

Remodeling or Remembering?

Negotiating the Past in Gladiatorial Spaces in the Eastern Roman Imperial Provinces

By

Kelly Ann Moss

M.A., University of Arizona, 2017

Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts in the Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology and the Ancient World at
Brown University

PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

MAY 2020

This thesis by Kelly Ann Moss is accepted in its present form
by the Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology and the Ancient World as satisfying the
thesis requirements for the degree of Master of the Arts

Date April 30, 2020



Peter van Dommelen, Advisor

Approved by the Graduate Council

Date _____

Andrew G. Campbell, Dean of the Graduate School

Table of Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>page iv</i>
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: Historical and Theoretical Background	3
Historical Background	3
Theoretical Scholarship Review	4
Conclusion	9
Chapter 3: Structuring Identity in the Roman Greek World	11
Romanization and Other Frameworks	11
Articulating Relationships to the Past	14
Achaia	15
Anatolia	16
Gaul and Spain	19
The Role of the Imperial Cult in Roman Expansion	21
Chapter 4: Architectural Review and Analysis	26
Referencing Rome	26
Remodeling for Remembrance	33
Conclusion	38
Chapter 5: Conclusion	40
<i>References</i>	42

List of Figures

1	Map of sites mentioned	<i>page 2</i>
2	Image of the Flavian Amphitheater in Rome, Italy	27
3	Image of the amphitheater at Corinth, Greece	28
4	Image of the amphitheater at Merida, Spain	29
5	Image of the amphitheater at El Djem, Tunisia	30
6	Image of the amphitheater at Nimes, France	31
7	Image of the amphitheater at Corinth, Greece	31
8	Image of the theater at Perge, Turkey	33
9	Image of the theater of Dionysus in Athens, Greece	33
10	Image of the stadium at Messene, Greece	34

Chapter 1: Introduction

The structure of the Roman amphitheater, such as the Colosseum (or Flavian Amphitheater), has functioned as a symbol of Rome since antiquity well into the modern day, appearing in movies, poetry, and on a variety of tourist paraphernalia which is meant to symbolize the entirety of Italy. Regardless of the context or location, the image of this architectural form impresses upon western civilization an idea of imperial Rome, gladiators, spectacle, and entertainment.

During the Late Hellenistic and Early Imperial periods, the Greek reaction to the amphitheater is indicated through their preferential use of adapted theaters and stadia for imperial cult spectacles. Amphitheaters are more typical in the western provinces of the Roman empire but tend to exist in formal Roman colonies, like Corinth, throughout the eastern Greek-speaking provinces. Simultaneously, the adaptation of theaters and stadia recalled traditional Greek religious spaces as Greeks worked to incorporate the imperial cult into the Hellenistic Greek religious framework.

This thesis examines the role of memory (and forgetting) in the adoption of the Roman imperial cult and its associated architecture throughout the Hellenistic Greek world, specifically architecture intended for the spectacles associated with the imperial cult. I emphasize case studies dating from the start of the Augustan period (31 B.C.) through the 4th c. A.D. throughout the regions previously categorized as the Hellenistic Greek world in the eastern Mediterranean regions. Rome intentionally constructed amphitheaters not only as a practical component of the imperial cult spectacle but also as symbols of Roman hegemony. Rome allowed for the adaptation of previously existing structures like the Greek theater and stadium for the same purpose, enabling Greeks to reconcile their culture with Roman culture and functioning as an economical substitution for the amphitheater. The adaptation of theaters and stadia also functioned to supplant the Greek purpose of these spaces with a purely Roman practice, furthering the Roman goals of socially and politically integrating these people into Roman society. The architecture of these sites reveals the explicit manipulation of memory on both the part of the Romans

as well as the Greeks in order for each to preserve their own cultural traditions in the new joint socio-political world order of Roman Greece.

I first review the historical and scholarly background on this topic in Chapter 2. I then discuss in Chapter 3 the role of the imperial cult in the change in identities throughout the Hellenic world, stepping briefly into a discussion of “Romanization” – or the process of the spread, and subsequent degrees of adoption, of Roman culture in areas outside of Italia – and other frameworks of analysis. Also in Chapter 3, I explore how people in various Roman provinces articulated their relationship to their pasts. I review the architecture of gladiatorial events in Chapter 4 and examine the role of memory in the architectural choices in the regions of the Hellenistic Greek world, specifically focusing on Corinth, Merida, El Djem, Nimes, Messene, Perge, and Athens (see Figure 1). Chapter 5 concludes these case studies by reviewing the case studies’ trends in architecture through a mnemonic lens and suggests areas for future work.



Figure 1: Map of Sites

Chapter 2: Historical and Theoretical Background

Historical Background

The Hellenistic period (323 – 31 B.C.) was complex, characterized by change and cosmopolitanism in the eastern Mediterranean. It saw the rise of four dominant kingdoms: the Antigonid (306 – 168 B.C.), the Attalid (282 – 129 B.C.), the Seleucid (312 – 63 B.C.), and the Ptolemaic (305 – 31 B.C.) – as well as their subsequent annexation into the Roman empire. During this period there was an intensification of the diversification of Greek art and architecture as Greeks adopted and adapted other artistic trends more prolifically and vice versa.

The Hellenistic period is historically recorded as the time between the death of Alexander III of Macedon in 323 B.C. and the defeat of Cleopatra VII at the Battle of Actium in 31 B.C.¹ The Roman period of Greek history is typically placed after 31 B.C.; however, Roman influence and control was occurring before this date in many regions of the Hellenistic world. As can be seen from the end dates of each of the predominant kingdoms, Rome came to control each of them through various paths at different times. In 168 B.C., Perseus of the Antigonid (Macedonian) Dynasty was defeated at the Battle of Pydna. This resulted in the dissolution of the kingdom, and its incorporation into Roman control.² The Attalid Dynasty came to an end when Attalus III willed his kingdom to Rome in 133 B.C. to avoid a succession war.³ In 63 B.C., Pompey, a Roman general, defeated Lucullus and the province of Syria was created, ending the Seleucid kingdom.⁴ Finally, in 31 B.C., the last of the Hellenistic Kingdoms, the Ptolemaic Kingdom in Egypt, was defeated at the Battle of Actium. In this naval battle, Octavian (later Augustus) defeated the alliance of Cleopatra VII and Mark Antony, resulting in the end of the Hellenistic

¹ Pollitt 1986, 17.

² Green 2007, 93.

³ Green 2007, 100.

⁴ Green 2007, 123 – 24.

period and what would ultimately lead to the beginning of the Roman imperial period.⁵ For this reason, I will be referring to events and referencing archaeological remains that fall within the historically defined Hellenistic period but which are relevant to our discussion of the early Roman period in the Greek world. Here, I define the “early imperial period in the Greek world” or “early Roman period in the Greek world” as the time frame between 200 B.C. and A.D. 200. On occasion, however, I will refer to examples that fall outside of this designation but which clarify an argument most effectively.

Theoretical Scholarship Review

Memory

The mnemonic turn in anthropological theory started to boom around the late 1990’s when archaeologists began to explore and apply the concept of memory to their field similar to other fields such as sociology and history. In her recent article, “Archaeology and Social Memory”, Ruth Van Dyke reviews the background of memory studies in archaeology and outlines current trends and future inquiries in this subfield.⁶ The field began with the realization that past peoples interacted with their own more distant pasts and expanded into the exploration of memory via places, monuments, and mortuary memory among other facets of archaeological memory studies.⁷ While examining memory in the past has been a prevalent part of this study, archaeologists simultaneously sit at the heart of political conversations around heritage and memory studies in the contemporary world as well. For this reason, Van Dyke states that archaeology is “the construction of social memory” and that archaeologists should be cognizant of our role in preserving the past and memory.⁸ In a broader study than this perhaps an exploration of cultural heritage and a review of Roman and Byzantine archaeology in the

⁵ Green 2007, 129.

⁶ Van Dyke 2019, 209.

⁷ Van Dyke 2019, 212.

⁸ Van Dyke 2019, 220.

political atmosphere of modern Greece could be added to this topic of amphitheater construction and theater reuse. This conversation, however, is not in the scope of this thesis.

There are variations of the definition of memory that have been developed by multiple people in a number of different fields. For that reason, in this thesis I define memory as follows. Memory is the multifaceted personal or collective understanding of the past which is constructed through personal, shared and taught experiences, events, and histories, and which is continuously changing over time and according to the social environment in which one is expected to engage. An individual's or group's memory may exist simultaneously alongside any number of alternative variations that are of any scale and stem from any motivation, and memory can be tied to places and materials.

Today, memory has become a common theoretical framework in which to study archaeological data. Memory studies was introduced to other fields prior to archaeology, and Durkheimian sociologist, Maurice Halbwachs first argued that memory was collective – not only individual. In fact, Halbwachs argues that one is able to remember because we are able to orient ourselves within the viewpoint of groups around us.⁹ Bergson noted that there are two primary types of memory: habit memory and event memory. Habit memory is primary and requires no effort while event memory is secondary and requires effort.¹⁰ Bergson's argument suggests that secondary memory is an active choice and thus has intention and agency behind it. With the introduction of materiality into archaeology and memory studies, many archaeologists perhaps took the argument that the qualities and properties of objects are paramount to understanding that object in the past too far. Ingold argues that archaeologists need to properly engage with the qualities and properties of materials, especially through the acknowledgement that the properties of materials are “practically experienced” throughout time.¹¹ Borić suggests that Ingold's argument nudges memory studies away from Bergson's dual system of “habit-memory” and

⁹ Borić 2010, 8.

¹⁰ Borić 2010, 8.

¹¹ Ingold 2007, 14.

“recollection”.¹² Borić presents instead the concepts of trace, citation, and repetition/recapitulation. He states that traces are “objectified nodes and marks in the passage of a past agency” that can be used to reconstruct a narrative and that citation is one such way that those traces are sought out.¹³

Repetition/recapitulation is the term used to describe the ability of a trace to be repeatable in a variety of contexts.¹⁴ These three terms, while not new in Borić’s work alone, drive collective memory studies in archaeology forward. For example, in his 2019 work Rojas uses the word trace to encapsulate his dual use of material remains and textual ones as equally constructive to a narrative of the past.¹⁵ Rojas’ framework for memory studies will be discussed more in the next chapter.

Collective memory is often criticized for being contradictory since memory is personal at its core and works as a mental act. However, Alcock notes that “social groups share common memories that inflect group perceptions and actions”.¹⁶ One way to reconsider this is to look at various memory communities existing together and experiencing memory in overlapping circumstances with some similar mnemonic practices. Just as individuals are capable of acting in various groups (religious, political, familial, etc.), so then memory is also varied and overlapping.¹⁷ Rather than arguing about the validity of the idea that memory can be collective, Burke embraced it and noted that “it is surely more fruitful to think in pluralistic terms about the uses of memories to different social groups”.¹⁸ By comparing and contrasting the variety of memories among different social groups, scholars can begin to ask new questions about narratives and sub-narratives that previously may not have been examined.

These groups that have collective memory are often referred to as memory communities, and multiple memory communities can be present in the same place at the same time and one person can

¹² Borić 2010, 25.

¹³ Borić 2010, 25.

¹⁴ Borić 2010, 26.

¹⁵ Rojas 2019, 15 – 16.

¹⁶ Alcock 2002, 15.

¹⁷ Alcock 2002, 15.

¹⁸ Burke 1989, 107.

belong to more than a single memory community. Memory communities can be subversive, co-exist, or remain neutral. Assmann wrote that “the past is modeled, invented, reinvented, and reconstructed by the present”.¹⁹ When studying memory, it has to be acknowledged that memory is always evolving and revolving into a new understanding of the past. In order for this process to occur, pieces of the narrative of the past have to be abandoned, reworked, or amplified. Thus, forgetting is a crucial part of creating memory.

In “Seven Types of Forgetting”, Connerton explores the concept that forgetting is intentional, rather than an accident in collective memory groups and in general. He parses out seven variations of forgetting: repressive erasure; prescriptive forgetting; forgetting that is constitutive in the formation of a new identity; structural amnesia; forgetting as annulment; forgetting as planned obsolescence; and forgetting as humiliated silence.²⁰ This list is not exhaustive and of course new ones will continue to be added. In following chapters, I will refer to case studies that reflect three of Connerton’s types: repressive erasure; prescriptive forgetting; and forgetting that is constitutive in the formation of a new identity. Repressive erasure occurs when one hegemonic group imposes an omission of a memory on another group, though not always violently by nature. Connerton uses *damnatio memoriae* in Roman society as an example of repressive erasure. Via *damnatio memoriae*, members of the elite were declared criminal and images of them were destroyed and their names were removed from inscriptions.²¹ Prescriptive forgetting, like repressive erasure, is motivated by the state. This type of forgetting exists when the forgetting of a memory is in the interest of all parties. Connerton notes that this occurs often during the resolution of a civil or international conflict when there is a formal command that both sides should forget the past and move forward.²² Forgetting that is constitutive in

¹⁹ Assmann 1997, 9.

²⁰ Connerton 2008, 59.

²¹ Connerton 2008, 60.

²² Connerton 2008, 62.

the formation of a new identity is when a person or community acknowledges that there is something to be gained from “discarding memories that serve no practicable purpose in the management of one’s current identity and ongoing purposes”.²³ Connerton notes that this type of forgetting is individual but may be experienced widely across a culture. For example, he discusses that among the South East Asian area, the high degree of mobility between the islands leads to kinship relationships emphasizing siblingship over ancestors because the priority is to create a new identity with a new group of people after a move from island to island.²⁴ While it is not an injunction from the state level, the act of forgetting to help form a new identity can be a widespread social choice that leads to memory groups redetermining their identity and forgetting for mutual gain rather than forgetting the loss, as with prescriptive forgetting.

Whatever the reason, when something in the past is no longer beneficial to remember, stories and events are lost. What is forgotten is just as important as what is remembered when examining the narrative of the past. Archaeology is one field that allows for the reconstruction of the pieces of a narrative that were forgotten through the exploration of past physical remains as they exist in the archaeological record.

The nature of memory is that it is constantly being reworked and refined from the present. Because memory is “malleable” and emotive, we see political manipulation of the past via “memory politics” typically by rulers or ruling elites throughout history.²⁵ When examining Roman presence in the Greek world, there is evidence of the political manipulation of the past on the part of the Romans. However, the Greek people arguably were allowed to retain some of their previous memories and at times amplified the ideal or traumatic elements of their own past.

²³ Connerton 2008, 63.

²⁴ Connerton 2008, 63.

²⁵ Alcock 2002, 17.

Multiple dynamic memory communities within a single social group results in a web of memories that simultaneously exist with varying degrees of success. Thus, Greco-Roman culture refers not to a homogeneously hybrid culture but to a multifaceted culture with various subcultures within it. Reflecting the culture overall, memory communities are also multifaceted and varied within the larger community of, for example, a colony. Moreover, when a multifaceted version of the past was created it “allowed the elision of predicted frameworks of authority and hierarchy”.²⁶ By creating a new status quo via memory, effective networks of communication and negotiation, both among Greek populations and with Roman rulers, could be established.²⁷ The imperial cult was one tool for the delivery of the new world order, and its venues existed as places where new multifaceted memory communities were able to play out their role and thus left material evidence.

Conclusion

The most topically relevant sources for this study of memory and architecture in the Roman Hellenic world are Susan Alcock’s 2002 *Archaeologies of the Greek Past* and Katherine Welch’s 1999 “Negotiating Roman Spectacle Architecture in the Greek World: Athens and Corinth”. Alcock’s work details the Roman Greek world (especially Achaia) through a mnemonic lens while Welch examines the implications of memory and materiality in gladiatorial architecture at Corinth.

Alcock demonstrates how social memory influences identity by examining three archaeological case studies that emphasize moments of transformation in a society, such as conquest. Alcock examines the various ways in which memory studies relate to archaeology. In chapter two, she also extensively discusses the province, Achaia (primarily the Greek mainland), under Roman control. I will explore her

²⁶ Alcock 2002, 178.

²⁷ Alcock 2002, 176.

thoughts on Roman Greece in Chapter 3 and examine how social memory, identity, and cultural change are linked.

Welch discusses the architectural variations for the Roman imperial cult between the theater of Dionysus in Athens and the amphitheater in Corinth. While both venues served the same purpose – to serve as the spectacle center for the imperial cult – the architecture was completely different. She argues that the implementation of theaters was preferred over amphitheaters due to the resistance of the Greek people during the early imperial period.²⁸ I aim to add to her study by incorporating memory and forgetting into our understanding of these architectural choices and augment her interpretation of these spaces by incorporating a more Hellenic perspective into the existing Roman interpretation of these spaces.

As we will see throughout the next two chapters, memory was molded by both the Greek community and the Roman community for political, social, and cultural reasons. I argue that the dichotomy of Roman and Greek perception of the past is visible through the comparison of amphitheater construction and theater adaptation for use by the imperial cult throughout the Greek world and so was chosen for this case study.

²⁸ Welch 1999, 139.

Chapter 3: Structuring Identity in the Roman Greek World

Before discussing Roman changes to architecture, it is pertinent to explore conversations around Roman-Greek identity, including frameworks such as Romanization, perceptions of the past in Roman imperial territories, and the role of the imperial cult in identity construction in Roman territories.

Romanization and Other Frameworks

Roman colonization has generated much discussion, but Roman expansion and Roman colonies cannot be discussed in Roman Archaeology without engaging with the conversation around Romanization and the attempts in Roman archaeological theory to find new analytical frameworks. The task of finding a functional framework has been difficult and nearly impossible, generating polarized opinions.

Romanization was developed as a framework for Roman cultural studies during a time when imperialist and colonialist perspectives dominated archaeology, suggesting that Rome brought civilization and calm to provincial areas. Provincial art and culture have often been dismissed as an imitation of the art and culture of Rome, or as “residual” cultural remnants of the past before Rome.²⁹

The Roman empire stretched across a huge expanse of territory and consisted of an amalgamation of cultures, each with their own artistic techniques, aesthetics, and nuances.³⁰ Each Roman province had its own geographical, historical, cultural, and economic traits, and for this reason, Rome needed to incorporate each new location while considering those peculiarities. Rome did, however, control local administrations and people to varying extents in provincial areas. This process has been termed ‘Romanization’ by some, but it is the process of adoption of Roman cultural practices in areas outside of the Roman cultural zone (usually considered to be the Italian peninsula). This process

²⁹ Woolf 1998, 6.

³⁰ Scott 2003, 1.

has been discussed for various provinces, like Spain and Britain, but often it disregards the agency of the local communities of each province and does not adequately discuss hybridity, nuances, or outlier events.³¹ Romanization also does not allow for the idea that Roman culture itself did not have a standardized form.³² This framework inhibits the exploration or appreciation of the variety in culture throughout the Roman world. Woolf argues that by suggesting that there was a resistance to Romanization by provincial locals and by non-elites, scholarship reinforces the concept of Romanization as a driving force that revolved around a standard idea of what it was to be Roman.³³

Moreover, the concept of Romanization implies an intentional supplanting of policies and lifestyle on the part of the empire onto a population to reconcile subjects to colonial rule. Intentionality cannot be accurately measured, and thus might not represent the entirety of changes taking place in Roman provinces.³⁴ The evidence instead suggests that imperial control was not standard or systemic. Thus, most Romanists have put aside 'Romanization' as a valid framework since it does not adequately describe the cultural changes occurring during the Roman period and emphasizes European-centric notions of colonialism and the imperial context in which the field of Roman archaeology was formalized.³⁵ Moreover, 'Romanization' has multiple meanings but usually implies a unilateral and unilinear cultural change that is inaccurate and exclusive of non-elites.³⁶ As Mattingly states, "a paradigm with so many different definitions is no paradigm at all".³⁷

Following the discontinuation of 'Romanization', Postcolonialism and Globalization approaches came to the forefront of the field as potential frameworks. Andrew Gardner explores the strengths and weaknesses of these overarching theories and their subdisciplines in his 2013 article, "Thinking about

³¹ See Curchin 2011 for a discussion on "Romanization" in Spain.

³² Woolf 1998, 7.

³³ Woolf 1998, 23.

³⁴ Mattingly 2011, 38.

³⁵ Gardner 2013, 2.

³⁶ Mattingly 2011, 38.

³⁷ Mattingly 2011, 39.

Roman Imperialism: Postcolonialism, Globalisation and Beyond?” He argues that Postcolonialism sought to “critique and challenge traditional Eurocentric history” while emphasizing the study of hybrid and overlapping identities.³⁸ However, Gardner identifies the weaknesses of Postcolonialism as failing “to identify and analyze the power relationships that create and sustain inequality”.³⁹ Similarly, the literature on globalization aims to study hybrid identities via the study of commodification, consumption, and economic networks. However, like the other models, globalization fails to encompass both the large-scale and small-scale occurrences and change.⁴⁰ Versluys also argues that we have to find a way to reconcile the global with the local and Roman with ‘Native’ studies. He suggests that connectivity must be the underlying theme of study in the post-Hellenistic world of an increasingly interconnected world with a common – or ‘koine’ – culture. This approach would push the scholarship past the exploration of terms related to post-colonialism and anti-colonialism, such as acculturation and resistance, and it would drive scholarship to engage with material evidence in the context of a group with shared social and cultural characteristics.⁴¹

‘Creolization’ is offered as another framework by Jane Webster that can help contextualize the Roman influence among local societies throughout the empire. In linguistics, creolization indicates the “merging of two languages into a dialect that blends the two”.⁴² Webster argues that this idea could apply to material culture as well. She supplies an example of Epona as a Romano-Celtic deity – rather than one or the other – arguing that Epona was “the product of the post-Roman negotiation between Roman and indigenous belief, and Roman and indigenous religious art”.⁴³ By reading Epona through a Creolization lens, it allows for the study of how she is both Roman and Celtic and what that reflects in

³⁸ Gardner 2013, 4 – 5.

³⁹ Gardner 2013, 6.

⁴⁰ Gardner 2013, 7.

⁴¹ Versluys 2014, 11 – 12.

⁴² Webster 2003, 40.

⁴³ Webster 2003, 48.

the social and religious life of Gaul. Webster suggests that creolization enables scholars to study the negotiation of acceptance and resistance from the vantage point of all involved cultures.

Regardless of how we frame it, Rome did come to control various environments, physically and socially. They did this by implementing Roman laws, administration, military garrisons, colonizers, cults, and culture into these areas in order to incorporate the people into the Roman economic and political sphere. Roman architecture such as their temples and basilicas were built across the eastern Mediterranean. The proliferation of these structures, as Alcock notes, has been rarely discussed. She also mentions that the imperial cult and monuments related to it in the eastern provinces have not traditionally been discussed in depth.⁴⁴ One of the primary aims of this thesis is to explore gladiatorial events, the imperial cult, and associated monuments in the eastern provinces.

Articulating Relationships to the Past

Prior to looking at gladiatorial events and the imperial cult, I will outline how social memory impacted identity throughout Achaia, Anatolia, and Spain and Gaul during the Roman imperial period. These regions are not exhaustive but offer a sampling of the many regions that existed in the Roman Empire. Social memory has a variety of lenses through which it can be filtered. These narratives can be influenced politically, culturally, religiously, and economically on any scale. The Roman imperial expansion into widespread Mediterranean and European areas resulted in changes in all of these areas. For this reason, social memory of the past, though layered, impacted peoples' identities and often transcended geographic boundaries, tying people across the empire to Rome. This does not mean that social memory – and thus identities - could not be plural in these regions. Often regions were actively balancing their imperial Roman identity with local identities.

⁴⁴ Alcock 2005, 328.

Achaia

The Athenian Agora presents a perfect example of how Achaia managed to balance multiple identities, including Athenian, Hellenic, and Roman. The Agora demonstrates that the Greek past was important to both Romans and Greeks and helps enlighten how identities were impacted by the shift in the political status of the community. Alcock calls the Agora changes in particular a “superb architectural equivalent to the antiquarian tendencies of the Second Sophistic”.⁴⁵ The Second Sophistic, dated to A.D. 50 – 250, was a period when Classicizing trends were widespread in art, terminology, epigraphic letter forms, and architecture. The intensification of Classicizing elements in culture during the early imperial period demonstrates a feeling of nostalgia for what was during the Classical period. The changes in the Agora include the movement of temples, renovations, and new constructions.

The Romans often moved cults to other cities and even Rome itself. Cult displacement reoriented regional loyalties and routed attention toward new imperial centers of importance.⁴⁶ The 5th c. B.C. Temple of Ares was most likely placed in the Agora during the time of Augustus, but the original location of the temple is uncertain. Though Ares was not a popular god for Greek civic life, the Temple of Ares incorporation into the Agora was possibly a reflection of the central building project in Rome of Mars Ultor temple in the Forum of Augustus.⁴⁷ This mirroring of Rome in Athens could have drawn attention to the imperial cult and brought Roman power to mind. Whether or not there were feelings of resentment towards the move or who the agents were behind it remains uncertain. While we may never understand the exact intention in moving the temple, nor its specific purpose in the Agora, nor its origin, we can grasp the significance of moving an entire temple. It was momentous to move the temple to the Agora, economically, politically, and symbolically.

⁴⁵ Alcock 2002, 51.

⁴⁶ Alcock 2002, 45 – 47.

⁴⁷ Alcock 2002, 55.

Monuments in situ were also renovated. The Sanctuary of Aphrodite Ourania was constructed in Athens during the Augustan times to face an Archaic period altar to the goddess. Likewise, the Tholos was repaired from damage that occurred during the siege of Sulla in the 1st c. B.C. and later added onto.⁴⁸ These changes often emphasized the Greek past, balancing the introduction of Roman structures. Alternatively, when the Romans constructed religious monuments over Greek ones, they were often changing the purpose of a space. For example, by moving the political and economic functions of the Athenian Agora elsewhere, they intensified the sacred nature of the space.⁴⁹ This means the introduction of the imperial cult into religious spaces was particularly potent.

The changes in the Agora simultaneously reoriented the community towards Roman hegemony in the region while venerating Athenian religious structures. The changes to the Athenian Agora were not carried out with the intention to eviscerate the past but to highlight it in juxtaposition to the new Roman Agora, which held political and economic activities. By balancing these two identities via the division of purposes, a mutual respect was preserved as well.

Anatolia

Anatolia exemplifies the extent of layering of identities and memory which can exist in a single place. While social memory is never static, “manipulation of the past is most pronounced at times of marked social, religious, or political change”.⁵⁰ Anatolia, has witnessed many changes over the millennia due to its location at the intersection of a variety of cultural and political groups.

In his book *The Pasts of Roman Anatolia: Interpreters, Traces, Horizons*, Felipe Rojas examines Roman Anatolia through the biographies of material cultural remains and primary sources in literature from the Roman period. By holistically studying artifacts outside of their time of origin, for example a

⁴⁸ Alcock 2002, 58 – 60.

⁴⁹ Alcock 2002, 62.

⁵⁰ Alcock 2002, 32.

Bronze Age mace head in a Roman temple in Sardis, he is able to attempt to understand the people in the Roman world who “felt the urge to explore and explain their past” via the remnants of the past.⁵¹ By using ancient texts which discuss interactions between people and pre-Roman monuments and objects, Rojas is able to explore new “possible avenues of inquiry” and increase “the level of detail”.⁵²

Rojas examines “memory horizons” in Chapter 4, which he defines as “the historical contexts that ancient interpreters themselves brought into focus when interacting with material remains”.⁵³ He emphasizes the layering and variations of ancient memory horizons in Roman Anatolia and examines how they often overlap. He demonstrates how past material remains were used “to substantiate different, conflicting, and contradictory historical narratives” on various scales.⁵⁴ For example, he looks at Asianics in Aphrodisias and how the city balanced multiple identities and narratives. The inhabitants of the city used prominent reliefs as well as inscriptions to illustrate their ties to Rome, weaving mythological and historical details to draw awareness to the dual Roman and Asianic origins of the city. Rojas emphasizes that the layered “memory horizons” of places like Aphrodisias do not correspond to the political, cultural, or philological understandings of the past by modern historians and archaeologists.⁵⁵ It is important instead to study regions holistically outside of the modern constraints of categorization systems.

Incorporating multiple identities into Anatolia was not a new concept during the imperial period. In fact, Zahra Newby argues that in Anatolia during the Roman period, it was a city’s “Hellenic culture and past which give a city its primary sense of identity”.⁵⁶ While it seems that Greek and Roman identities were both important to people in other areas of the Roman imperial world, this does not seem to be widely reflected in the cities of Anatolia. The Greek past was important in elite education

⁵¹ Rojas 2019, 1.

⁵² Rojas 2019, 12.

⁵³ Rojas 2019, 16.

⁵⁴ Rojas 2019, 16.

⁵⁵ Rojas 2019, 116.

⁵⁶ Newby 2003, 192.

across the empire, and this likely helped generate general interest in the Hellenic past.⁵⁷ Many cities venerated their Hellenic past via dedications in prominent Greek cities like Athens, Sparta, and Olympia. For example, the Ionian cities in Anatolia had a tradition of demonstrating their ties to the Greek mainland. The Olympieion in Athens is an example of euergetism that was subsequently picked up by various people. First in the 6th c. B.C., the Olympieion was begun by either Pisistratus or his sons. Around 175 – 164 B.C., it was continued during the rule of Antiochus IV of the Seleucids who aimed to demonstrate his ties to Zeus and to the Classical Greek past.⁵⁸ By using an Ionian sized plan that echoed Ionian temples like the Artemision at Ephesus, Antiochus IV drew attention to his kingdom as both important among Alexander III's successor kingdoms and as culturally Greek. Antiochus IV did not complete the temple, and it was later completed by Hadrian in the 2nd c. A.D. Completing the temple was likely an action taken to further solidify Rome's presence in Athens, while simultaneously supporting local religious institutions in an act of empire stabilization. Hadrian, much like Pisistratus and Antiochus IV before him, understood that euergetism and the subsequent gratitude of the people that follows is a strong political tool that can assist in identity creation via collective memory.

We also see the assertion of local claims of Hellenic identity in Anatolia itself, rather than always on the Greek mainland. One way that a city could demonstrate their claim to be part of the Greek world was through the institution of athletic festivals.⁵⁹ Athletics were understood to be an important part of Panhellenic identity from the onset of events like the Olympic Games from at least the 8th c. B.C. The festival served to celebrate Zeus, and victors were celebrated both in Olympia and their home city. In addition to these grand events, athletics played a daily role in the life of Greeks in gymnasia as part of education (intellectual and physical) and leisure.⁶⁰ The importance of athletics to establishing a Greek

⁵⁷ Newby 2003, 193.

⁵⁸ Morales 2017, 152.

⁵⁹ Newby 2005, 11.

⁶⁰ Newby 2005, 16.

identity can be seen in Ephesus in the 2nd c. A.D. when the public center included four gymnasia, all of which were linked to a Roman-style bath.⁶¹ The spectacle of public bathing was incorporated into the culture of the gymnasium across the Hellenic world. The combination of these complexes has been interpreted as one of the ways in which Greek cities of the Roman world continued their tradition while adopting Roman ones.⁶² The inclusion of gymnasia at Ephesus demonstrates one way that the city asserted its claim to a Greek identity during the Roman period.

Anatolia throughout the Classical and especially Hellenistic period had been balancing their local identities with the Greek mainland and in particular Athens. When Rome became the new hegemonic power in the region, a new layer was added. People were now tying their imperial Roman identity with local identities, founded in both recent and ancient events and memories. Each economic, political, or cultural change over the millennia resulted in a new layer added to the understanding of identity and refocused social memory to incorporate the new identity into the matrix of identities already in existence.

Gaul and Spain

Another region wherein the question of local community identity during the Roman period has been discussed is in Gaul and Spain. In *The Sons of Remus: Identity in Roman Gaul and Spain*, Johnston examines the complexity and diversity of identity in Roman Spain and Gaul by examining “self-representations – in literature, inscriptions, and visual art”, placing an emphasis on the local reimagining of communal identity.⁶³ Johnston argues via his examples that identities during the Roman period in provincial areas were dependent on both the foreign and familiar changing and recombining into a new, and still everchanging, identity. In his opening chapter, for example, he discusses the Gate of Mars in

⁶¹ Newby 2005, 230.

⁶² Newby 2005, 231.

⁶³ Johnston 2017, 4.

Remi, which illustrates both the foundation myths of Rome by Romulus and of Remi by Remus. The gate illustrates how the Remi tied their own foundation to the legends of Rome thereby strengthening the associations between local and Roman myths of origin and their Roman and yet local identity.⁶⁴ Layering of identities in communities is ubiquitous and any individual in a society will have multiple identities that they might “perform”, as Johnston says, based on a social context. Johnston argues that identity is inherently an action rather than an adjective – resulting in plural identities that overlap and play out in different arenas at different moments in an individual’s life, often being reimagined and reinvented overtime.⁶⁵ This also holds true on a broader level for more widespread collective identities, such as those in a province or a city.

In his book, Johnston aims to examine how the Roman past was incorporated into local identities and how Roman it truly was. He examines various case studies of how local communities adapted elements of the Roman past. First, he looks at how Roman founders, Aeneas and also Romulus and Remus, were memorialized and then explores case studies of how Roman Republican political figures were incorporated into the imperial period community identity.⁶⁶ Then he discusses how various communities in Gaul and Spain adapt their origin story to appear more Roman. Often these origin stories linked back to the aftermath of the Trojan War, mirroring Aeneas’ foundation of Rome. These origin myths were designed to link local communities to a mutual legendary past with Rome; however, these traditions were continuously revised overtime based on the individual community in order to best serve that population.⁶⁷ Finally in this chapter, Johnston demonstrates how monuments and sculptural programs reflect and often mimic those in Rome. Notably, these monuments also had the potential to accommodate local memories.⁶⁸ Johnston mentions that the stories that were created through the

⁶⁴ Johnston 2017, 2 – 3.

⁶⁵ Johnston 2017, 4.

⁶⁶ Johnston 2017, 193.

⁶⁷ Johnston 2017, 209 – 11.

⁶⁸ Johnston 2017, 214.

adoption of Roman past memories into local community identities would not be “readily intelligible or even recognizable to a non-local, Roman audience”.⁶⁹ This is due to the intrinsic uniqueness of the newly created and recreated local community identity.

Johnston’s book demonstrates how memory is incorporated into community identity and explains how community identities are layered, dynamic, and everchanging. He argues that these local identities can exist simultaneously to a “Roman” identity – even when the memories contradict or are unrecognizable by the non-local Roman communities. This region, like Achaia and Anatolia, was actively merging its imperial Roman identity with the existing local identities.

The Role of the Imperial Cult in Roman Expansion

The Roman empire was expansive, and each region adapted to Roman control at different rates and in ways as various as the diverse socio-cultural landscapes of each location. Spectacle arguably enabled Roman control in other regions and influenced communities’ identity during the Late Republic and Early Imperial periods. The imperial cult both engaged the provincial regions of the empire in the traditions of Rome and also solidified the role of the emperor “within the [preexisting] framework of the traditional cults of the [Greek] gods”.⁷⁰ By constructing temples and altars, and other architecture like the theaters, dedicated to the emperor within Greek sanctuaries, the Greeks were able to accommodate the imperial cult.⁷¹ This phenomenon is seen at most major Greek sanctuaries and in most city centers’ central cult. For example, there is an imperial cult shrine in the sanctuary of Asklepios in the Peloponnese.⁷² This was effective as a demonstration of imperial presence because it would have been seen, not only by the locals, but also by all those Greeks who pilgrimaged to the Panhellenic sanctuary for the healing cult of Asklepios.

⁶⁹ Johnston 2017, 229.

⁷⁰ Price 2009, 1.

⁷¹ Price 2009, 134.

⁷² Luraghi 2008, 277 – 80.

Imperial cult centers had civic function as well as religious and this is likely one reason why they existed within areas of civic and political activity. Emancipation could occur before an imperial emperor, and in Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*, Lucius appeals to the statue for legal sanctuary.⁷³ Elites even competed for offices as imperial priests as they demonstrated individual and city loyalty to the emperor as well as broadcasted imperial loyalty to other cities.

Spectacles had a civic function as well. They were important in Roman tradition because they created a conversational environment that allowed for the *populus* to communicate their concerns to the emperor or local ruler, often in the form of chants by the *populus* that were appeals for change.⁷⁴ For this reason, gladiatorial events became important as part of the imperial cult with the expansion of the empire since they facilitated a dialogue between the multicultural populations of Roman provincial towns and the administration. The attendance of non-Romans at the Roman cultural event helped legitimize the ruler through agreements negotiated during dialogues about taxes and other public concerns. The Roman process of control instigated political and cultural unity essential for the success of the empire while allowing Greeks to continue to worship their native deities and live their pre-Roman lifestyles. However, Greeks still regarded Rome as an outside political entity and “other” culture.

Indeed, the early reception of gladiatorial combats shows that the games were not initially regarded as a mutual cultural event. This reaction is illustrated in Livy's description of the gladiatorial events in Antioch, sponsored by Antiochus IV in 166 B.C., just prior to the imperial period. Here, Livy outlines various events and their generally well-favored reception with “one exception”:

...the one exception being a gladiatorial contest exhibited in Roman fashion, which frightened the spectators, who were unused to such sights, more than it pleased them.⁷⁵

⁷³ Apu. *Met.* 3.29.

⁷⁴ Futrell 1997, 54.

⁷⁵ Livy *Hist.* 41.20.

This description shows that the gladiatorial event was unfamiliar and startling to the Greeks. Gladiators were a Roman phenomenon, and this would not have been something seen by many Greeks at all. In fact, Antiochus IV spent time in Rome as a youth, and this is likely the reason for his enthusiasm for a foreign, violent spectacle. The appeal of the cult to Greeks changed over time. By the end of the Hellenistic period in 30 B.C., the events were “put on by Greeks, for Greeks, in a Greek ceremonial context”, even though the administration was Roman.⁷⁶ The change in acceptance of the games shows that there was a change in the Greek attitude towards this traditionally Roman event.

Michael Carter suggests that this change occurred via the incorporation of this Roman event into the Greek framework of cult. By examining epitaphs of gladiators in the east, references to Greek traditions and myths become apparent.

You see me who was bold (θρασύν) in the stadia, dead, traveler, from Tarsis a retiarius of the second rank, (by the name of) Melanippus. No longer do I hear the voice of the bronze trumpet, nor when competing do I raise the din of the unequal pipes. They say that Herakles completed twelve labors, but I completed the same and finished with thirteen. Thallus and Zoe made this for Melanippus from their own funds in remembrance.⁷⁷

This epitaph is written in dactylic hexameter, the meter Homer used to compose, and uses key words from Homer like “θρασύν”, bold, in order to reference the heroic past. Carter argues that this was intended to recall the heroic tradition of Homer.⁷⁸ The epitaph also references athleticism both in mythology, with Herakles’s labors, and in reality, with the stadia reference, where this gladiator probably fought. This shows that gladiators were presenting themselves as athletes and heroes – Greek cultural figures.

Gladiators were using vocabulary, and even syntax, to associate themselves with Greek heroic tradition in athletics and Homer.⁷⁹ This trend indicates that the language surrounding gladiators was

⁷⁶ Carter 2014or, 621.

⁷⁷ Robert 1971, 234 (Transl. Carter 2009, 307 – 8).

⁷⁸ Carter 2009, 308.

⁷⁹ Carter 2009, 307 – 08.

being adjusted over time to present gladiators as heroes and athletes. This demonstrates how gladiators and their combats were incorporated into the preexisting framework of Greek tradition. By recalling Greek athletic competitions and through the heroization of gladiators Greeks were able to fit this traditionally Roman cultural event into their own religious frameworks, claiming the gladiatorial events as a new component of the ever-changing Greek religious landscape.

The “sacred landscape” works within the rural, civic, and provincial landscapes to situate a province within the Roman empire as one of many provinces.⁸⁰ Changes in the sacred landscape of the Hellenic world include the existing local cults being displaced, augmented, or amplified while the imperial cult was introduced by the Romans. For example, Alcock notes that Augustus most likely removed cult objects from the Athena Alea sanctuary at Tegea in Arcadia not only because Tegea was one of the cities that supported Anthony instead of Octavian but also because Tegea was influential and highly visible in the Peloponnese.⁸¹ Removing the cult objects of Athena Alea decreased their visibility in Tegea and sent a message of control to the population of the Peloponnese. Changes to the sacred landscape were intended to control, but also mediate conversations with local populations now under Roman control.

Visibility – or lack thereof – seems to dictate most of the changes to the sacred landscape in Greece under Roman rule. The imperial cult objects and temples, for example were often, but not always, kept in prominent and public places, such as the Athenian Agora and Athenia acropolis or even the enormous Olympieion of Hadrian. The scale of imperial cult shrines varies. One unique example of the imperial cult, the Treasury of Minyas in Orchomenos, takes shape in a Mycenaean tholos that had been converted during the Hellenistic period into a *heroon*. A large statue base inside the tomb with an inscription to the imperial cult attest to the conversion of this monument during the Roman times into

⁸⁰ Alcock 1993, 230.

⁸¹ Alcock 1993, 176 – 177.

an imperial cult monument. Pausanias, writing in the 1st c. A.D., attests to its visibility, stating that it was “a wonder second to none either in Greece itself or anywhere else”.⁸² Alternatively, *naoi* were constructed at Gytheion and Messene for Caesar and Augustus, and adaptations were made to Greek-style theaters so they could be used for the imperial cult rituals.⁸³ Prominence and location partially dictated the installations of the imperial cult, remaining ever in the eye of the public to some degree. Assuring that the imperial cult was widespread across the empire was key to raising familiarity with the cult and the new order it represented.

The role of the imperial cult was to provide an outlet for conversation between the members of the provinces and the Roman government officials, while increasing familiarity with the new cult and the new world order it represented among the provincial peoples. It simultaneously demonstrated Rome’s control and enabled Greeks to see how the change fit into their own social and civic roles. The imperial cult was a tool for the construction of provincial identities that encompassed the memories of both the Romans and the locals. As the next chapter will demonstrate, the adaptation of Greek theaters alongside the new construction of amphitheaters throughout Roman Greece during the early imperial period (200 B.C. – A.D. 200) reflects this function imperial cult.

⁸² Paus. 9.38.2.

⁸³ Alcock 1993, 183.

Chapter 4: Architectural Review and Analysis

Now that I have laid out a theoretical background and the historiography and also examined provincial identity in general, this chapter will review and examine the architectural monuments for our case studies and contextualize these monuments within a mnemonic framework. The case studies in question for amphitheaters are those at Corinth, Merida, El Djem, and Nimes. The case studies for theaters and stadia are Perge, Athens, and Messene. While the case studies in Corinth, El Djem, Perge, Athens, and Messene are in the eastern Mediterranean, I have brought Merida and Nimes into the discussion to clarify arguments.

Referencing Rome

In her article, “Negotiating Roman Spectacle Architecture in the Greek World: Athens and Corinth, Katherine Welch compares the architecture of the amphitheater of Corinth and of the Roman phase of the theater of Dionysus in Athens to examine the reception of gladiatorial events through material culture, rather than solely through textual and epigraphical sources. She argues that converted theaters were preferred over the new construction of amphitheaters, because Greeks during the early imperial period were not willing to adopt an architectural symbol of Roman power due to its connection with Corinth, a Roman colony and to Rome directly.⁸⁴ Later, Corinth was influenced by the trend of converting theaters for spectacles during the late second and early third centuries. This resulted in Corinth having both an amphitheater and a converted space for gladiatorial events. Alcock notes that “even a Roman colony such as Corinth had no single fixed identity”.⁸⁵ The duplicity of spaces with the same function illustrates this clearly, but this section focuses mostly on the amphitheater, the symbol of Roman power, and examine how it functioned as a symbol of power.

⁸⁴ Welch 1999, 139.

⁸⁵ Alcock 2002, 87.

Symbols and representations function as citations, analogies, or rather “references.” The word “reference” is from the Latin “*refere*”, meaning “to bring back or to carry back.” This comes from the addition of the prefix “*re*” to “*ferre*”, which means “to bring or to carry.” “*Ferre*” is also used to mean “carrying (bringing) a thought from the mind” – or, what we would simply call “thinking.” “*Referre*”, in this context then, means “to carry (bring) a thought from the mind again” or “to remember.” Thus, a “reference” is “an object or word that carries a thought or idea from your mind again” or “recalls something else.” Amphitheaters were acting as references.



Figure 2: Flavian Amphitheater, Rome, A.D. 72 – 80

Bruno Latour discusses “references” in *Pandora’s Hope*. He states that over time, with the addition of more information, the transformation of a reference can either be amplified or reduced.⁸⁶ In the case of the amphitheater for Rome, the reference is amplified resulting in standardization. Through standardization, the communication of ideas is made easier.⁸⁷ The standardization, or rather,

the canonization, of amphitheaters does just this for Rome. The Flavian Amphitheater in Rome, built in A.D. 72 – 80 and after some of our uncanonized examples, was the epitome of the Roman amphitheater with stacked columnar orders, arches, and a large *cavea* for performance (See Figure 2). This became the canonized form due to the popularity of the public Flavian Amphitheater, since it replaced the unpopular emperor Nero’s Domus Aurea (his opulent, private mansion).⁸⁸ Rome was able to use the amphitheater, especially in its canonized form, to demonstrate Roman power and hegemony in

⁸⁶ Latour 1999, 71.

⁸⁷ Latour 1999, 59 – 61.

⁸⁸ Welch 2007, 162.

provinces. However, the amphitheater in its uncanonized forms was widely recognized as a unique part of the Roman architectural catalogue. Latour also says that a “reference... is our way of keeping something constant through a series of transformations”.⁸⁹ This statement means that a reference acts to make communication efficient and effective. The amphitheater was acting as a reference, recalling Rome through an architectural symbol. Or rather, the architectural form was repetitively citing the Roman amphitheater, creating memory of that space each time someone interacted with any of the repetitions. The amphitheater was communicating by passing information, between Rome and the provinces through its form. Amphitheatres transferred to provincial people concepts of Roman hegemony and power in the form of architecture designed for entertainment and religion. This was done through standardization, monumentalizing, and collective memory of Roman socio-cultural traditions.

The amphitheater at Corinth, on mainland Greece, offers a productive case study for examining the ways in which amphitheatres function as a reference (see Figure 3). Corinth was re-founded by Julius Caesar in 44 B.C. as a Roman colony, *Colonia Laus Iulia Corinthiensis*, after its destruction in 146 B.C.⁹⁰ It is also one of the only Greek cities that has an amphitheater.⁹¹ The amphitheater at Corinth,



Figure 3: Amphitheater at Corinth, Greece
2nd – 3rd c. A.D.

thought to date to the 2nd or 3rd c. A.D, was not as actively protested as it seems to have been in other

⁸⁹ Latour 1999, 58.

⁹⁰ Romano, D.G. 2003, 279 – 81. Regarding the question of continuity during the Interim Period, see Romano, I. B. 1994, 59. See Pausanias’ description about the sack of the city by Mummius (Paus. 7.16.8).

⁹¹ Welch 1999, 133. This date is based on textual evidence, not archaeological. The amphitheater has not yet been excavated, but plans exist from the 17th c. A.D.

Greek towns. It is likely that this was due to the larger Roman population and the distinctly Roman infrastructure. Additionally, particularly in Roman colonies founded by Caesar, gladiatorial games were mandated by law as part of his cult.⁹² The city was almost complete redesigned and reorganized during the Roman period in order to incorporate a typical Roman, orthogonal city plan with all of the constructions required for running a colony.⁹³ Numerous other Roman colonies and towns also received amphitheaters, but not in the eastern part of the empire. Corinth was looked at as having disregarded the traditions of the past – as opposed to Athens, who upheld these traditions.⁹⁴ The negative opinion of other Greek cities towards Corinth and the amphitheater there demonstrates that gladiatorial events (and amphitheaters) were not desirable from the Greek vantage point. This reaction is likely because the architecture was symbolic of Rome and the gladiatorial events were unfamiliar and repulsive.

The amphitheaters were an effective reference to Rome because of their canonized form, but also because of their size. The enduring nature of monumental constructions allowed for the building to be interpreted across generations.⁹⁵ The monumentality of the amphitheaters would have been



Figure 4: Amphitheater at Merida, Spain, 31 B.C. – A.D. 14

impressive and altered the landscape of any town in which they were constructed. Even to “perceive a landscape is therefore to carry out an act of remembrance”, resulting in engagement with the past

⁹² Welch 1999, 137.

⁹³ Romano 2003, 281.

⁹⁴ Welch 1999, 137.

⁹⁵ Bradley 1998, 18.

though a place.⁹⁶ Altering the landscape of a town would have changed the way that people interacted with their environment and created an awareness of the monument, and through it, of Rome itself.

A lack of preservation of amphitheaters in the eastern Mediterranean along with the sparsity of them, calls for an examination of other sites to understand how these monumental references were effective. While the preservation of monumental architecture in the archaeological record of the Greek world is less than ideal, the impression amphitheaters left on the landscape can be gleaned from other western sites, such as at Merida in Spain. Merida, built during the Augustan period (31 B.C. – A.D. 14), exhibits an earlier type of architecture that was constructed into a hill (see Figure 4). It shows that even



Figure 5: Amphitheater at El Djem, Tunisia, 3rd c. A.D.

from prior to the Flavian period, monumental amphitheaters were being constructed as part of the civic life in provinces.⁹⁷ The size of the amphitheater in North Africa at El Djem, built in the 3rd c. A.D. can be seen in comparison to the modern town around it. El Djem also exhibits a nearly canonized form of the amphitheater that directly reflects the Flavian Amphitheater in Rome (see Figure 5). It was built in the 3rd c. A.D. and has three stories, although they are all Corinthian, instead of stacked orders.⁹⁸ Regardless, most of its architectural components are still true to the form of the Flavian Amphitheater, and it

⁹⁶ Ingold, Tim. 1993, 152.

⁹⁷ Welch 2007, 103.

⁹⁸ Welch 2007, 319 – 320.



Figure 6: Amphitheater at Nîmes, France, A.D. 70

immediately recalls Rome upon seeing it. The amphitheater in Nîmes, France, built in A.D. 70, demonstrates that a partially canonized form of the amphitheater would have created an impressive experience for the viewer (see Figure 6). The amphitheater at Nîmes has undergone several renovations throughout its history, resulting in its impeccable

preservation. As can be seen in Figure 5, amphitheaters of this size dwarf the surrounding town today as it would have in antiquity. Even aerial images of the amphitheater at Corinth shows that these



Figure 7: Amphitheater at Corinth, Greece
2nd – 3rd c. A.D.

constructions were large enough to leave scars on the landscape that can still be seen today (even if from a different perspective) (see Figure 7). Ingold and Borić would argue that an inherent and important part of archaeology is to experience the space as we do today as a “witness” to our environment and consider that in our analysis of the past.⁹⁹ Our modern perspectives and observations of archaeological landscapes

and materials can be transposed back in time in some scenarios. This aerial view of the amphitheater at Corinth allows for us to understand its impressive size even though it is not standing tall as in El Djem and has not yet been excavated. By referencing Rome monumentally, amphitheaters would have

⁹⁹ Borić 2010, 24 – 25.

changed the way people interacted with their cityscapes and maintained a cognitive and physical link between Rome and the provinces.

Aside from their monumental form, amphitheaters were the only space used for gladiatorial events occurred whose origins can be traced solely back to the heart of Rome, in the Forum Romanum.¹⁰⁰ This was where gladiatorial contests were originally held and the location of the first amphitheaters of wood.¹⁰¹ The amphitheater was steeped in a history of Roman culture, and the architectural form was, therefore, symbolic of Rome and Roman traditions by extension. The tradition of gladiatorial events and spectacles in arenas like amphitheaters would have been a part of the memory of Romans.¹⁰² By constructing amphitheaters abroad, these memories were being accessed and exploited for familiarity and comfort of citizens that had migrated abroad to maintain a connection to their *patria*, fatherland.¹⁰³ The amphitheaters and gladiatorial events were then also referencing Rome for the benefit of the Roman colonizers who were migrating to new provinces.

Through standardization (canonization), monumentalizing the architectural form, and the use of memory of Roman socio-cultural traditions, the amphitheaters referenced Rome, Roman traditions, and hegemony. This would have been an effective tool in the construction of new identities in colonies around the Roman empire. However, there was less of a positive reception in the more eastern provinces. For this reason, the conversion of theaters and stadia was potentially preferred to the construction of amphitheaters in eastern provinces. These forms still enabled gladiatorial events to be performed to fulfil Roman administrative requirements. Rather than impressing the new form upon all provinces, Roman officials often tried to create a sense of belonging among provincial members by incorporating what was familiar to them.

¹⁰⁰ Welch 1999, 126. Also, see Welch 2007, on the evolution of the amphitheater.

¹⁰¹ Welch 2007, 91 – 92.

¹⁰² For more on the role of collective memory in ancient communities and a review of scholarship on the topic, see Borić 2010, 6 – 8.

¹⁰³ See Iğsiz 2008 on migration and memory.

Remodeling for Remembrance

Adaptations to theaters and stadia were pervasive throughout the eastern provinces. These conversions allowed for the imperial cult to exist in the Greek religious landscape via political manipulations of the memory of the past. Commonly, a parapet wall around the *cavea* of theaters was often added or a part of stadia was sectioned off with a wall to distinguish the active arena floor.

At Perge in Anatolia, there is a parapet wall around the floor of the theater, and a net system was anchored into the wall in order to protect spectators from the violent gladiatorial events in the arena (see Figure 8).¹⁰⁴ These adaptations were modeled on the Theater of Dionysus in Athens, since this was the first theater to be adjusted.¹⁰⁵ Athens had also been the traditional leader of Greek culture from at least the 5th c. B.C., if not earlier. A parapet wall surrounded the floor of the theater on the left and there were anchor holes for the nets in the wall on the right (see Figure 9). This was the same method of adaptation used at Perge. The method was likely cheaper than constructing new amphitheaters. However, as we have seen from Alcock's discussion of renovations, adaptations and reuse of monuments or pieces of



Figure 8: Theater at Perge, Turkey,
A.D. 120



Figure 9: Theater of Dionysus, Athens,
Greece, 6th c. B.C.

¹⁰⁴ Welch 1999, 129.

¹⁰⁵ Welch 1999, 138.

monuments are not always economical.¹⁰⁶ In this case, I think it probably was economical by coincidence only.

The architectural adaptations for spectacles also show that amphitheaters were not necessary for the creation of a space dedicated to gladiatorial events. Other forms of Roman architecture were being chosen for constructions, and theaters and stadia were opted for conversion instead. Roman leisure structures, like baths, were being adopted all over the Greek world. There are examples of baths in most major Greek cities and sanctuaries, such as at Messene, Gerasa, and Argos.¹⁰⁷ Their prevalence suggests that cost was not an issue, or, at least, the budget for Roman architecture was not always allotted for amphitheaters. This is interesting because they were the most suited for gladiatorial combats of all the available architectural forms since this was their primary function. Amphitheaters provided spectators with a safe view of the arena floor and the emperor. The circular form created a conversational environment key for the civic interactions between the populous and the emperor.

Moreover, amphitheaters were constructed to allow for a 360-degree view of the spectacle and enable gladiators to utilize both a circular space for performance with the benefits of an oblong shape for running. While the configuration of amphitheaters was ideal for gladiatorial games, the adapted theaters did not



Figure 10: Stadium at Messene, Greece, 369 B.C.

allow for a 360-degree view nor a fully functional space.¹⁰⁸ The gladiators fought in a round space so as never to be cornered. Contrary to popular belief, gladiators were rarely intended to die in the arena, often collecting large sums of money for their efforts. They also did not allow for as conversational of an

¹⁰⁶ Alcock 2002, 55.

¹⁰⁷ Lancaster 2010, 448; Luraghi 2008, 277 – 80; Raja 2012, 167.

¹⁰⁸ Welch 1999, 138 – 39.

environment or a clear view of the emperor – or overseeing elite. This meant that at any given event, a participant in the arena could be cornered or that the view of the spectacle or emperor could be obscured from spectators. Regardless of this, theater adaptation continued to be more prevalent in eastern provinces. Stadia alterations, like that of Messene, exhibit some of the same issues as the theaters. The stadium at Messene had a wall added to the arena floor and stairs for spectators as well during the Late Roman period (see Figure 10).¹⁰⁹ These adaptations, like those at Messene and Athens, did not allow for the same view and created issues for the participants themselves. Though they were not ideal spaces for the activities, theaters and stadia continued to be converted for gladiatorial events.

This phenomenon begs the question: why remodel these spaces instead of constructing a new amphitheater specifically designed for this purpose, especially when these provinces were willing to pay the cost for other constructions, like baths? Previous scholars have argued that it was a choice based on familiarity with the space and a desire to fit the imperial cult and the exotic gladiatorial events into the pre-existing Greek framework. I would like to expand on these hypotheses and suggest that memory of the past was being exploited by both Greeks and Romans to construct a new cultural event space that were equally relevant to both groups.

The architectural alterations to theaters and stadia had multiple motivations. Firstly, it was pragmatic; it was in fact cheaper but also less of a disturbance to the daily life of these already well-established cities. It was also familiar because this was where Greeks already held spectacles in the Greek world. Greeks were using their memory of past religious traditions to incorporate a new foreign cult. This was something they had done from earlier during the Hellenistic period to create space for the cults of non-Greeks, like those of Isis and Serapis.¹¹⁰ The division of Hellenistic ruler cults and emperor/imperial cults is a distinction made only in modern scholarship. In antiquity, this would not

¹⁰⁹ Luraghi 2008, 275.

¹¹⁰ Tripolitis 2002; Witt 1979.

have been at the forefront of Greek minds. Moreover, the division between foreign Roman cults and other foreign cults is also a creation of scholarship. These cults were all non-Greek and therefore were incorporated similarly. The imperial cult was simply another ruler cult, another foreign cult.

The architecture itself is reflective of the ability of the Greeks to adjust their already existing venues for a new purpose. Indeed, Richard Bradley notes that manipulations to monuments over generations may reflect the society.¹¹¹ He goes on to say that monuments are adapted to the concerns of the society.¹¹² This prospect suggests that the adaptations were directly reflective of the society. Conversions of theaters, therefore, was representative of the multifaceted nature of the cultural makeup in most major sanctuaries and cities throughout the eastern provinces of the Roman empire. Adaptations and reuse were common in Greek architecture, and the reuse by the Greco-Roman population of these spaces was just another phase in the fluctuating nature of ancient Mediterranean culture, religion, politics, and society, another layer of identity.

The adaptations to the architecture of theaters occurred first, followed later by stadia. These were both spaces that were traditionally used for spectacles in the Greek world as part of religious ceremonies and festivals. Thus, using them for the imperial cult only required partial adaption of their function. Interestingly, the adaptations to theaters would not have been as disruptive to their original function – theatrical performances – as they would have been in stadia, where the adaptations often actively cut the useable space in half. I think this was partially a manipulation of the past by the Romans. By altering the space, they were deliberating setting aside the past and repurposing the space for a distinctly Roman event.

This is particularly apparent in the stadia adaptations which completely remodeled the usable space but also would have been apparent in the theaters with the new walls and nets. The architectural

¹¹¹ Bradley 1998, 18.

¹¹² Bradley 1998, 19.

adaptations then were two-fold: the Greeks were able to employ their memory of traditional Greek religious spectacles (often athletic festivals) while the Romans were able to partially remodel the spaces for their own political purpose (to introduce imperial cult spectacles).

Still, why were the Greeks choosing one space to alter over another and how did they make this decision? The imperial cult had a political overtone and choosing the space for its ceremonies was crucial for both the Greeks and the Romans. Other imperial cult architecture, such as altars, often appears alongside the most important shrine or temple in a sanctuary. I think that the foreign, violent nature of the gladiatorial events required careful consideration regarding how to adapt already existing spaces for this purpose. At first, as with the theater of Dionysus, this was done by using a structure already designed for spectating that was common in many cities and close to the city center as an audience was a crucial player in gladiatorial spectacles. The theater, however, needed the addition of a wall and nets to protect the spectators from the sport. I think that the relationship between the purpose of the theater and the gladiatorial events was too distant from traditional Greek religious practice for Greeks to fully adopt the events and subsequently the cult.

Instead, they often converted stadia because athletic festivals for cult worship better aligned with the new gladiatorial events intended to honor the imperial family. The heroization of gladiators as athletes, as discussed by Carter from epitaphs, is what made the adoption of the imperial cult and gladiatorial events possible among Greeks. This was necessary within the Greek cultural mindset since sanctuaries were not spaces designated for death. In fact, it was banned. So, the Greeks needed to find a way to reconcile this, and athletic competition was the closest culturally similar event in their repertoire. Athletic competitions were a major part of Greek religious practice as much as the gladiatorial combats were part of Rome's.

The ability of the Romans and Greeks to adjust the religious structures, both physically and ritually, is surprising at first glance. However, Connerton's concept that forgetting can be instrumental

to the construction of new identities fits both the Roman and Greek perspectives.¹¹³ By altering the spaces, the Greeks were repressing part of their religious traditions; they were allowing for death to occur in sanctuaries. By not entirely forgetting their past, they were able to fit the new cult and its requirements of worship into their religious landscape. Alternatively, the Romans were probably partially acting out “repressive erasure”.¹¹⁴ They were using religious space in order to demonstrate their political power through the imperial cult. This is particularly apparent with the adaptation of stadia, which entirely changed the useable space for a new purpose, as at Messene. The adoption – and renovation – of religious spaces is seen cross-culturally to demonstrate new political rule since the two have often been linked. The various phases of the post-Classical Parthenon in Athens during Christian and Islamic phases were linked directly to foreign political rule and changes in the religious atmosphere of Athens.¹¹⁵ While erasure was not complete during these phases, it did occur. Partial erasure allowed for the construction of a new identity that was plural – much like the architecture. Partial forgetting was necessary in this situation to allow for religious and political change to occur.

Conclusion

The adaptation of theaters and stadia throughout the Greek world implies four cultural changes. Firstly, the adaptations were a reaction against the form of the amphitheater which referenced Roman power overtly, an architectural form that was associated with the sacking of Corinth and the subsequent re-foundation as a colony. Secondly, the adjustments to monumental Greek architecture is reflective of Greek cultural change on a systemic level. The adaptations also suggest that Greeks and Romans both used partial forgetting of the past to create a new multi-layered identity that allowed for Greek and Roman religious traditions to coexist in a single space. Finally, the Roman’s application of “repressive

¹¹³ Connerton 2008, 62 – 64.

¹¹⁴ Connerton 2008, 60.

¹¹⁵ Bouras 2017, 146 – 154.

erasure” enabled them to solidify their control by supplanting Greek architectural forms and cultural events with their own. All of these actions alongside referential amphitheaters throughout the empire created a layered identity that encouraged plural social memories to exist simultaneously in the complex and multifaceted empire that was Rome.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Monumental references to Rome allowed for erasure of Greek culture while simultaneously the adaptations of pre-existing culturally Greek structures for a new similar purpose (namely, spectacles related to the imperial cult) enabled remembrance of pre-Roman Greek culture. The practice of new constructions as well as adapted ones was a political manipulation of Greek memory, allowing the Romans and Greeks to restructure the previous koine culture of the Hellenistic Greek world into a new and diverse Greco-Roman culture. While both the Hellenistic koine culture and the Early Imperial Greco-Roman culture were already both diverse, the latter imposed a new Roman structure over the existing Hellenic one, adding a new layer to the collective memory and therefore to the identities of the people.

Through both monumental references to Rome via amphitheaters and also the partial forgetting and memorializing of the past through architectural adaptations to theaters, the Greek religious landscape was able to incorporate the imperial cult and gladiatorial spectacles into their existing cultural norms. This in turn created a layered cultural identity under Roman imperial control wherein gladiatorial events were both embedded in Roman history and also associated with heroes and athletes in Greek tradition. The political manipulation of Greek memory was intentional both on the part of the Greeks as well as the Romans to fit the identities of both groups into the new diverse community. The fluidity of the religious landscape allowed for the peoples to find a new joint cultural identity and to adjust to the new requirements of the Greco-Roman zeitgeist.

This study of Roman political manipulation of cultural symbols via architecture demonstrates the prowess of Rome to adapt other cultures into a broader, yet diverse, Roman culture. It also amplifies previous studies surrounding Greco-Roman identity and culture in the eastern Mediterranean. While this study combined architectural analysis and memory studies regarding amphitheaters and imperial cult as a tool for Roman imperial cult participation for the first time, a more exhaustive examination of

Roman imperial cult structures, or even just spectacle architecture, would be beneficial to the interpretation of memory and identity in the Roman provinces. Moreover, it would be interesting to incorporate small finds archaeological reports as well as extensive literary and epigraphical evidence into this study to examine these alongside the architecture.

References

- Alcock, S. 2002. *Archaeologies of the Greek Past: Landscape, Monuments, and Memories* (Cambridge).
- Alcock, S. 1993. *Graecia Capta: The Landscapes of Roman Greece* (Cambridge).
- Alcock, S. 2005. "Roman Colonies in the Eastern Empire: A Tale of Four Cities" in *The Archaeology of Colonial Encounters*, edited by G. Stein, 297-329 (Santa Fe: School of American Research).
- Assmann, J. 1997. *Moses and the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge).
- Borić, D. 2010. *Archaeology and Memory* (Oxford).
- Bouras, C. 2017. *Byzantine Athens, 10th – 12th centuries* (London).
- Bradley, R. 1998. *The Significance of Monuments: On the Shaping of Human Experience in Neolithic and Bronze Age Europe* (London).
- Burke, P. 1989. "History as Social Memory" in *Memory: History, Culture and the Mind*, edited by T. Butler, 97 – 113 (Oxford).
- Carter, M. 2009. "Gladiators and Monomachoi: Greek Attitudes to a Roman 'Cultural Performance'" in *International Journal of the History of Sport* 26.2, 289 – 322.
- Carter, M. 2013. "Persuade the People: Violence and Roman Spectacles in the Greek East" in *The Archaeology of Violence*, edited by S. Ralph, 158-168 (Institute for European and Mediterranean Archaeology).
- Carter, M. 2014. "Romanization through Spectacle in the Greek East" in *A Companion to Sport and Spectacle in Greek and Roman Antiquity*, edited by P. Christesen and D. Kyle, 619-632 (UK).
- Connerton, P. 2008. "Seven Types of Forgetting" in *Memory Studies* 1, 59-71.
- Curchin, L. 2011. *The Romanization of Central Spain: Complexity, Diversity, and Change in a Provincial Hinterland* (London).
- Gardner, A. 2013. "Thinking about Roman Imperialism: Postcolonialism, Globalisation and Beyond?" in *Britannia* 44, 1 – 25.
- Green, P. 2007. *The Hellenistic Age: A Short History* (New York).
- Iğsiz, A. 2008. "Documenting the Past and Publicizing Personal Stories: Senses and the 1923 Greco-Turkish Population Exchange in Contemporary Turkey" in *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 26.2, 451-487.
- Ingold, T. 2007. "Materials against Materiality" in *Archaeological Dialogues* 14:1, 1-16.
- Ingold, T. 1993. "The Temporality of the Landscape" in *World Archaeology* 25:2, 152-74.
- Johnston, A. 2017. *The Sons of Remus: Identity in Roman Gaul and Spain* (Cambridge, Massachusetts).
- Lancaster, L. 2010. "Parthian Influence on Vaulting in Roman Greece? An Inquiry into Technological Exchange under Hadrian" in *American Journal of Archaeology* 114.3, 447 – 73.
- Latour, B. 1999. "Circulating Reference: Sampling the Soil in the Amazon Forest" in *Pandora's Hope* (Cambridge, Massachusetts).
- Luraghi, N. 2008. *The Ancient Messenians: Constructions of Ethnicity and Memory* (Cambridge).
- Mattingly, D. 2011. *Imperialism, Power, and Identity: Experiencing the Roman Empire* (Princeton, New Jersey).

- Morales, F. A. 2017. "The Monument of Roma and Augusta" in *Imperial Identities in the Roman World*, edited by W. Vanacker and A. Zuiderhoek (New York).
- Newby, Z. 2003. "Art and Identity in Asia Minor" in *Roman Imperialism and Provincial Art*, edited by S. Scott and J. Webster (Cambridge).
- Newby, Z. 2005. *Greek Athletics in the Roman World: Victory and Virtue* (Oxford).
- Pollitt, J.J. 1986. *Art in the Hellenistic Age* (Cambridge).
- Price, S. 2009. *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge).
- Raja, R. 2012. *Urban Development and Regional Identity in the Eastern Roman Provinces, 50 BC-AD 250: Aphrodisias, Ephesos, Athens, Gerasa* (Museum Tusculanum Press).
- Robert, L. 1971. *Les gladiateurs dans l'Orient grec* (Paris, 1940; reprinted Amsterdam).
- Rojas, F. 2019. *The Pasts of Roman Anatolia: Interpreters, Traces, Horizons* (Cambridge).
- Romano, D. G. 2003. "City Planning, Centuriation, and Land Division in Roman Corinth: Colonia Laus Iulia Corinthiensis & Colonia Iulia Flavia Augusta Corinthiensis" in *Corinth* vol. 20, Corinth, The Centenary, 279-301.
- Romano, I. B. 1994. "A Hellenistic Deposit from Corinth: Evidence for Interim Period Activity (146 – 44 BC)" in *Hesperia: The Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens* 63.4, 57 – 104.
- Scott, S. 2003. "Provincial Art and Roman Imperialism: An Overview" in *Roman Imperialism and Provincial Art*, edited by S. Scott and J. Webster (Cambridge).
- Tripolitis, A. 2002. *Religions of the Hellenistic-Roman Age* (William Eerdmans Publishing Company).
- Van Dyke, R. M. 2019. "Archaeology and Social Memory" in *Annual Review of Anthropology* 48, 207 – 225.
- Versluys, M. J. 2014. "Understanding Objects in Motion. An Archaeological Dialogue on Romanization" in *Archaeological Dialogues* 21:1, 1 – 20.
- Webster, J. 2003. "Art as Resistance and Negotiation" in *Roman Imperialism and Provincial Art*, edited by S. Scott and J. Webster (Cambridge).
- Welch, K. 1999. "Negotiating Roman Spectacle Architecture in the Greek World: Athens and Corinth" in *Studies in the History of Art* 56, 125-145.
- Welch, K. 2007. *The Roman Amphitheatre: from its Origins to the Colosseum* (Cambridge).
- Welch, K. 1998. "The Stadium of Aphrodisias" in *American Journal of Archaeology* 102.3, 547.
- Witt, R.E. 1971. *Isis in the Graeco-Roman World* (Ithaca, New York).
- Woolf, G. 1998. *Becoming Roman: the Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul* (Cambridge).