GREEK HERITAGE IN ROMAN CORINTH AND EPESOS: HYBRID IDENTITIES AND STRATEGIES OF DISPLAY IN THE MATERIAL RECORD OF TRADITIONAL MEDITERRANEAN RELIGIONS

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Archaeological remains are an important but sometimes neglected tool for conceptualizing the impact of Roman imperial domination on Greek religion in the Eastern empire. In their visibility and impact on urban space, material objects represent conscious attempts to display the activity of the agents who made them and thus can be valuable for reconstructing the self-representation of ancient subjects.¹ Since Corinth, as a refounded colony, is in many ways an instructive anomaly among the Greek cities of the Roman East, this study will be explicitly comparative, drawing from the evidence at Corinth and contrasting it with a specific example of traditional religion from Ephesos. The material remains will then be contextualized with their descriptions in the account of Pausanias and in the Ephesiaka, a second-century CE Greek novel. The literary works open another angle onto the aspirations of the Greek-speaking elite of the eastern Empire, a segment of the population that offers the richest evidence for the phenomenon of identity construction during this period. Literary sources also serve as a reminder that urban space does not consist only of the physical locations through which people moved, but also of the stories they told about them. As will be shown, in their emphasis on a non-hybrid Greek identity, the literary sources sometimes contrasted dramatically

¹ Current conceptions of agency in archaeological research derive from Anthony Giddens’s theory of ‘structuration,’ in which each social agent both receives and produces cultural traditions in her individual appropriation of them; Giddens 1979, 69) and 1984. Various theorists of archaeology have sharpened the concept of agency as it can be read from material objects; Barrett 2001; Robb 2005; and Dobres and Robb 2000. Cognitive archaeology employs material objects to make hypotheses about the development of abstract and symbolic thought, which is particularly germane to the study of ancient religion; Renfrew 1998 and 2001; Mithen 2001.
with the public display of the monuments, which tended to present a more complex fusion of indigenous and Roman features.

Corinth, a Greek city that was refounded as a Roman colony in 44 BCE after a long hiatus in its civic life, provides a clear contrast to Ephesos, which never suffered a break in the continuity of its traditions. Even as a Roman colony, Corinth differed from many others. Pisidian Antioch, for example, like other colonies in Asia Minor, had functioning civic institutions at the time that Roman veterans were settled there: the colony represented the addition of formally constituted groups of veterans to an existing Greek city. This was not the case at Corinth, though most signs indicate continued habitation between the ‘sack’ of the city by Mummius in 146 BCE and its refoundation. Cicero attests people living among the ruins in 63 BCE (Leg. agr. 1.5, 2.5.1). Archaeological traces likewise show continued settlement. Graffiti on pottery and the defixiones found in the sanctuary of Demeter, which are in Greek, suggest the presence of a Greek population, even if these may have been settlers from outlying regions rather than the “old Corinthisans” whom Pausanias no longer found in the Roman city (2.1.2). Economic life also continued. If the land was ager publicus as both literary and archaeological testimony suggest, it would then have been leased to tenant farmers. Absent, however, is material evidence of the usual accoutrements of civic life: building programs, organized civic

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2 For the date: Walbank 1997, 97–99.
3 Walters’s work on the civic contexts of early Christian mission differentiates first between colonies and cities, and then between types of Roman colonies; 2005, esp. 398–400, which contrasts Corinth with Thessalonike. See also the chapter of Millis in this volume.
4 Noted by Yegül 2000, 133–34. New evidence has been published in Byrne and Labarre 2006; see also the site survey in Mitchell and Waekens 1998; and articles in Drew-Bear, Thomas, and Taşlıalan 2002.
5 D. Romano (2000, 87) notes two roads that traverse the Forum that date from this “dark age” between 146–44 BCE, one along the east end of the south stoa and another parallel to the north of the Hellenistic racecourse.
6 Walbank 1997, 95–96, 103–7; Gebhard and Dickie 2003, 261–78; confirmed by the study of amphora handles in Grace 1934. Other finds from the east and west ends of the Forum suggest continued habitation through this period; Bookidis 2005, 148–49; I. Romano 1994.
7 D. Romano (2000, 86–88) cites Cicero, who claims that the ager publicus around Corinth was vectigalis, that is, a source of income and taxation. Romano criticizes Alcock’s theory (1993) of rural abandonment by pointing out that her survey did not take into account patterns of Roman land division that were signs of continued agricultural activity.