INTRODUCTION

The topic of Romanization has featured prominently in discussion of the Roman provinces. The archaeological material and written sources from the provinces have to be discussed in the light of cultural change, even if the issue of Romanization is not directly addressed. This conceptualization of cultural change became the focus of theoretical debates in the last decade of the twentieth century, and is still often discussed.\(^1\) Scholars of the early twentieth century were clear on the question of what Romanization was: the improvement of living conditions, civilization, progress, in short the education of the barbarians. The term 'Romanization', coined in the early twentieth century,\(^2\) was used for the larger part of the century, and is still predominant in the discourse on cultural change outside the Anglo-Saxon academic world. Romanization was thus understood as a process originated in the presence of Romans on the territory of a province, which resulted in a change in the culture of the natives, who became more Roman.\(^3\) And in the words of Haverfield, one of the first scholars to tackle the question of Romanization in the West, it was an easy task, since "here Rome found races that were not yet civilized, yet were racially capable of accepting her culture".\(^4\) Conversely, for the Eastern provinces the term resistance was the main concept, where the attention was mostly directed at the survival of the (again explicitly or implicitly superior) Greek culture.\(^5\)

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2 Freeman, (1997); Hingley (1997).
3 Millett (1990, 1).
4 Haverfield (1923, 5).
5 It has been postulated that even if the Greeks appeared Roman for pragmatic reasons, they would not have felt like it: Madsen (2006, 78).
Scholars in the later twentieth century were less sure: in the light of the new world born after the fall of the great colonizing empires, they opened a new debate on the concepts of Romanization as well. Postcolonial theory concentrated on the experiences of the ‘conquered people’, and postmodernism on the questions of different identities that all played a part in the process of cultural change. The term Romanization suffered strong criticism and almost became a dirty word, the evidence of theoretical illiteracy. Postcolonial theory debunked the old ‘progress’ paradigm: Millett for example explicitly defines himself in his book as belonging to “the post-imperial generation” that is “unwilling to accept the paternalistic view that the Britons did what they were told by the Romans because it represented progress”. He insists on dialectical change and revises the argument of Romanization concentrating on the role of the local elites in the spontaneous acceptance of Roman customs. Millett’s argument was not fully welcomed, and Keppie’s words in the review of Millett’s book, namely, “not all readers may care for the deluge of sociological cult-phrases which the author sprinkles into his narrative such as ‘status competition’, ‘social elites’ and ‘wealth hierarchies’”, mirror many Roman archaeologists who are distrustful of the use of theory in the interpretation of material from the Roman time.

Although scholars are still in search of new terminology and theory that would encompass the cultural changes on the Italian peninsula and later in the provinces of the Empire (frontrunners being ‘discrepant experiences’, creolization, and globalization), a certain consensus has been reached. Even if we do not know what exactly the new concept of cultural change is, we know what it is not: a single-directional and one-dimensional process. And regardless of the distrust some Roman archaeologists show towards the theoretical approach and towards the borrowing of methods from social sciences, the discussion of Romanization has become increasingly prominent in the theoretical circles.

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6 For a good overview of the postcolonial theory see Childs & Williams (1997).
7 On discussion on identities and culture from the postmodern perspective see Featherstone (1995).
9 This view was met with the criticism of that is diminished the intentional role of Roman state: Mattingly (2004, 6–7); Woolf (1997, 10).
12 Webster (1997).
13 Witcher (2000).