above, the wine and vine allude to the Eucharist and biblical texts and were widely employed motifs throughout the Mediterranean. The cityscapes, however, are part of an artistic tradition that is specific to this



15.7. Mosaic floor from the Church of Saint George, Madaba, mid-6th century CE.



15.8. Mosaic floor from the Church of Saint John the Baptist, nave, c. 531 CE (in situ).

region—walled cities appear in many church mosaics; the best known is the so-called Madaba mosaic map from the Church of Saint George in Madaba, Jordan (fig. 15.7). It features topographic aerial views of Jerusalem and Bethlehem and may represent a cartographic illustration of the journey for Christians overland from Egypt to the Holy Land. Hellenistic and Roman artists practiced *topographia*, “the painting of places” using similar aerial views of buildings and landscapes. Greek artists portrayed an important expedition from Alexandria through the Delta to the border of Ethiopia on the famous Palestrina mosaic produced most likely in the first century BCE in the form of a map with highlights of exotic animals and sites visited.¹⁷ Roman artists also explored mapping techniques, as evidenced by several fourth-century North African mosaics. For example, the cult places of Aphrodite (Erycos, Cytherae, Knidos, etc.) are the subject of an early fourth-century mosaic, perhaps representing a pilgrimage itinerary for the followers of the goddess, recently found in Haidra (ancient Ammaedara).¹⁸ The earlier examples of this art form confirm that early Byzantine artists could draw on a rich and long tradition of topographic scenes in ancient art, but the inventive compositions with their explicitly labeled regional locales found in the early Byzantine churches of Jordan are especially impressive and distinctive. These mosaics employ geographic and topographic approaches and are among the most creative expressions of early Byzantine art anywhere in the Mediterranean. Recent finds continue to astonish with their innovations.¹⁹ One surprising discovery made in the late 1980s is the pavement from the Church of Saint Stephen at Umm al-Rasas (Kastron Mefaa) located about 30 km southeast of Madaba and dated by inscription to 785. The nave pavement of an inhabited vine scroll is surrounded by a double border—on the outside by 15 walled cities and the inside by 10 walled cities labeled with Egyptian towns and Nilotic landscapes.²⁰

The representation of cities such as Memphis and Alexandria that are so significant as ancient urban centers, as well as for the development of early Christian church history, suggests that the choice of cities might provide the key to interpretation. Yet, despite multiple scholarly attempts to justify the presence of particular cities on particular pavements with special religious (e.g., the theological struggles between the Orthodox and the

Monophysites) or with local significance (e.g., Holy Land pilgrimage sites), it seems most likely given the visual culture of the early Byzantine period that many of the city vignettes function more generally as *topoi*.²¹ In fact, there are several examples of cityscapes without labels, indicating that they do not necessarily signal specific locations. In the case of the Yale mosaic from the Church of Saints Peter and Paul, the famous Egyptian cities stand in as generic references to Egypt and the Nile. Like the amphora with vine shoots, the cities set on the banks of the Nile River allude to the abundance of the earth, and these decorative elements function in much the same way as the dedicatory inscriptions found throughout the churches of Jordan at this time, as part of a larger pictorial ensemble of thanksgiving to the Creator. The Yale city vignettes are matched by a slightly earlier variation on this theme from the circular Church of Saint John the Baptist in Gerasa dated to 531. In the frame surrounding the interior square nave pavement, there are several city vignettes and shrines (fig. 15.8). In the southern section we find the cities of Memphis and Alexandria, identified in Greek, that sit on a wide curved band representing the fish-filled waters of the Nile with long-legged wading birds and lotus flowers along its banks.²² The lush acanthus foliage and elaborate candelabra fill in the areas of the exedra and outline the circular plan of the building; these design elements reinforce that the land where these cities and shrines existed was prosperous and fertile. These compositions of city vignettes and allusions to the Nile should be seen in the context of the even more popular inhabited vine scroll designs, or the animal-filled gardens and forests that occupy the nave mosaics throughout Palestine, Syria, and Arabia (Transjordan).²³ Taken together they represent an enthusiastic regional response to incorporate nature and the wonders of creation within the sacred walls of the many new churches. Henry Maguire has tracked this visual trend with the literary works, especially sermons of the period, and produced a convincing dialogue between image and word for the early Byzantine period.²⁴

The Nilotic theme provides a convenient means to explore possible sources and a context for this new visual language.²⁵ A later fifth-century domestic mosaic from Antioch, slightly earlier than the Gerasa church mosaics under discussion, demonstrates the close association between the Nile and Creation.²⁶ At the center of the room is a medallion featuring an ornately bedecked female bust identified as Ktisis; the surrounding border filled with ducks, wading birds, and lotus blossoms alludes to the Nile (fig. 15.9). Typically, Ktisis might translate as “Foundation” in the sense of the construction of a building, but the Nilotic-themed frame signals a broader meaning, one that encompasses earthly Creation. This interpretation is supported by the decoration of a neighboring room with the busts of the Seasons surrounding a female bust identified as Earth (Ge). Several sixth-century church pavements include figures of Ktisis along with motifs from nature, suggesting perhaps that such themes first developed in the domestic sphere and were later adopted for religious settings. There are several mosaics related to the Nile found in the houses of Palestine and Syria, for example, the mosaic hall in the House of Leontios in Beth She’an, Israel, a Jewish house complex dated to the later fifth or early sixth century. In addition to scenes from the Odyssey, there is a panel with the personification of the River Nile, a Nilometer, and a building inscribed with the name Alexandria.²⁷ The most elaborate Nile mosaic yet discovered comes from a fifth-century secular building in Sepphoris, Israel, where an entire room is paved with scenes related to the flooding of the Nile. Most elements are labeled in Greek, including the personifications of Egypt, the Nile River, Semasia or “the flooding,” and the Pharos.²⁸ It is an extremely dense composition that emphatically demonstrates a post-pagan interest in the festivals connected with the inundation and a continued belief in their propitious effects. Perhaps the popularity of Nilotic themes with its focus on the flooding and therefore on fertility of the land both in sacred and domestic spaces might be likened to the frequent appearances of Aphrodite/Venus in Roman imperial mosaics, which also belied a keen interest in invoking fertility, however through sexuality and beauty. A



15.9. Mosaic floor from Antioch with bust of Ktisis and Nilotic borders, late 5th century CE. Worcester Art Museum, 1936.35.

sixth-century papyrus text from Antionœ preserves a Christian hymn glorifying the Nile and provides a window into the Christian thinking about such matters, namely that the Nile, like the earth and ocean and rivers, manifests God's creative powers.²⁹ The hesitation to give up on tried and true rituals, such as the celebration of the Nile festival, usually has more to do with the quotidian preoccupations of communities tied to the agricultural seasons, than as an expression of devout paganism. In other words, the ongoing offerings of thanks to multiple powers, both pagan and Christian, made practical sense to villagers and even urbanites dependent on fertile fields and good water supplies. Adaptation and absorption are the strategies of the early Byzantine artists when confronted with the gaps left by the abandoned mythical repertoire. Early Islamic artists are equally skilled at re-visualizing the artistic language of their peers in the region. The Umayyad mosaics of the courtyard of the Great Mosque in Damascus employ city vignettes and water-filled gardens to evoke a vision of Islamic paradise.³⁰

The loan from Boston (plate 182) further illustrates the cross fertilization of visual language between the secular and the sacred realms. Of course, the same mosaic workshops and often the same donors are involved, and so it stands to reason that there are borrowings and a shared cultural understanding of imagery. The late antique viewer was accustomed to "reading" mosaic compositions that included personifications, mostly in the form of female

figures who were often identified by Greek labels. They made reference to abstract ideas (e.g., “desire,” “renewal,” “wealth,” “power”), to time (the year, the seasons, the occupations of the seasons), and to parts of nature (seas, rivers, mountains). A couple embraces, seated on a bench outside, indicated by the trees, and they are labeled as Pleasure (*Apolausis*) and Wealth (*Ploutos*). They were once accompanied by Life (*Bios*) and Luxury (*Tryphe*), who recline on a couch and are on view at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto.³¹ And indeed, myth never quite disappeared from the artistic repertoire as vividly demonstrated by the mosaic pavement from the Room of Hippolytus (on the site of the Church of the Virgin) in Madaba with a very busy cast of characters from pagan narratives.³² The limestone funerary relief (plate 181) of a local elite man reclined for posterity echoes the same message despite the fact that he is garbed in local Palmyrene dress. Regional details may vary but a shared visual language abides. The aspirations of the local elite underline an ongoing concern with projecting the “good life.” Within the context of a domestic reception space—the most likely location of the Boston and Toronto mosaics—the artists invented a fresh, but perfectly readable composition of four figures celebrating the bounty of life. Similar themes are explored within the synagogues and churches in the region while drawing on a wide pool of motifs related to nature.

It is surprising that within the restricted scope of this essay, namely the mosaics of Gerasa now in the collection of the Yale University Art Gallery, an overview of the development of floor mosaics in the Byzantine Near East during the formative period of the fifth through the sixth centuries is possible. The trends discussed here are representative of those found throughout the Mediterranean and reflect significant cultural shifts in this era. The intermingling of the sacred and the secular was part of the strategy to develop a fresh artistic vocabulary with a decided focus on nature, terrestrial abundance, and, by extension, God’s Creation.

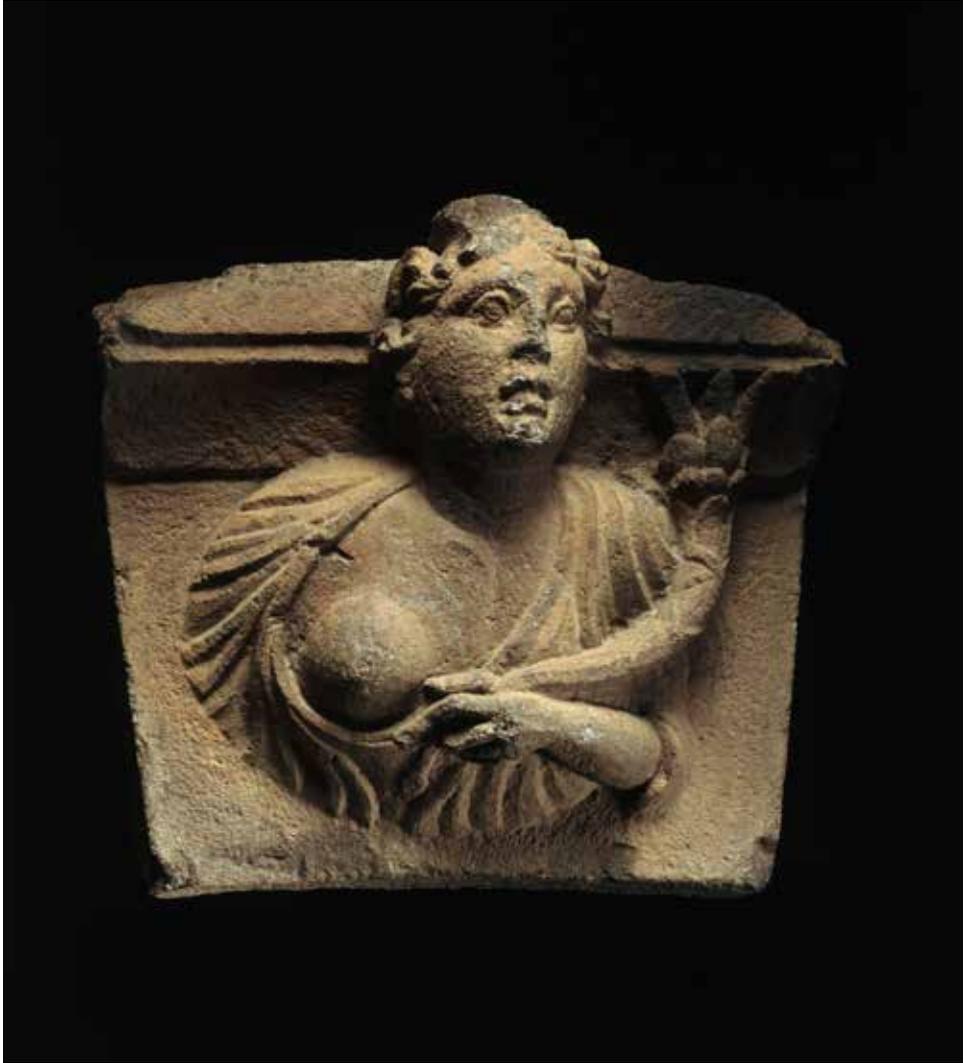


- 1 It should be noted that Jerash was in the ecclesiastical province of Antioch until the middle of the sixth century, and Antioch was at the “apex of a vast ecclesiastical infrastructure which stretched over Asia Minor, Cyprus, Syria and much of Arabia,” see Annabel Jane Wharton, *Refiguring the Post Classical City: Dura Europos, Jerash, Jerusalem and Ravenna* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 76.
- 2 On the negotiation and transformation of space from pagan to Christian city, see *ibid.*, esp. 64–85.
- 3 James Trilling, *Language of Ornament* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2001), 134–35.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 135.
- 5 For this pattern, see Catherine Balmelle et al., *Le décor géométrique de la mosaïque romaine 1: Répertoire graphique et descriptif des compositions linéaires et isotropes*, rev. ed. (Paris: Picard, 2002), plate 178d and DG 2002.2 plate 373a; for fillers see DG 2002.2 plate 373b. Antioch provides ample parallels for these interlace designs starting in the later fourth century and especially in the fifth and sixth centuries (see Doro Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947], Bath E, Room 10, plate 109a, Kaoussie plate 114a, b; mosaic of Ananeosis, plate 93a; Yakto Complex, mosaic of Megalopsychia, Room 21, plate 111a, b; House of the Bird Rinceau, upper level, Room 2, plate 92b).
- 6 Ernst Kitzinger, “Stylistic Developments in Pavement Mosaics in the Greek East from the Age of Constantine to the Age of Justinian,” in *La mosaïque gréco-romaine* (Paris: CNRS, 1965), 341–52, esp. 343–44; one of the earliest demonstrations of the taste for pure geometric ornamentation was found in the Church of Kaoussie (Qaouysiye Church) dated by inscription to 387 CE.
- 7 See John Winter Crowfoot, *Churches at Jerash: A Preliminary Report of the Joint Yale-British School Expeditions to Jerash, 1928–1930* (London: Beccles, 1931), 46, plate 13b.
- 8 Carl H. Kraeling, *Gerasa: City of the Decapolis* (New Haven: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1938), 340.
- 9 For a related composition, see Qasr-el-Lebia, East Church panels with single motifs representing nature in Henry Maguire, *Earth and Ocean: The Terrestrial World in Early Byzantine Art* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1987), 35, fig. 52.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 36.
- 11 Demetrios Michaelides, *Cypriot Mosaics* (Nicosia: Department of Antiquities, 1992), 70–71, no. 37.
- 12 According to one source an indiction is: “The most commonly used Byzantine mark of time was in fact the Indiction cycle of 15 years, beginning on 1 September 312, which became mandatory from 537” (Elizabeth Jefferys, John F. Haldon, and Robin Cormack, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008], 33). And it is noted that, “The Byzantines used indictional dating in everyday life and in administration” (Alexander P. Kazhdan et al., *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 2 [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991], 993).
- 13 MFA, Boston 1971.633, in Marlia Mango, *Silver from Early Byzantium: The Kaper Koraon and Related Treasures*, exh. cat. (Baltimore: Walters Art Gallery, 1986), 246–47, cat. 73, and for other examples of similarly inscribed silver chalices: 141–46, no. 29–30; 188–91, no. 41; for an ewer, 104–7, cat. 14.
- 14 For example C. Bradford Welles in Kraeling, *Gerasa: City of the Decapolis*, 473–89 or the Packard Humanities Institute epigraphy database, www.epigraphy.packhum.org/inscriptions/main

- ?url=gis%3Fregion%3D10.
- 15 Kraeling, *Gerasa: City of the Decapolis*, 251.
 - 16 “Certainly, my bishop brings beautiful marvels to the people who inhabit this city and land, because he built a house to Peter and Paul, the chiefs of the disciples (for the Savior imparted the authority to them), and adorned it with silver and beautifully colored stones; the renowned Anastasios who teaches the true precepts of God,” see Lisa R. Brody, “Gerasa,” in *Byzantium and Islam: Age of Transition (7th–9th Century)*, ed. Helen C. Evans and Brandie Ratliff, exh. cat. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2012), 12, cat. 1.
 - 17 J. J. Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 205–8, fig. 221.
 - 18 See Fathi Bejaoui, “Îles et villes de la Méditerranée sur une mosaïque d’Ammaedara (Haïdra en Tunisie),” *CRAI* 141, no. 3 (1997): 825–58.
 - 19 For a general discussion of the architectural scenes found on Jordanian mosaics, see Noel Duval, “L’iconografia architettonica nei mosaici di Giordania,” in *I Mosaici di Giordania*, ed. Michele Piccirillo (Rome: Quasar, 1986), 151–55.
 - 20 See Michele Piccirillo, *The Mosaics of Jordan* (Amman: American Center of Oriental Research, 1992), 218–33; and Glen W. Bowersock, *Mosaics in History: The Near East from Late Antiquity to Islam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), who devotes a whole chapter to the city vignettes, 64–88.
 - 21 This is not the opinion of Bowersock who states that the city vignettes are not “merely symbolic...but rather an attempt to show the real city” (*ibid.*, 68). No doubt the specificity of certain mosaic cityscapes expresses a desire to draw on the regional geography and architecture, but how does this affect our reading of the overall message?
 - 22 Piccirillo, *Mosaics of Jordan*, 286–88, figs. 501–6, 536–45.
 - 23 Peter Brown evokes the symbolic power of the Nile so vividly in his review of *Palestine in Late Antiquity*, by Hagith Sivan, *New York Review of Books* (June 11, 2009): 42: “A magic river whose divinely effortless inundation brought a tingle of delight to pagans, Jews and Christians alike at the very thought of so much damp fertility, carried by art into the midst of a hot, dry city.”
 - 24 This method is first established in Maguire, *Earth and Ocean* and later expanded upon in several articles and books, cited in the notes below.
 - 25 For a review of the significance of Nilotic scenes, see Rachel Hachlili, *Ancient Mosaic Pavements: Themes, Issues, and Trends* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 97–109, and Henry Maguire’s “Nature in Early Byzantine Art,” in *Nectar and Illusion: Nature in Byzantine Art and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 11–34; Maguire, “The Nile and the Rivers of Paradise,” in *The Madaba Map Centenary, 1897–1997: Travelling through the Byzantine Umayyad Period*, ed. Michele Piccirillo and Eugenio Alliata (Jerusalem: Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, 1999), 179–84.
 - 26 Now in the Worcester Art Museum, 1936.35, but originally from the House of Ge and the Seasons, Room 4; see *The Arts of Antioch: Art Historical and Scientific Approaches to Roman Mosaics and a Catalogue of the Worcester Art Museum Antioch Collection*, ed. Lawrence Becker and Christine Kondoleon (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 208–15, mosaics, cat. 5.
 - 27 Hachlili, *Ancient Mosaic Pavements*, 97, plate 5.1.
 - 28 Zeev Weiss and Rina Talgam, “The Nile Festival Building and Its Mosaics: Mythological Rep-

- resentations in Early Byzantine Sepphoris,” in *The Roman and Byzantine Near East* 3, ed. J. H. Humphrey (Portsmouth: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2002), 55–72.
- 29 Henry Maguire, “Christians, Pagans, and the Representation of Nature,” *Riggisberger Berichte* 1 (1993): 153.
- 30 These mosaics are best seen in the 1928–29 pre-restoration photographs of the west rivaq, see Loreline Simonis, *Les relevés des mosaïques de la grande mosquée de Damas* (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 2012), fig. 40.
- 31 Attributed to the sixth century and to a Syrian workshop because of their style, technique, and iconography, see Christine Kondoleon, “Celebrating Pleasure and Wealth: A New Mosaic at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston,” in *ANAΘHMATA EOPTIKA: Studies in Honor of Thomas F. Mathews*, ed. Joseph Alcherms (Mainz: Von Zabern, 2009), 216–22.
- 32 Bowersock, *Mosaics in History*, 7–8, fig. 1.3.

PLATES



1. Keystone with bust of Tyche

Syria, early 2nd century CE

Basalt, 34.6 x 40 x 31 cm

Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton University Archaeological Expedition to Syria, 1904–5 and 1909, Y1930-456



2. Textile roundel with nimbed bust (possibly Tyche)

Egypt, 5th–7th century CE
Wool on undyed linen, 18 x 19 cm
Donald and Barbara Tullalain, 1979-01000



3. Mosaic floor with views of Alexandria and Memphis

Gerasa, Church of Saints Peter and Paul, nave, c. 540 CE

Limestone tesserae, 396.3 x 609.6 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-British School Excavations at Gerasa, 1932.1735

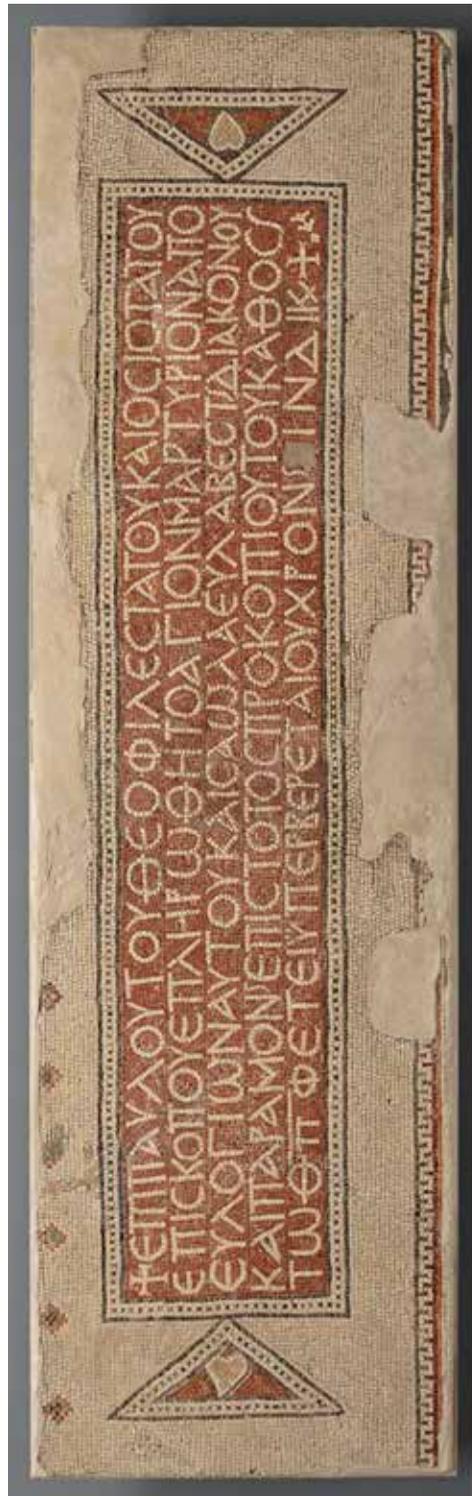


4. Mosaic floor with geometric design

Gerasa, Church of Bishop Paul (Procopius Church), south aisle, c. 526 CE

Limestone tesserae, 294.6 x 373.4 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-British School Excavations at Gerasa, 1929.418



5. Mosaic floor with inscription

Gerasa, Church of Bishop Paul (Procopius Church), nave, c. 526 CE

Limestone tesserae, 100.3 x 340.5 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-British School Excavations at Gerasa, 1929.419

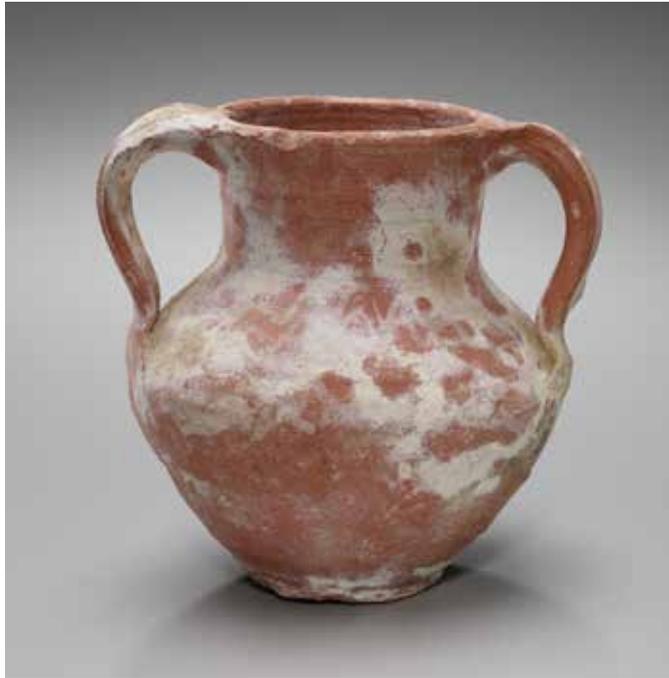


6. Dedicatory inscription from a public building

Gerasa, Forum, 66–67 CE

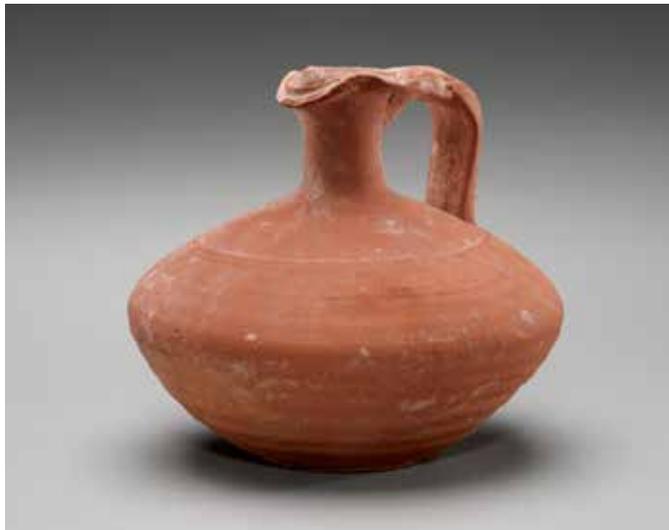
Limestone, 55 x 96 x 8 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-British School Excavations at Gerasa, 1935.274.1



7. Jar

Gerasa, Church of Saint Theodore (Room 10), 6th–7th century CE
Terracotta, 8.8 x 9.1 cm
Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-British School Excavations at Gerasa, 1929.688



8. Jug

Gerasa, area west of Church of Saint Theodore, 2nd–3rd century CE
Terracotta, 10.1 x 11.4 cm
Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-British School Excavations at Gerasa, 1935.293



9. Bowls

Gerasa, area west of Church of Saint Theodore, 1st–3rd century CE

Terracotta, a: 4.8 x 10.1 cm, b: 4.5 x 10.5 cm, c: 3.2 x 10.8 cm, d: 3.5 x 13 cm, e: 5.8 x 13.4 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-British School Excavations at Gerasa, 1935.312a–e



10. Candlestick unguentarium

Gerasa, Southwest Cemetery (Tomb 9), 4th–5th century CE

Glass, 11.8 x 4.3 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-British School Excavations at Gerasa, 1935.323

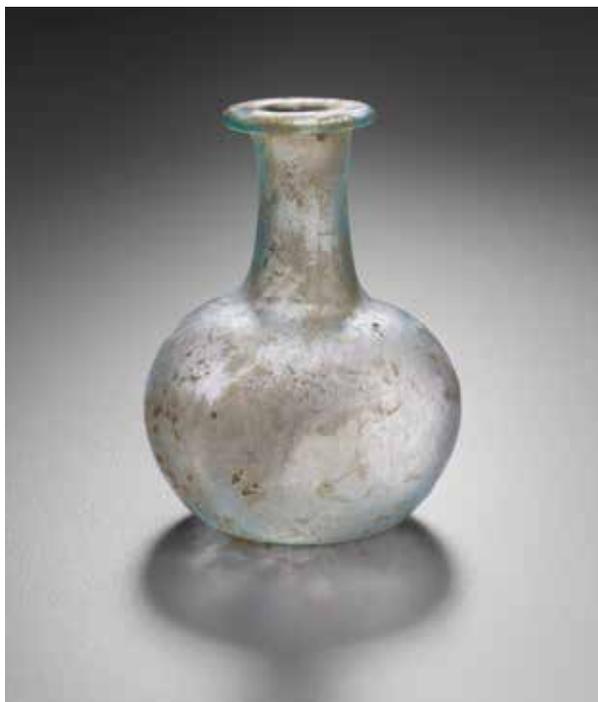


11. Candlestick unguentarium

Gerasa, Southwest Cemetery (Tomb 5), 4th–5th century CE

Glass, 10 x 2.8 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-British School Excavations at Gerasa, 1935.326



12. Long-necked vase

Gerasa, area west of Church of Saint Theodore, 4th–5th century CE

Glass, h: 5.8 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-British School Excavations at Gerasa, 1935.320



13. Wide-mouthed jar

Gerasa, area west of Church of Saint Theodore, 5th century CE

Glass, 6.5 x 6 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-British School Excavations at Gerasa, 1935.321



14. Round lamp with eight holes

Gerasa, 5th-6th century CE

Terracotta, diam: 10.2 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-British School Excavations at Gerasa, 1929.651



15. Figurine of nude female

Gerasa, Cave on the Irbid Road

Terracotta, 29.2 x 6.9 x 5.1 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-British School Excavations at Gerasa, 1939.457



16. Figurine of horse and rider

Gerasa, Cave on the Irbid Road

Terracotta, 21.3 x 18 x 4.5 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-British School Excavations at Gerasa, 1939.453



17. Clavius fragment with horses and riders

Egypt, 6th–7th century CE

Wool on undyed linen, 27.5 x 11.5 cm

Glenn and Rebecca Cahaly, 1986-00300A



18. Uncertain denomination of Neocaesarea

Head of Septimius Severus (obverse) and tetrastyle temple (reverse)

Dura-Europos, near Southwest Tower, Hoard 8/9

Mint: Neocaesarea, Pontus, 205–206 CE

Bronze, 10.88 gm, 12:00, 30.5 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.6000.1345



19. Cistophorus of the proconsul C. Claudius Ap. F. Pulcher

Cista mystica (obverse) and serpents flanking a stylized bow case (reverse)

Mint: Pergamum, Mysia, 56–54 BCE

Silver, 11.86 gm, 12:00, 28 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Transfer from Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, 2001.87.218



20. Cistophorus of Hadrian

Head of Hadrian (obverse) and cult image of Zeus Askraios (reverse)

Mint: Halicarnassus, Caria, overstruck on a cistophorus of M. Antonius, 128–130 CE

Silver, 10.66 gm, 6:00, 28 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Ben Lee Damsky, 2011.155.1



21. Uncertain denomination of Halicarnassus

Bust of Septimius Severus (obverse) and cult image of Zeus Askraios (reverse)

Mint: Halicarnassus, Caria, 193–211 CE

Bronze, 21.67 gm, 12:00, 32 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Ben Lee Damsky, 2011.155.2



22. Tetradrachm of Alexandria

Head of Commodus (obverse) and emperor making an offering in front of bust of Serapis (reverse)

Mint: Alexandria, Egypt, 183–184 CE

Billon, 11.36 gm, 12:00, 24.5 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Transfer from Sterling Memorial Library,

Yale University, Gift of Dr. Sidney Peerless, 2001.87.3684



23. Uncertain denomination of Nicomedia

Bust of Caracalla (obverse) and Tyche seated with a small octastyle temple in each hand (reverse)

Mint: Nicomedia, 211–215 CE

Bronze, 14.99 gm, 12:00, 28 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Ruth Elizabeth White Fund, 2003.12.4



24. Uncertain denomination of Ephesus

Head of Claudius facing bust of Agrippina II (obverse) and Artemis of Ephesus (reverse)

Mint: Ephesus, Ionia, 49–50 CE

Bronze, 7.76 gm, 12:00, 26 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Ruth Elizabeth White Fund, 2004.6.168



25. Uncertain denomination of Ephesus

Head of Philippus Junior (obverse) and children playing with *astragaloi* (knucklebones) before cult image of Artemis of Ephesus (reverse)

Mint: Ephesus, Ionia, 244–247 CE

Bronze, 4.69 gm, 6:00, 21.5 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Ruth Elizabeth White Fund, 2004.6.190



26. Uncertain denomination of Ephesus

Head of Valerian (obverse) and Artemis the Huntress (reverse)

Mint: Ephesus, Ionia, 253–260 CE

Bronze, 7.2 gm, 6:00, 28 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Ruth Elizabeth White Fund, 2004.6.193



27. Uncertain denomination of Ephesus

Bust of Domitian (obverse) and Artemis of Ephesus standing between the two Nemeses of Smyrna and Ephesus (reverse)

Mint: Ephesus, Ionia, 92–94 CE

Bronze, 21.14 gm, 6:00, 32 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Ruth Elizabeth White Fund, 2004.6.195



28. Uncertain denomination of Sardis

Head of Domitian (obverse) and *dēmos* of Sardis clasp hands with *dēmos* of Smyrna (reverse)

Mint: Sardis, Lydia, 81–96 CE

Bronze, 10.46 gm, 12:00, 25.5 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Ruth Elizabeth White Fund, 2004.6.393



29. Uncertain denomination of Neocaesarea

Bust of Septimius Severus (obverse) and tetrastyle temple (reverse)

Mint: Neocaesarea, Pontus, 193–211 CE

Copper, 14.5 gm, 12:00, 28 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of James H. Schwartz, 2005.6.325



30. Drachm of Geta

Head of Commodus (obverse) and Mount Argaeus (reverse)

Mint: Caesarea, Cappadocia, 182 CE

Silver, 4.16 gm, 12:00, 20 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Ruth Elizabeth White Fund, 2006.61.4



31. Uncertain denomination of Sardis

Bust of Julia Domna (obverse) and figure of Kore (reverse)

Mint: Sardis, Lydia, 193–217 CE

Orichalcum, 12.63 gm, 6:00, 28.6 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Ruth Elizabeth White Fund with the assistance of Ben Lee Damsky, 2007.183.83



32. Uncertain denomination of Temenothyrae

Bust of Gallienus (obverse) and ceremonial scene (reverse)

Mint: Temenothyrae, Phrygia, 253–268 CE

Bronze, 20.85 gm, 12:00, 40.6 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Ruth Elizabeth White Fund with the assistance of Ben Lee Damsky, 2008.83.133



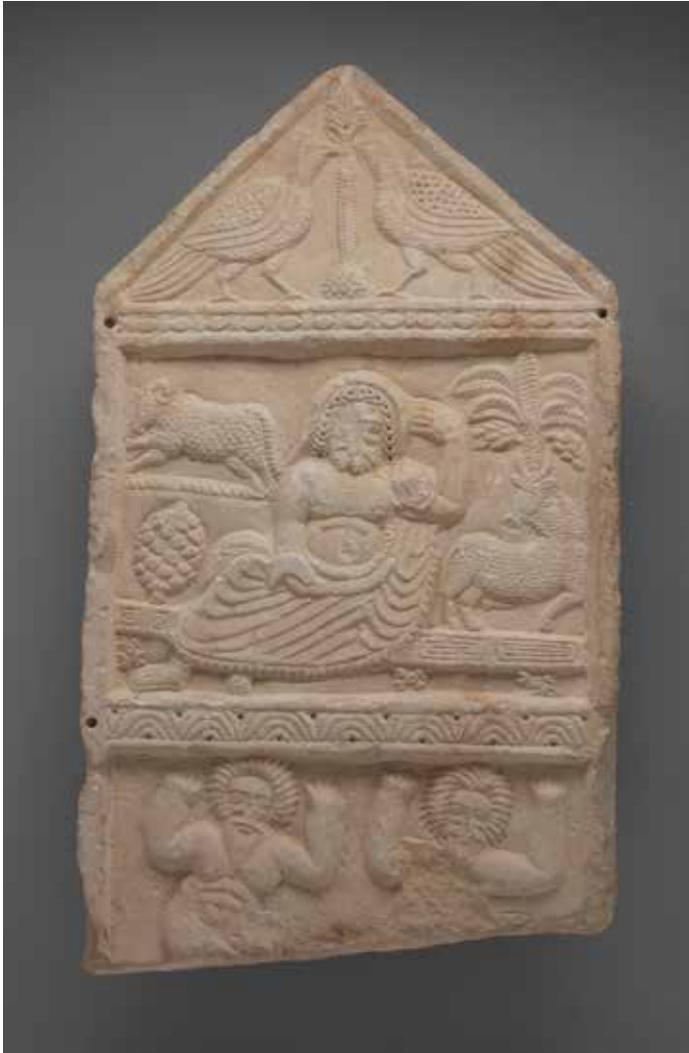
33. Uncertain denomination of Ephesus

Head of Hadrian (obverse) and tetrastyle temple of Artemis of Ephesus (reverse)
Mint: Ephesus, Ionia, 117–138 CE
Bronze, 7.09 gm, 12:00, 21.5 mm
Yale University Art Gallery, Promised Gift of Ben Lee Damsky, ILE2013.17.148



34. Uncertain denomination of Pergamum

Bust of Caracalla (obverse) and emperor worshipping Telesphorus (reverse)
Mint: Pergamum, Mysia, 214–215 CE
Bronze, 44.97 gm, 6:00, 43.8 mm
Yale University Art Gallery, Promised Gift of Ben Lee Damsky, ILE2013.17.331



35. Votive stele

Tunisia, 2nd century CE

Limestone, 75 x 42 x 10.2 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Ambassador and Mrs. William L. Eagleton Jr., BA 1948, 1984.79.1



36. Uncertain denomination of Temenothyrae

Bust of the senate of Temenothyrae (obverse) and drunken Hercules (reverse)

Mint: Temenothyrae, Phrygia, 244–249 CE

Orichalcum, 34.03 gm, 5:00, 44.1 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Promised Gift of Ben Lee Damsky, ILE2013.17.98



37. Statue of Hercules

Tunisia, 1st–3rd century CE

Marble, h: 29 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Ambassador and Mrs. William L. Eagleton Jr., BA 1948, 1987.37.1



38. Relief of Hercules

Dura-Europos, House G5-C10, 2nd–mid-3rd century CE

Plaster, 23.5 x 13.5 x 7.5 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1935.50



39. Relief of Hercules

Dura-Europos, Block L8, 2nd–mid-3rd century CE

Limestone, 31.5 x 16 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1935.51



40. Textile fragment with Hercules

Egypt, 4th-5th century CE

Wool on undyed linen, 13.5 x 12.8 cm

Donald and Barbara Talian, 1988-05000



41. Textile fragment with dancing man holding shield

Egypt, 5th century CE
 Wool on undyed linen, 13 x 7.5 cm
 Donald and Barbara Tullian, 1984-00150B



42. Clavus fragment with nude warrior, foliate background

Egypt, 5th century CE
 Wool on undyed linen, 16 x 12 cm
 Donald and Barbara Tullian, 1984-00040



43. Ring with intaglio

Dura-Europos, House B2-D10, 100–256 CE

Silver and carnelian, 2.5 x 2.8 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1933.615



44. Ring

Dura-Europos, 1st–3rd century CE

Silver, 2.5 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1934.641



45. Intaglio with figure of Diana

Dura-Europos, Block N8, 2nd century CE
Nicolo, 1.4 x 0.3 x 1.5 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1932.1679
Image on right produced using Reflectance Transformation Imaging and digital enhancement to create a positive version of the carved surface.



46. Intaglio with figure of Tyche (Fortuna)

Dura-Europos, Temple of Atargatis, 2nd century CE
Sardonyx, 1.2 x 1.8 x 0.4 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.4332
Image on right is an impression of the carved surface.



47. Intaglio with figure of Triton

Tunisia, 1st century BCE–2nd century CE

Carnelian, 0.7 x 1 x 0.3 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Ambassador and Mrs. William L. Eagleton Jr., BA 1948, 1984.79.6

Image on right produced using Reflectance Transformation Imaging and digital enhancement to create a positive version of the carved surface.



48. Intaglio with figure of Minerva

Tunisia, 1st century BCE–2nd century CE

Carnelian, 1 x 0.9 x 0.2 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Ambassador and Mrs. William L. Eagleton Jr., BA 1948, 1984.79.7

Image on right produced using Reflectance Transformation Imaging and digital enhancement to create a positive version of the carved surface.



49. Intaglio with seated figure

Tunisia, 1st century BCE–2nd century CE

Gray stone, 0.9 x 0.6 x 0.1 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Ambassador and Mrs. William L. Eagleton Jr., BA 1948, 1984.79.8

Image on right produced using Reflectance Transformation Imaging and digital enhancement to create a positive version of the carved surface.



50. Intaglio with bust of Mars

Anatolia, 1st century BCE–2nd century CE

Carnelian, 1.2 x 0.9 x 0.2 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Ambassador and Mrs. William L. Eagleton Jr., BA 1948, 1984.79.9

Image on right produced using Reflectance Transformation Imaging and digital enhancement to create a positive version of the carved surface.



51. Intaglio with eagle between two standards

Syria, 1st–2nd century CE

Carnelian, 1.6 x 1.3 x 0.5 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Ambassador and Mrs. William L. Eagleton Jr., BA 1948, 1986.17.4

Image on right produced using Reflectance Transformation Imaging and digital enhancement to create a positive version of the carved surface.



52. Intaglio with figure of Mercury

Syria, 1st–2nd century CE

Carnelian, 1.2 x 0.9 x 0.3 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Ambassador and Mrs. William L. Eagleton Jr., BA 1948, 1986.17.12

Image on right produced using Reflectance Transformation Imaging and digital enhancement to create a positive version of the carved surface.



53. Intaglio with figure of Tyche (Fortuna)

Syria, 1st-2nd century CE

Agate, 1.3 x 0.9 x 0.3 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Ambassador and Mrs. William L. Eagleton Jr., BA 1948, 1986.17.14

Image on right produced using Reflectance Transformation Imaging and digital enhancement to create a positive version of the carved surface.



54. Intaglio with portrait head

Syria, 1st-2nd century CE

Carnelian, 1.1 x 1 x 0.3 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Ambassador and Mrs. William L. Eagleton Jr., BA 1948, 1986.17.19

Image on right produced using Reflectance Transformation Imaging and digital enhancement to create a positive version of the carved surface.



55. Intaglio with figure of Ceres

Syria, 1st-3rd century CE

Carnelian, 1.2 x 1.1 x 0.1 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Ambassador and Mrs. William L. Eagleton Jr., BA 1948, 1986.17.22

Image on right produced using Reflectance Transformation Imaging and digital enhancement to create a positive version of the carved surface.



56. Intaglio with figure of Mars

Syria, 1st-3rd century CE

Carnelian, 1.3 x 1 x 0.5 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Ambassador and Mrs. William L. Eagleton Jr., BA 1948, 1986.17.23

Image on right produced using Reflectance Transformation Imaging and digital enhancement to create a positive version of the carved surface.



57. Intaglio with two animals flanking a tree

Syria, 1st–3rd century CE

Jasper, 1.3 x 0.9 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Ambassador and Mrs. William L. Eagleton Jr., BA 1948, 1986.100.3

Image on right produced using Reflectance Transformation Imaging and digital enhancement to create a positive version of the carved surface.



58. Intaglio with standing female figure holding offering dish

Syria, 1st–3rd century CE

Carnelian, 0.8 x 1.2 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Ambassador and Mrs. William L. Eagleton Jr., BA 1948, 1986.100.35

Image on right produced using Reflectance Transformation Imaging and digital enhancement to create a positive version of the carved surface.



59. Painted Latin inscription

Dura-Europos, Principia ("Praetorium"), 222–223 CE

Paint on plaster, 82.6 x 63.5 x 6.2 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1932.1207a



60. Pierced rosette from a horse trapping

Dura-Europos, House G1, 165–256 CE

Bronze, 6.3 x 0.4 x 8.9 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1932.1434



61. Horse trapping

2nd–3rd century CE

Bronze, 11.2 x 8.6 x 0.3 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Jerry Nagler, 2001.118.1



62. Openwork baldric fastener

Dura-Europos, Block J7, 165–256 CE

Bronze, 1 x 5.4 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1935.41



63. Openwork baldric fastener

Dura-Europos, Block J8, 165–256 CE

Bronze, 2 x 5.2 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.2179



64. Military belt plate

Dura-Europos, 165–256 CE

Bronze, 2.7 x 5.3 x 0.4 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.2163



65. Buckle with glass inlay

Dura-Europos, Block E7, 165–256 CE

Bronze and glass, 4.5 x 8.6 x 2.5 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1932.1412



66. Tetradrachm of Philip I

Bust of Philip I (obverse) and eagle (reverse)
Dura-Europos, House L8-A4, Hoard 10
Mint: Rome (struck for Syria), 244 CE
Silver, 13.34 gm, 12:00, 25.5 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.6000.701



67. Tetradrachm of Philip I

Bust of Philip I (obverse) and eagle (reverse)
Dura-Europos, House L8-A4, Hoard 10
Mint: Antioch, Syria, 248 CE
Silver, 10.73 gm, 12:00, 26.5 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.6000.716



68. Uncertain denomination of Nicaea

Bust of Macrianus (obverse) and city walls of Nicaea (reverse)
Mint: Nicaea, 261–262 CE
Copper, 7.32 gm, 1:00, 24 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Ruth Elizabeth White Fund, 2004.6.2298



69. Tetradrachm of Perseus

Head of Perseus (obverse) and eagle (reverse)

Mint: Macedonia, 178–168 BCE

Silver, 15.37 gm, 12:00, 31 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Ruth Elizabeth White Fund, 2004.6.1620



70. Tetradrachm of Amphipolis

Head of Artemis *Tauropolos* (obverse) and club surrounded by oak leaf crown (reverse)

Mint: Amphipolis, Macedonia, 158–149 BCE

Silver, 16.88 gm, 2:00, 31.5 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Ruth Elizabeth White Fund, 2004.6.1432



71. Uncertain denomination of Nicaea

Head of Commodus (obverse) and table with two prize crowns from games of imperial cult (reverse)

Mint: Nicaea, 180–192 CE

Copper, 15.71 gm, 7:00, 29.5 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Ruth Elizabeth White Fund, 2004.6.2280



72. Uncertain denomination of Ancyra

Head of Commodus (obverse) and octastyle temple (reverse)

Mint: Ancyra, Galatia, 180–192 CE

Copper, 11.9 gm, 6:00, 28 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Ruth Elizabeth White Fund, 2004.6.3513



73. Tetradrachm of Alexandria

Bust of Antoninus Pius (obverse) and she-wolf with Romulus and Remus (reverse)

Mint: Alexandria, Egypt, 150–151 CE

Billon, 13.01 gm, 12:00, 23 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Transfer from Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, 2001.87.3671



74. Uncertain denomination of Ephesus

Bust of Septimius Severus (obverse) and she-wolf with Romulus and Remus (reverse)

Mint: Ephesus, Ionia, 202–211 CE

Copper, 5.89 gm, 6:00, 22 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Ruth Elizabeth White Fund, 2004.6.2656



75. Handle base from a situla

1st-3rd century CE

Bronze, 7.8 x 5.6 x 0.4 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Ruth Elizabeth White, 1988.80.4



76. Faucet or spigot in the form of a bearded male head

2nd century CE

Bronze, 5.5 x 5.5 x 3.8 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Ruth Elizabeth White, 1988.80.25



77. Wall painting with female face

Dura-Europos, Roman Bath (E3), 165–256 CE

Paint on plaster, 20 x 23.5 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1929.353



78. Wall painting with human face

Dura-Europos, Roman Bath (E3), 165–256 CE

Paint on plaster, 15.5 x 19.5 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1929.354



79. Portrait of a priest of the imperial cult

125–150 CE

Marble, 48.5 x 40.5 x 36 cm

Princeton University Art Museum, Museum Purchase, Gift of John B. Elliott, Class of 1951, Y1990-3

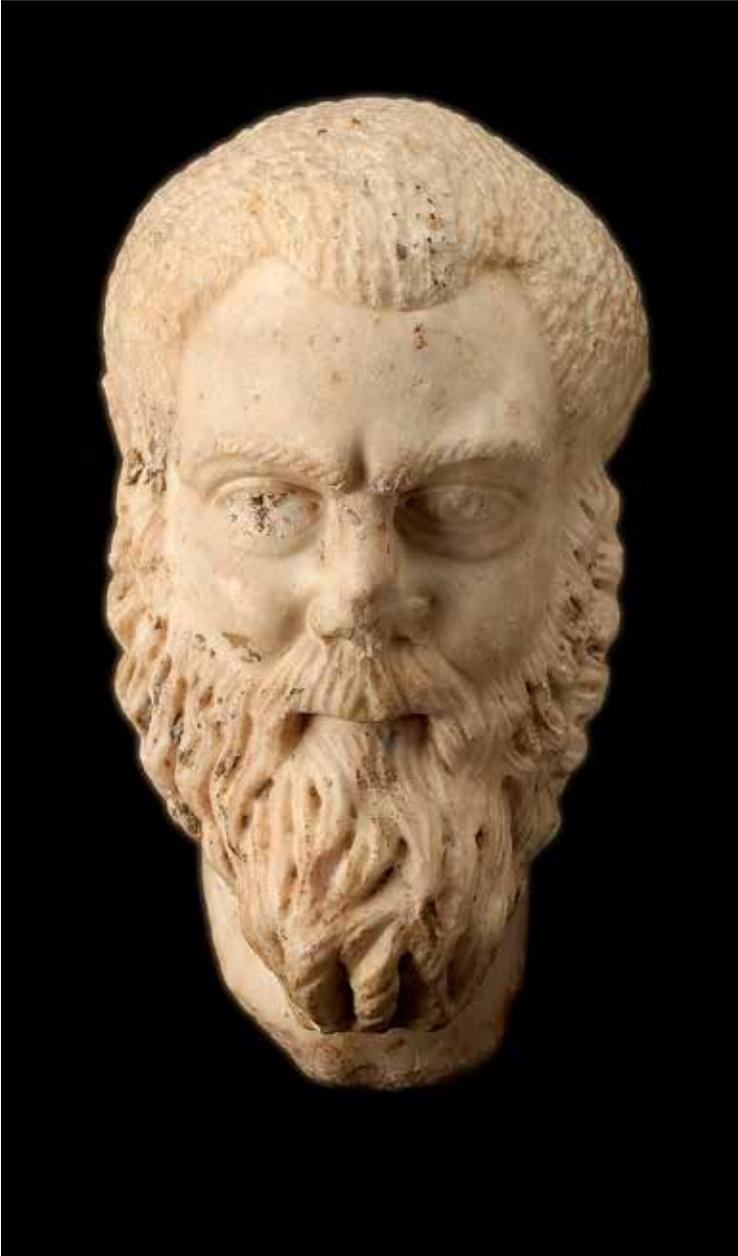


80. Portrait of an official

Aphrodisias, Baths of Hadrian, late 5th–early 6th century CE

Marble (from Göktepe, near Aphrodisias), h: 21 cm

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Gift of Gerome M. Eisenberg and Richard Titelman, 1971.18



81. Portrait of an intellectual

Athens, 275–325 CE

Marble, h: 46.3 cm

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Purchased from J. J. Klejman, 62.465



82. Portrait of a woman

Antioch, 117–138 CE

Marble, 24.3 x 17.8 x 22.7 cm

Princeton Art Museum, Gift of the Committee for the Excavation of Antioch to Princeton University, 2000-51

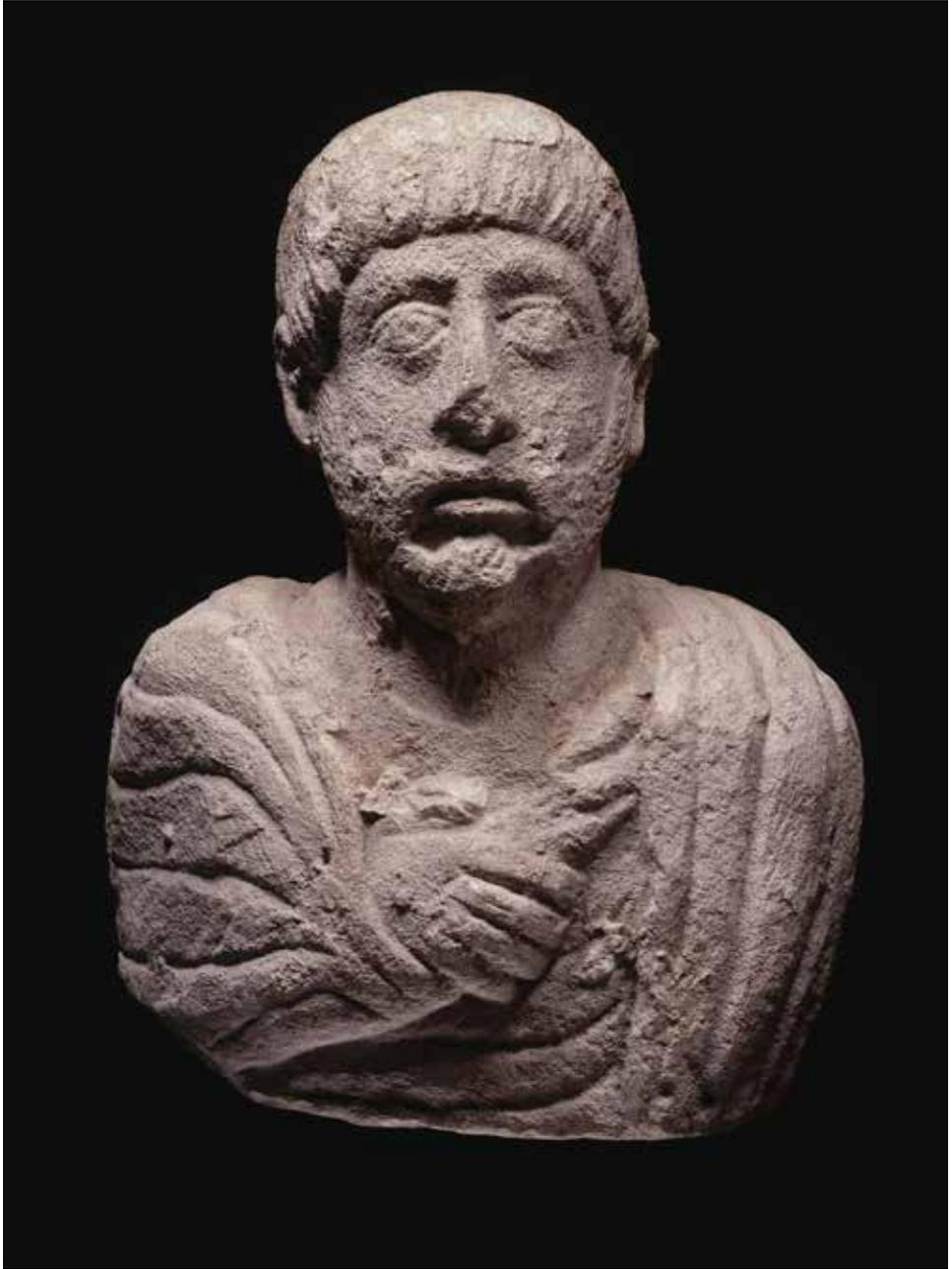


83. Colossal portrait of a woman

Antioch, late 2nd century CE

Marble, 36.8 x 27.5 x 27.4 cm

Princeton Art Museum, Gift of the Committee for the Excavation of Antioch to Princeton University, 2000-50

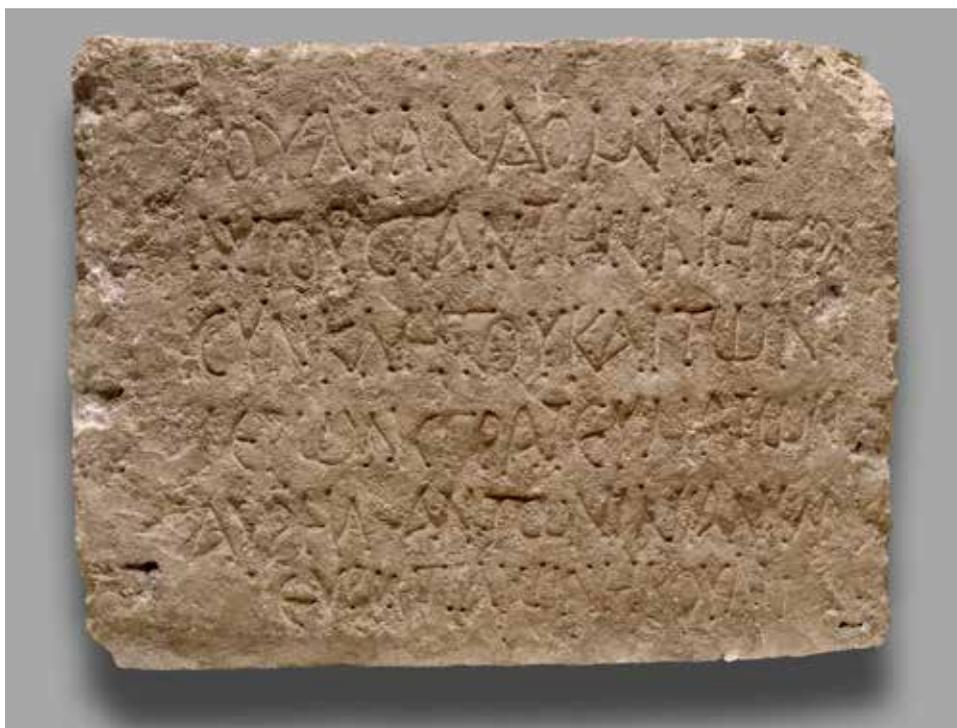


84. Portrait of a man in a toga

Britain, late 4th century CE

Chalk, 40.1 x 31.2 x 15.7 cm

Princeton University Art Museum, Museum Purchase, Y1943-90



85. Inscription to Julia Domna

Dura-Europos, Temple of Artemis, 193–217 CE

Marble, 48.3 x 63.5 x 15.9 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1930.626



86. Sestertius of Julia Domna

Bust of Julia Domna (obverse) and empress in the guise of Pax (reverse)

Mint: Rome, 209–211 CE

Orichalcum, 24.06 gm, 12:00, 32.7 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Ruth Elizabeth White Fund with the assistance of Ben Lee Damsky, 2007.183.82



87. Head of a doll resembling Julia Domna

3rd century CE

Ivory, 3.8 x 2.8 x 2.8 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Thomas T. Solley, BA 1950, 2002.15.1



88. Portrait of Julia Domna

203–217 CE

Marble, 35 x 26.7 x 24.1 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Ruth Elizabeth White Fund, 2010.143.1



89. Uncertain denomination of Marcianopolis

Heads of Septimius Severus and Julia Domna (obverse) and standing figure of Tyche (reverse)

Mint: Marcianopolis, Thracia, 202–205 CE

Orichalcum, 11.81 gm, 12:00, 27.5 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Ruth Elizabeth White Fund, 2004.6.452



90. Uncertain denomination of Nicopolis ad Istrum

Heads of Septimius Severus and Caracalla (obverse) and inscription within a wreath (reverse)

Mint: Nicopolis ad Istrum, Moesia, 198–211 CE

Orichalcum, 9.83 gm, 7:00, 26 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Ruth Elizabeth White Fund, 2004.6.416



91. Sestertius of Geta as Caesar

Head of Geta (obverse) and Caracalla and Geta with Victory and bound captive (reverse)

Mint: Rome, 200–202 CE

Orichalcum, 22.92 gm, 12:00, 32 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Ruth Elizabeth White Fund with the assistance of Ben Lee Damsky, 2008.83.143



92. Denarius of Caracalla

Head of Caracalla (obverse) and standing figure of Moneta (reverse)

Mint: Laodicea ad Mare, Syria, 198 CE

Silver, 3.12 gm, 12:00, 19.7 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Ruth Elizabeth White Fund with the assistance of Ben Lee Damsky, 2009.110.107



93. Denarius of Julia Domna

Head of Julia Domna (obverse) and standing figure of Venus (reverse)

Mint: Alexandria, Egypt, 193–217 CE

Silver, 2.96 gm, 6:00, 17 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Ruth Elizabeth White Fund with the assistance of Ben Lee Damsky, 2007.183.80



94. Aureus of Septimius Severus

Head of Septimius Severus (obverse) and standing figure of Victus (reverse)

Mint: Rome, 193–194 CE

Gold, 7.22 gm, 6:00, 21 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Transfer from Yale University Library, Numismatic Collection, 2001.87.2736



95. Cistophorus of Septimius Severus

Head of Septimius Severus (obverse) and eagle between two *signa* (reverse)

Mint: Caesarea, Cappadocia, 198 CE

Silver, 7.88 gm, 6:00, 24.3 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Ben Lee Damsky, ILE2013.17.280



96. Aureus of Caracalla

Head of Caracalla (obverse) and Caracalla making a presentation in front of the Temple of Vesta (reverse)

Mint: Rome, 214–215 CE

Gold, 7.27 gm, 1:00, 20.3 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Ben Lee Damsky, ILE2013.17.300



97. Sestertius of Caracalla

Head of Caracalla (obverse) and standing figure of Mars (reverse)

Mint: Rome, 213 CE

Orichalcum, 21.12 gm, 1:00, 31.8 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Ben Lee Damsky, ILE2013.17.314



98. Uncertain denomination of Marcianopolis

Heads of Julia Domna and Caracalla (obverse) and standing figure of Tyche (reverse)

Mint: Marcianopolis, Thracia, 211–217 CE

Orichalcum, 14.09 gm, 6:00, 27.5 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Transfer from Yale University Library, Numismatic Collection, 2001.87.9761



99. Bead necklace

Egypt, 1st century CE

Glass, length: 50.8 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of David Dows, PhD 1908, through Ludlow Bull, 1945.161



100. Bead necklace

Egypt, 1st century CE

Glass, length: 43.2 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of David Dows, PhD 1908, through Ludlow Bull, 1945.162



101. Bottle

Dura-Europos, 2nd-mid-3rd century CE

Glass, 23.1 x 19 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1929.422



102. Vase

France, 2nd-3rd century CE

Glass, 6.7 x 2.5 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of E. Francis Riggs, BA 1909, and T. Lawrason Riggs, BA 1910, 1929.628



103. Bottle

Kurcoğlu, 1st-2nd century CE
Glass, 13 x 6 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Exchange with the Oriental Institute,
University of Chicago, Kurcoğlu Excavation, 1940.635



104. Unguentarium

Kurcoğlu, 2nd century CE
Glass, 6.8 x 3.3 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Exchange with the Oriental Institute,
University of Chicago, Kurcoğlu Excavation, 1940.640



105. Candlestick unguentarium

France, 2nd–3rd century CE

Glass, 10.1 x 3.2 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of E. Francis Riggs, BA 1909, and T. Lawrason Riggs, BA 1910, 1929.629



106. Tumbler

Syria, 5th century CE

Glass, 11.8 x 7.6 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Anna Rosalie Mansfield Collection, 1930.397



107. Double head flask

Syria, 3rd-4th century CE

Glass, 8.8 x 4.2 x 4.3 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Anna Rosalie Mansfield Collection, 1930.413



108. Carinated millefiori bowl

Syria, 1st century CE

Glass, 4.5 x 10 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Anna Rosalie Mansfield Collection, 1930.422



109. Textile medallion of geometric/cross motif

Egypt, 8th-9th century CE

Wool on undyed linen, 3 x 3.5 cm

Donald and Barbara Tellaian, 1979-00000



110. Cup

Cologne, 2nd century CE

Glass (free-blown), 6 x 9.1 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Leonard C. Hanna Jr., Class of 1913, Fund, 1992.15.1



111. Patella cup

1st century BCE–1st century CE

Glass, 4.2 x 8.1 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Hobart and Edward Small Moore Memorial
Collection, Bequest of Mrs. William H. Moore, 1955.6.24

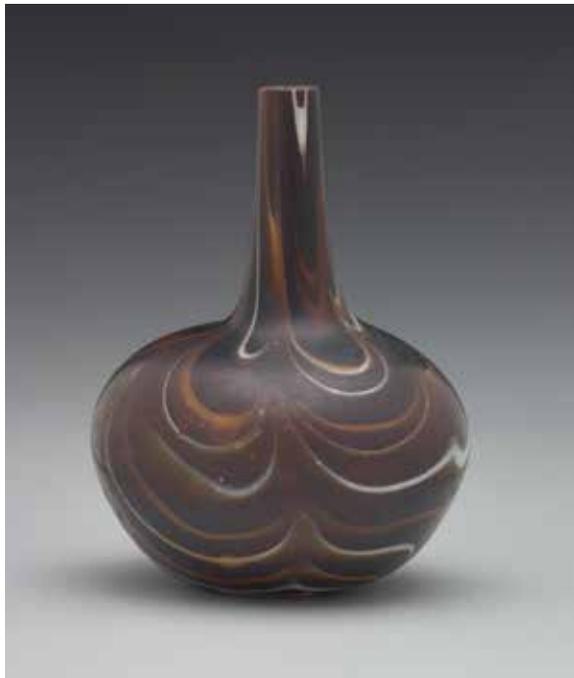


112. Ribbed bowl

1st century CE

Glass, 5.5 x 7.3 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Hobart and Edward Small Moore Memorial Collection,
Bequest of Mrs. William H. Moore, 1955.6.41



113. Agate glass bottle

Syria, 1st century CE

Glass, h: 9.1 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Anna Rosalie Mansfield Collection, 1930.460



114. Seasons beaker

Eastern Mediterranean, 1st century CE

Glass (mold-blown), 19 x 9.4 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Hobart and Edward Small Moore Memorial
Collection, Bequest of Mrs. William H. Moore, 1955.6.49



115. Gaza amphora (Late Roman Amphora 4)

Southern Palestine/Israel, 4th century CE

Terracotta, 54.5 x 21.9 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Whiting Palestinian Collection, 1912.911



116. North African amphora

Syria, 4th century CE

Terracotta, 90.8 x 18.7 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.5999.5333



117. Amphora (Middle Roman Amphora 7)

Dura-Europos, 200–256 CE

Terracotta, 78.1 x 27 x 22.9 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.5999.4288



118. Bowl (Gallic Relief Ware)

Melun, 75–175 CE

Potter: Censorinus of Lezoux

Terracotta, 13.3 x 24.1 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Rebecca Darlington Stoddard, 1913.535



119. Mold for Gallic Relief Ware bowl

100–150 CE

Potter: Eppilius of Lezoux

Terracotta, 11.4 x 21 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Rebecca Darlington Stoddard, 1913.538



120. Mold for Gallic Relief Ware bowl

Early 2nd century CE

Terracotta, 21 x 11.4 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Rebecca Darlington Stoddard, 1913.539a



121. Mold for lamp (Type IIA)

Tunisia, 420–500 CE

Plaster, 15 x 5 x 21 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Ambassador and Mrs. William L. Eagleton Jr., BA 1948, 1988.75.6



122. Lamp (Type IIA)

Tunisia, 420–500 CE

Terracotta, 3.5 x 8.3 x 14 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Ambassador and Mrs. William L. Eagleton Jr., BA 1948, 1989.69.12



123. Bowl (Arretine, Italian Sigillata)

20 BCE–10 CE

Potter: Sextus Annius

Terracotta, 5 x 9.8 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Rebecca Darlington Stoddard, 1913.514

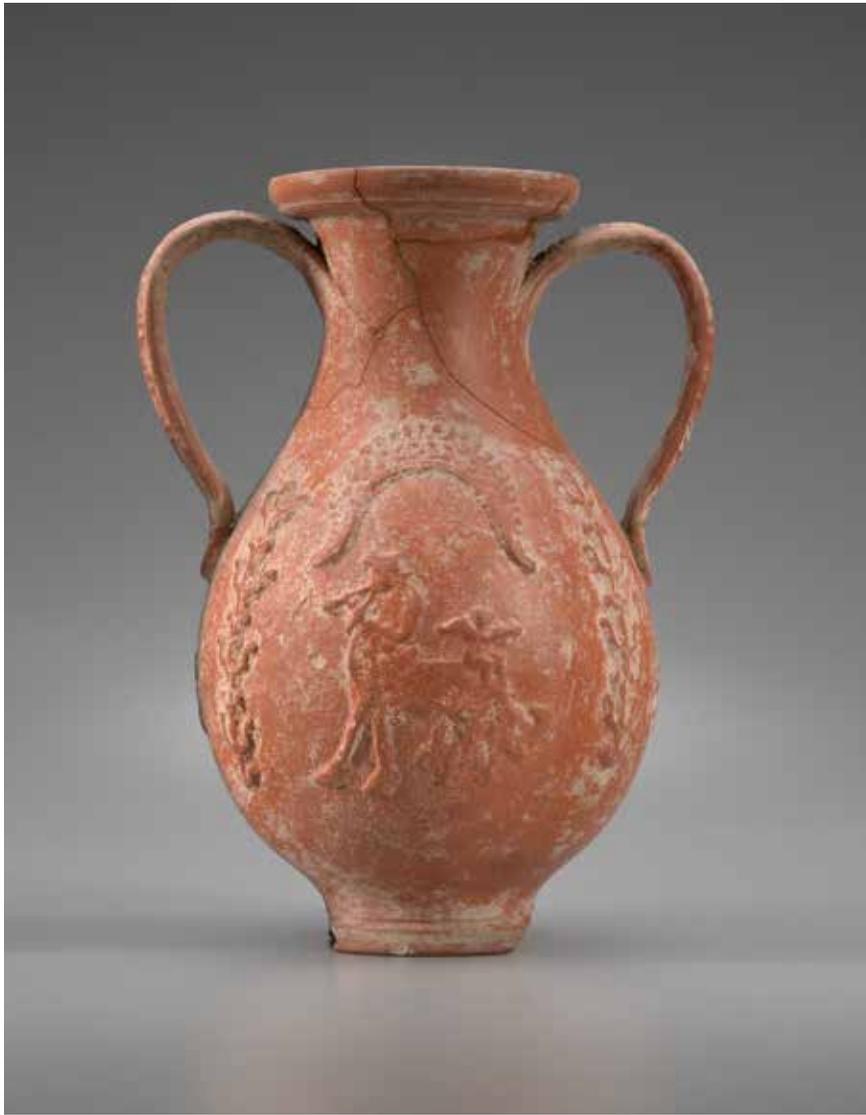


124. Cup (Eastern Sigillata A)

Syria, late 1st century BCE–early 1st century CE

Terracotta, 5.9 x 10.8 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Rebecca Darlington Stoddard, 1913.516



125. Pelike (African Red Slip)

Late 2nd-3rd century CE

Terracotta, 14.8 x 11.1 x 8.1 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Rebecca Darlington Stoddard, 1913.546



126. Bowl (Corinthian Relief Ware)

Corinth, 3rd century CE

Terracotta, 4.8 x 7.1 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Rebecca Darlington Stoddard, 1913.209



127. Jar (Knidian Relief Ware)

Smyrna, 3rd century CE

Terracotta, 10.3 x 6.4 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Rebecca Darlington Stoddard, 1913.211



128. Sestertius of Trajan

Bust of Trajan (obverse) and figure of Via Traiana (reverse)

Mint: Rome, 112–114 CE

Orichalcum, 24.48 gm, 6:00, 33.5 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.6000.984



129. Sestertius of Trajan

Bust of Trajan (obverse) and figure of Via Traiana (reverse)

Mint: Rome, 112–114 CE

Orichalcum, 28.06 gm, 5:00, 33.5 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Transfer from Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University,
Gift of Professor Tracy Peck, LLD 1861, MA 1864, 2001.87.7474



130. Stater of Rhescuporis III

Head of Rhescuporis III (obverse) and bust of Elagabalus (?) (reverse)

Mint: Bosphorus, 219 CE

Gold, 7.66 gm, 12:00, 19.5 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Transfer from Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, 2001.87.11021



131. Textile fragment

Egypt, 5th century CE

Wool on undyed linen, 22 x 23.5 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of the Olsen Foundation, 1956.8.3



132. Textile fragment

Egypt, 4th century CE

Wool on undyed linen, 20.2 x 21.5 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of the Olsen Foundation, 1956.8.10



133. Textile panel from a large tunic

Egypt, 4th century CE

Wool on undyed linen, 142 x 99.7 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of the Olsen Foundation, 1956.8.5



134. Child's tunic

Egypt, 5th-6th century CE

Wool on undyed linen, 129 x 101 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of the Olsen Foundation, 1956.8.23



135. Child's tunic

Egypt, 4th century CE

Wool on undyed linen, 108 x 79.5 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Olsen, 1956.33.90



136. Child's tunic

Egypt, 6th-8th century CE

Linen, 66 x 84 cm

Donald and Barbara Tullian, 1982-00413



137. Funerary relief of woman holding spindle

Palmyra, 125–150 CE

Limestone, 54.5 x 44 x 18 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Munroe, 1954.30.1



138. Relief with animals

Egypt, 6th century CE

Limestone, 35.5 x 74.3 x 8.5 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of the Olsen Foundation, 1955.60.5



139. Relief with confronting beasts

Egypt, 6th century CE

Limestone, 29.4 x 56.4 x 5.5 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of the Olsen Foundation, 1955.60.12



140. Textile band with roundels filled with lions, birds, foliage, dancers

Egypt, 5th–6th century CE

Wool on undyed linen, 50.3 x 17.8 cm

Donald and Barbara Tullian, 1988-00600



141. Fragmentary tunic roundels

Egypt, 5th-6th century CE

Wool on undyed linen, l: 12.5 x 14 cm, r: 13.5 x 14 cm

Donald and Barbara Tellalian, 1978-00450/00450



142. Textile fragment with roundels, tree of life, flowers, Eros figures

Egypt, 6th century CE

Wool on undyed linen, 28.5 x 28.5 cm

Donald and Barbara Tellalian, 1984-00500A



143. Textile fragment with tree of life, human figures, bird

Egypt, 5th-6th century CE

Wool on undyed linen, 26 x 24 cm

Donald and Barbara Tellalian, 1984-00500B



144. Textile fragment with fruit basket

Egypt, 6th century CE

Wool on undyed linen, 24 x 21 cm

Donald and Barbara Tellalian, 2013-00600B



145. Relief with acanthus leaves

Egypt, 6th century CE

Limestone, 21 x 17.3 x 68 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of the Olsen Foundation, 1956.8.38



146. Textile fragment with rooster

Egypt, 5th-6th century CE

Wool on linen, 18 x 21 cm

Donald and Barbara Tellaian, 1982-02500



147. Textile fragment with heraldic birds

Egypt, 7th-8th century CE

Wool on undyed linen, 26 x 11 cm

Donald and Barbara Tellaian, 1978-00350



148. Textile band with stylized birds and foliage

Egypt, 7th century CE
 Wool on linen, 24 x 26.5 cm
 Donald and Barbara Tellalian, 1980-00250



149. Relief with dove and grapevine

Egypt, 5th–6th century CE
 Limestone, 19.5 x 15.5 x 46 cm
 Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of the Olsen Foundation, 1956.8.41



150. Clavus fragment with apotropaic knot

Egypt, 5th century CE
Wool on undyed linen, 28.5 x 14.5 cm
Donald and Barbara Tellalian, 1982-00100



151. Textile roundel with interlace

Egypt, 4th century CE
Wool on linen, 21 x 26 cm
Donald and Barbara Tellalian, 1983-00600



152. Textile band with hares, birds, fruits, leaves

Egypt, late 5th century CE

Wool on undyed linen, 62 x 6 cm

Donald and Barbara Tullalain, 1979-00250/250



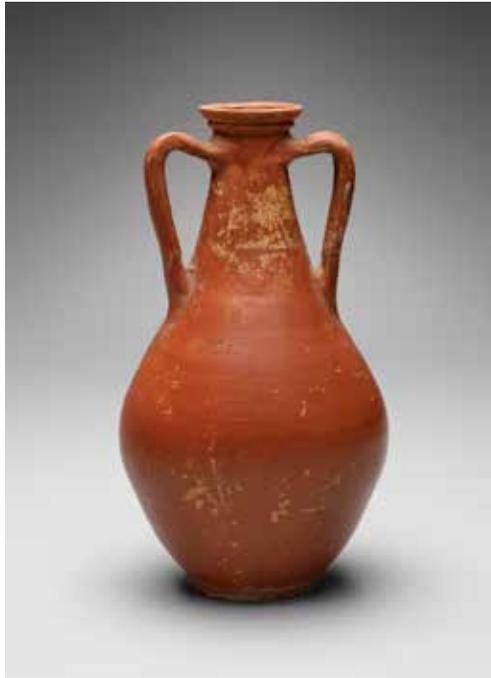
153. Textile fragment with hare and grapevine

Egypt, 5th-6th century CE
Wool on undyed linen, 11 x 11.5 cm
Donald and Barbara Tellalian, 1979-00350



154. Textile fragment with running hare

Egypt, 5th-6th century CE
Wool on undyed linen, 12.5 x 12.5 cm
Haig and Leslie Tellalian, 1984-00050A

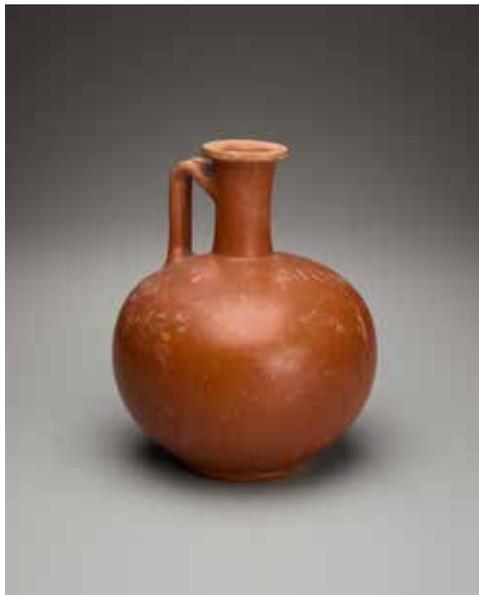


155. Pelike (Eastern Sigillata A)

Syria, 1st century CE

Terracotta, 25.5 x 14 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Whiting Palestinian Collection, 1912.290

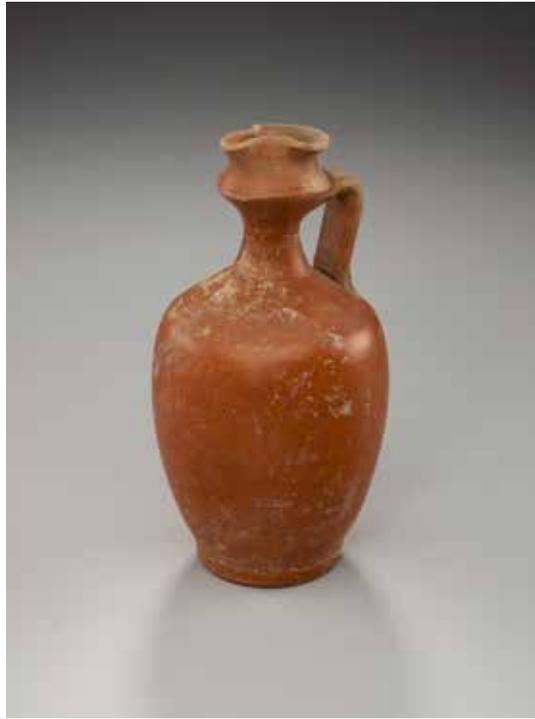


156. Jug (Eastern Sigillata A)

Syria, mid-1st century BCE–1st century CE

Terracotta, 19.5 x 16.6 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Whiting Palestinian Collection, 1912.292



157. Pitcher (Eastern Sigillata A)

Syria, 1st century CE

Terracotta, 17 x 9.2 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Whiting Palestinian Collection, 1912.295



158. Bowl (Eastern Sigillata A)

Syria, late 1st century BCE–early 1st century CE

Terracotta, 9 x 15 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Whiting Palestinian Collection, 1912.297



159. Dish (Arretine, Italian Sigillata)

Syria, late 1st century BCE–early 1st century CE

Potter: Rasinus

Terracotta, 3.3 x 17 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Whiting Palestinian Collection, 1912.301



160. Bowl

Late 1st century BCE–1st century CE

Terracotta, 4.8 x 9.2 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Rebecca Darlington Stoddard, 1913.583



161. Jar

Cologne, mid-3rd–early 4th century CE

Terracotta, 14 x 9.8 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Rebecca Darlington Stoddard, 1913.545



162. Bowl

Late 2nd–3rd century CE

Terracotta, 9.2 x 16.8 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Rebecca Darlington Stoddard, 1913.540

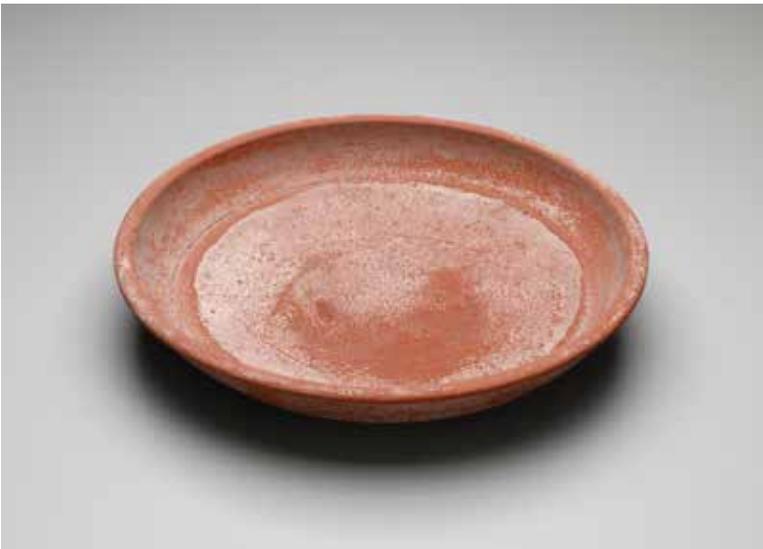


163. Cookware bowl with lid (African Red Slip)

Tunisia, late 2nd–mid-3rd century CE

Terracotta, 7 x 17.8 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of John Crockett, 2008.216.40a, b

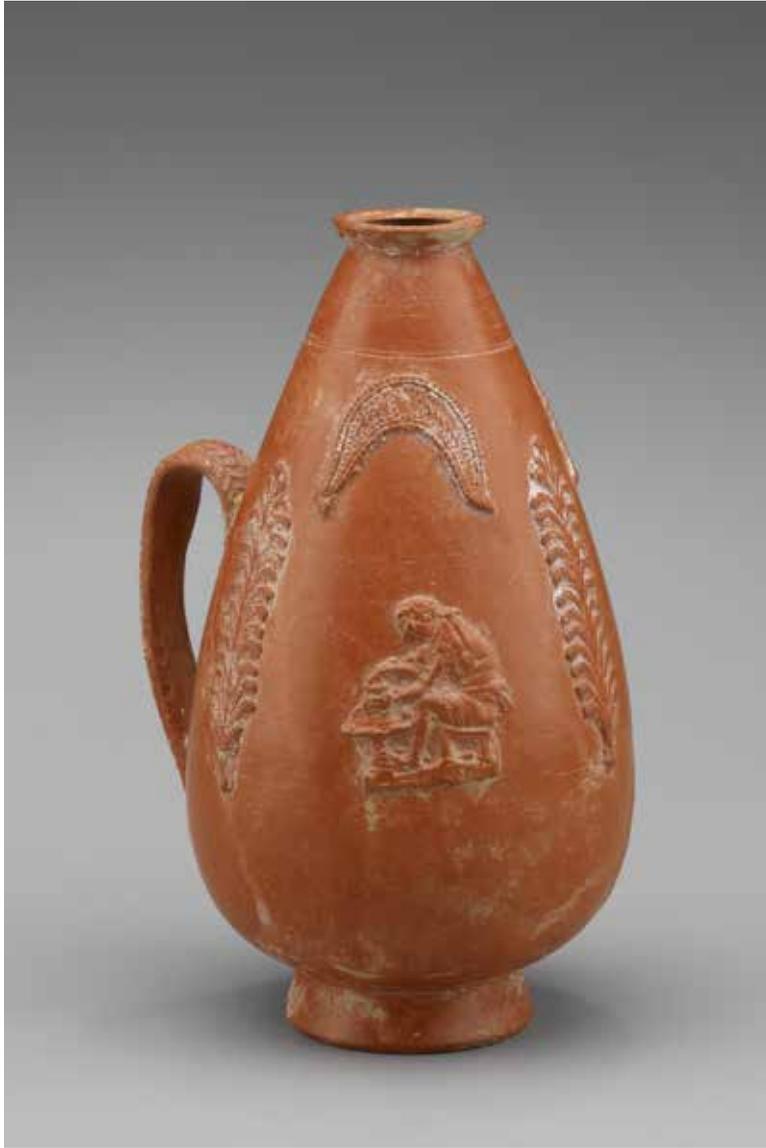


164. Bowl (African Red Slip)

Tunisia, mid-2nd century CE

Terracotta, 4.5 x 25.7 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of John Crockett, 2008.216.2

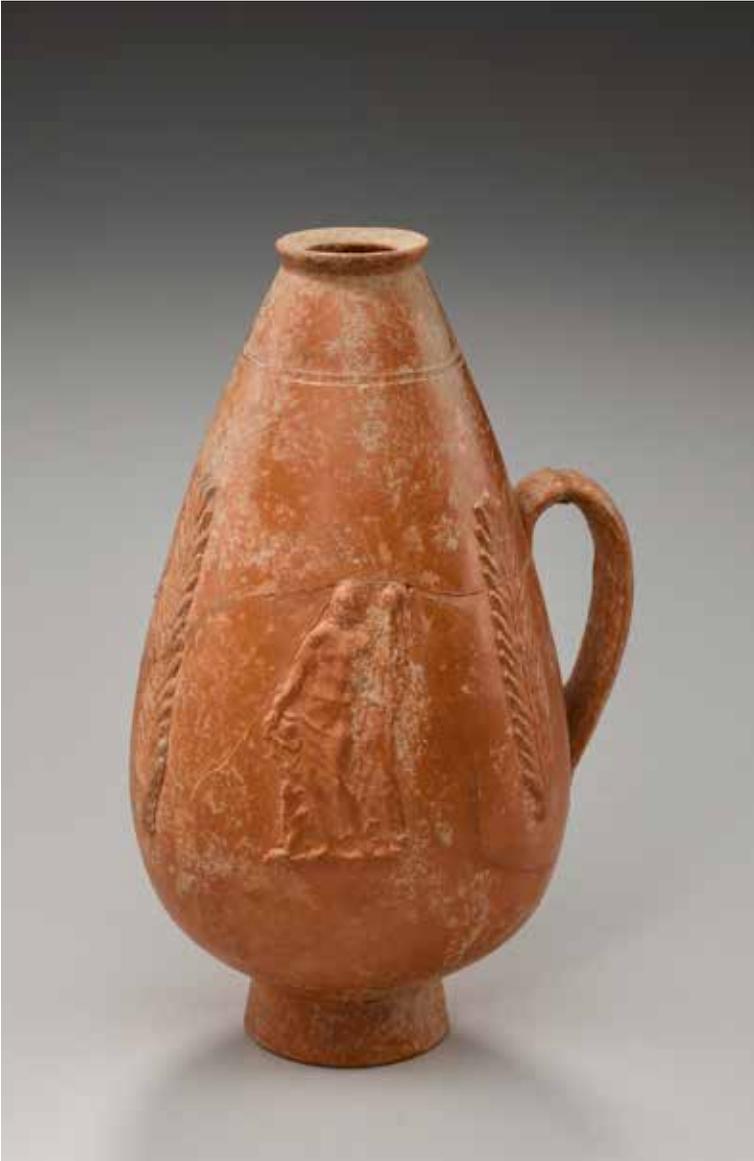


165. Piriform jug (African Red Slip)

Tunisia, 3rd century CE

Terracotta, 16.2 x 9 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Ambassador and Mrs. William L. Eagleton Jr., BA 1948, 1984.79.2



166. Piriform jug (African Red Slip)

3rd century CE

Terracotta, h: 15.9 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Rebecca Darlington Stoddard, 1913.547



167. Molded head-flask (African Red Slip)

Tunisia, 3rd–4th century CE

Terracotta, 19 x 10.1 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Ambassador and Mrs. William L. Eagleton Jr., BA 1948, 1980.33.3



168. Dancers and birds in heraldic pairs

Egypt, 8th-9th century CE

Wool on undyed linen, 32.5 x 19 cm

Donald and Barbara Tellalian, 1980-00650



169. Textile roundel with eight-pointed star, tree of life, dancing figures

Egypt, 6th century CE

Wool on undyed linen, 22 x 22 cm

Donald and Barbara Tellalian, 1984-00250

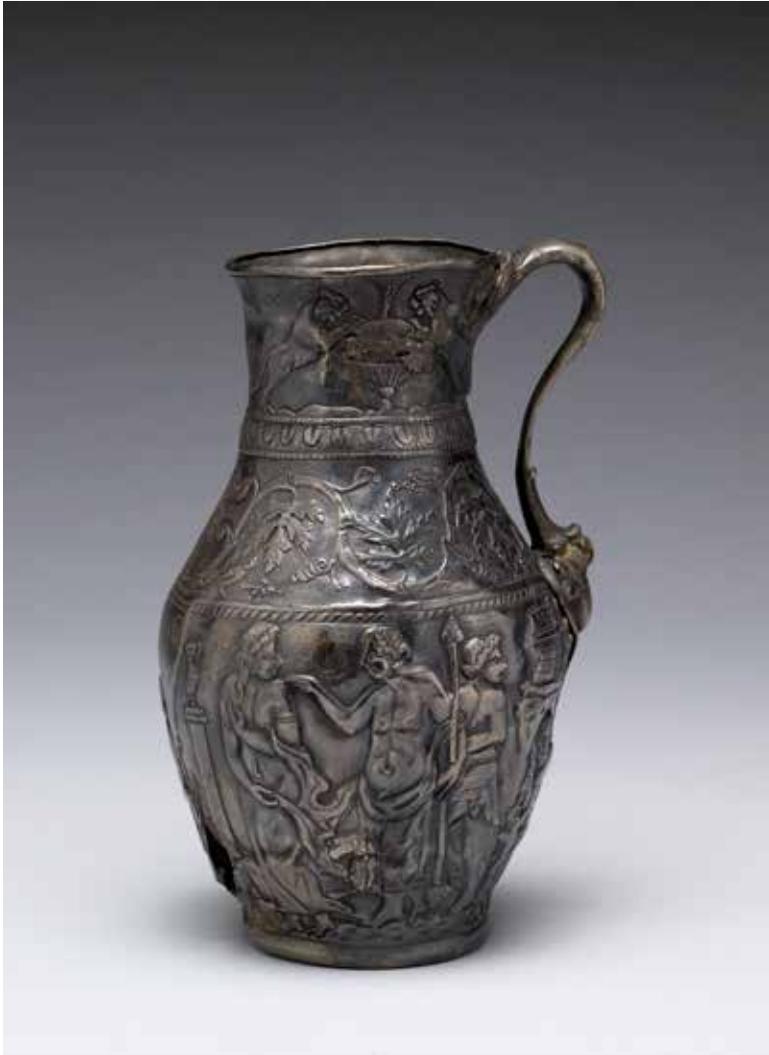


170. Textile fragment with dancing figures and leaping hare

Egypt, 5th–6th century CE

Wool on undyed linen, 35 x 7.5 cm

Donald and Barbara Tellalian, 1986-00300C



171. Pitcher with Bacchic scenes

Entrains-sur-Nohain, 2nd-3rd century CE
Silver with traces of gilding, 15.9 x 11 x 9.4 cm
Walters Art Museum, Acquired by Henry Walters, 57.708



172. Figurine of a seated dancer

Eastern Greece (?), late 4th century CE

Silver with gold inlay, h: 12 cm

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Frederick Brown Fund, 69.72



173. Lar

1st century CE

Bronze, 10 x 5.3 x 2.7 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Bequest of Chester D. Tripp, BS 1903, 1976.40.1



174. Plaque with female figure

Alexandria, 4th century CE

Bone, 18.6 x 6.2 x 2.1 cm

Walters Art Museum, Acquired by Henry Walters, 1931.71.34



175. Man with cloak and pointed hood (*genius cucullatus*)

2nd century CE

Bronze with copper inlay, 12 x 3.5 x 1.5 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Thomas T. Solley, BA 1950, 2002.15.13



176. Figurine of woman and two children

Dura-Europos, Block L8, 70–200 CE

Terracotta with traces of white slip, 15.7 x 7.3 x 2.9 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1935.57



177. Figurine of Mercury

Dura-Europos, Necropolis (Tomb 24), 2nd century CE

Terracotta, 30.1 x 12.4 x 6.2 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.4965



178. Wall painting with banquet scene

Dura-Europos, House M7-W6, south wall, 194 CE

Paint on plaster, 148.6 x 183.5 x 12.7 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.5999.1147



179. Funerary stele of Helene

Antioch, 2nd century CE

Marble, 12.6 x 10.1 x 2.9 cm

Princeton University Art Museum, Gift of the Committee for the
Excavation of Antioch to Princeton University, 2000-94

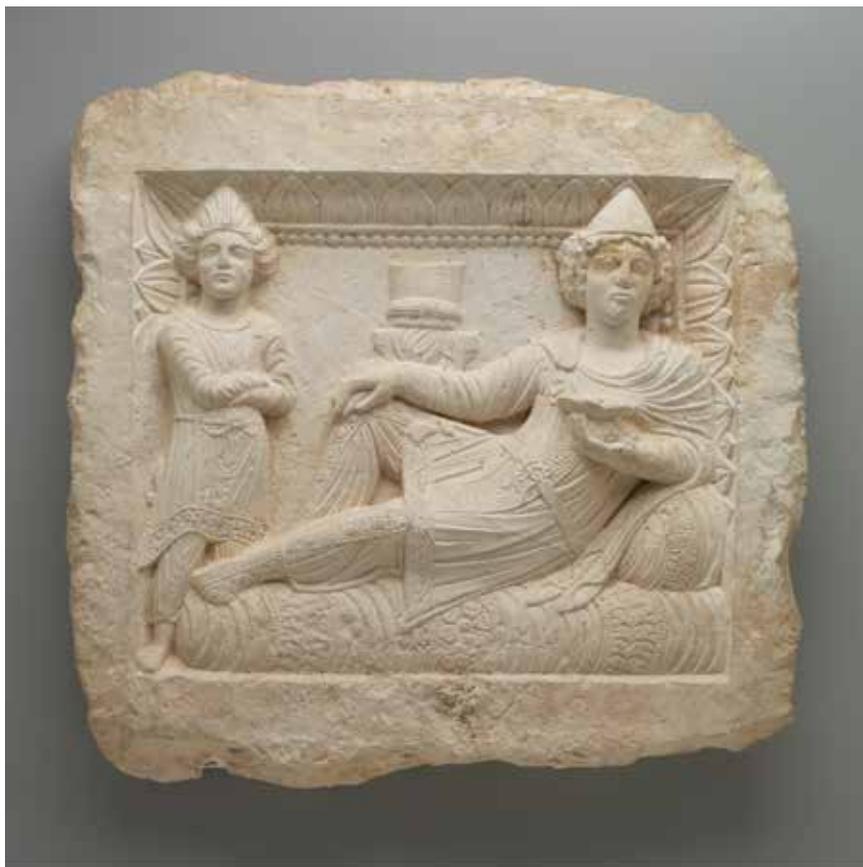


180. Funerary stele of Eubolas

Antioch, 1st-early 2nd century CE

Marble, 20.2 x 29.4 x 1.8 cm

Princeton University Art Museum, Gift of the Committee for the
Excavation of Antioch to Princeton University, 2000-92



181. Funerary relief with banquet scene

Palmyra, 200–250 CE

Limestone, 52.7 x 56.2 x 8.9 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Purchased for the University by Prof. Rostovtzeff, 1931.138



182. Mosaic with personifications of Pleasure and Wealth

Eastern Mediterranean, 6th century CE

Stone and glass tesserae, 134.6 x 83.8 cm

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Gift of George D. and Margo Behrakis, 2006.848



183. Two fragments of decorated tunic

Egypt, 7th-8th century CE

Wool on undyed linen, a: 44.5 x 43 cm; b: 46 x 43 cm

Donald and Barbara Tellaian, 1981-01200



184. Uncertain denomination of Nicopolis ad Istrum

Head of Gordian III (obverse) and tetrastyle temple with figure (Serapis or Hades?) (reverse)

Mint: Nicopolis ad Istrum, Moesia, 238–244 CE

Copper, 12.01 gm, 12:00, 27.00 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of James H. Schwartz, 2005.6.150



185. Dupondius of Augustus

Bust of Augustus (obverse) and altar of Lugdunum (reverse)

Mint: Lugdunum, Gallia Narbonensis, 9–14 CE

Orichalcum, 12.67 gm, 12:00, 27.5 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Transfer from Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, 2001.87.2804



186. Nummus of Constantine II

Bust of Constantine II (obverse) and altar surmounted by a star (reverse)

Mint: Londinium, Britannia, 320–324 CE

Argentiferous bronze, 3.02 gm, 6:00, 17.9 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Transfer from Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, 2001.87.8345



187. Nummus of Constantine I

Head of Constantine I (obverse) and Sol with radiate crown, standing and holding globe (reverse)

Mint: Londinium, Britannia, 316–317 CE

Argentiferous bronze, 3.62 gm, 7:00, 25.6 mm

Yale University Art Gallery, Transfer from Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, 2001.87.15970



188. Fragment of cushion cover with dancing figure, bowls of fruit

Egypt, 5th-6th century CE

Wool on undyed linen, 73 x 62 cm

Donald and Barbara Talian, 1994-07500



189. Clavius with seated saint and hare

Egypt, c. 6th–7th century CE

Wool on undyed linen, 42 x 9 cm

Donald and Barbara Tellalian, 1986-00300B



190. Corinthian column capital

2nd-3rd century CE

Marble, 26.8 x 25 x 19 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Ruth Elizabeth White, 1988.80.22



191. Corinthian column capital

2nd-3rd century CE

Marble, 25.5 x 26 x 18.5 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Ruth Elizabeth White, 1988.80.23

CONTRIBUTORS

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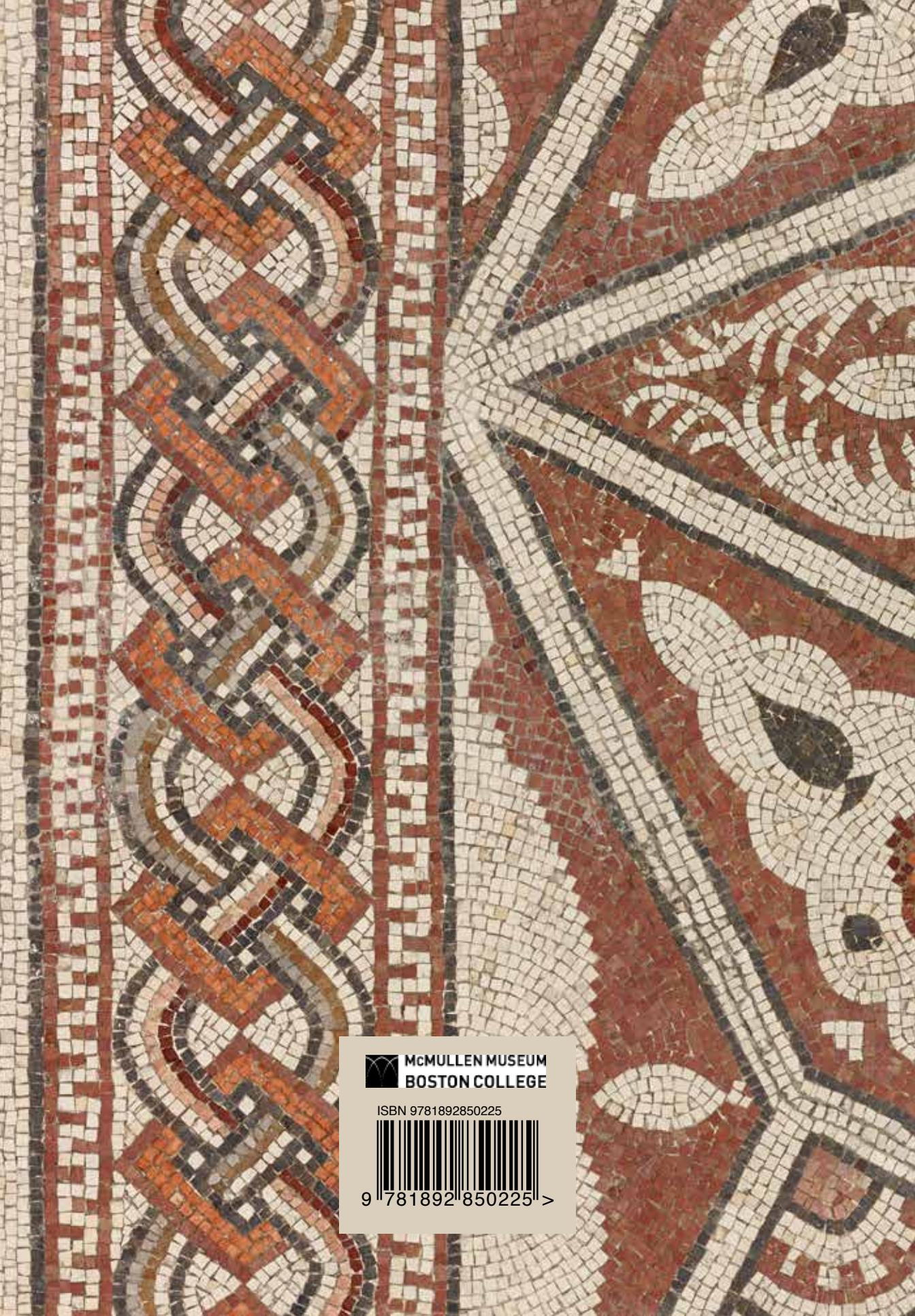
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