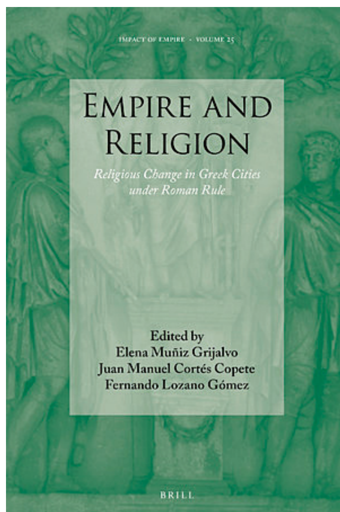
EMPIRE AND RELIGION



MUÑIZ GRIJALVO, ELENA, CORTÉS COPETE, JUAN MANUEL, LOZANO GÓMEZ, FERNANDO (eds.) (2017). *Empire and Religion: Religious Change in Greek Cities under Roman Rule*. Impact of Empire XXV. Leiden, Boston: Brill. XIII, 221 pp., 100,00 € [ISBN 978-9-0043-4710-6].

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FROM THE SAME SEVILLE TEAM – COMBINING THE STRENGTHS of the Universidad Pablo de Olavide and those of the Universidad de Sevilla – that brought us *Ruling the Greek World. Approaches to the Roman Empire in the East* in 2015,[1] now comes an excellent volume in the *Impact of Empire* series dealing with religious developments in the cities of the Roman East. Following a brief introduction, ten chapters are divided to show, firstly, how "local religious life ... was reinforced as a consequence of imperial dynamics" (xii); secondly, in what ways Greek culture was endorsed by the Roman authorities; and, thirdly, the range of "different local reactions to central initiatives" (xiii) and their diffusion over the Roman world.

In her chapter on "Priesthoods and civic ideology: honorific titles for *hiereis* and *archiereis* in Roman Asia Minor", A. Heller reaches a "paradoxical conclusion": the new title habit in the Greek world took shape under the aegis of Rome, but when

1. Cortés Copete, Muñiz Grijalvo and Lozano Gómez, 2015.

the titles were linked with priests or high-priests, they "expressed loyalty and commitment towards the city much more frequently than towards the emperor" (19). It is interesting that the title *philosebastos* was more popular amongst priests of the traditional civic cults, as priests of the emperors did obviously not need this title to communicate that they were supporting the imperial power. E. Muñiz Grijalvo, in her chapter on "Public sacrifice in Roman Athens", interprets what seem to be "minor changes in the epigraphic record" as "a sign of deeper shifts within the management of public religion" (22) in the city during the Roman period. Starting from the "extraordinarily rich" (22) collection of inscriptions recording the actions performed (and sacrifices conducted) by the *prytaneis*, the council's executives, Muñiz Grijalvo argues against notions of the diminishing importance and popularity of traditional public sacrifices in the Greek cities after the early Hellenistic period. She applies the lessons from one of Gordon's classic articles[2] to her case study and shows convincingly that one cannot ignore the "imperial dynamics" (29) when trying to understand the attitudes by the civic elites to cultic behaviour: formulaic adjustments in the epigraphy do not reflect changes with regard to who actually paid for the sacrifices, but ought to be recognised as a sign of "the growing importance of religious euergetism" (30). Public sacrifice never lost its centrality; rather, from the beginning of the second century BC "the notion of 'public' had shifted" (35). In the third chapter, "Cultic and social dynamics in the Eleusinian sanctuary under the empire", F. Camia demonstrates the continuing important role in the religious life of the Greeks in the Roman period played by the cult associated with the temple of Demeter and Kore at Eleusis. Not only were a number of second-century emperors initiated in the Eleusinian mysteries and indeed themselves receiving worship at the cult site, but the religious activities taking place at Eleusis also formed a part of the Panhellenic process. In the imperial period the sanctuary was also used by leading families "as a means of blowing their own trumpet" (64) – showing off status through assumption of prestigious priestly positions and through the dedication of statues for their children who had served as "hearth-initiate".

C. Rosillo-López, in "Communication between sanctuaries and rulers: an analysis of religious resistance to Roman abuses in the Greek East during the Roman republic", investigates the way in which Greek sanctuaries dealt with the Roman authorities after they suffered extortion by magistrates or abuse by *publicani*. She makes the point that "criminal law did not establish any specific proceedings or unique redress in the cases of abuses against religious institutions" (80) – forcing the sanctuaries to "play to their strengths" (76) during the legal procedures with a view

2. Gordon, 1990.

to the long-standing "special relationship" (67, cf. 79) between leading Romans and Greek places of worship. The chapter by R. Gordillo Hervás focuses on "Trajan and Hadrian's reorganization of the agonistic associations in Rome". She emphasises the "direct intervention" (93) of the emperors with regard to the administration of the *technitai* and the *athlētai* – "an important indicator of the ongoing absorption of Greek elements into Roman public spectacles" (92). A. Galimberti, in "*P.Oxy.* 471: Hadrian, Alexandria, and the Antinous cult", revisits the fragmentary recordings, preserved on papyrus, of the trial of a high Roman official (probably a governor) who was charged among other things with immoral conduct. Galimberti argues that "the need to conjure up [Antinous'] memory at a trial as an instrument to denigrate the behaviour of a Roman authority towards a 17-year-old boy" (110) reflects the Senate's unhappiness with Hadrian's "un-Roman" relationship with Antinous and with the emperor's widely advertised attitude to his lover following the latter's death.

In "Hadrian among the gods", J.M. Cortés Copete shows how the emperor's deification in the Greek world "formed part of a complex system of pre-existing gods, beliefs, rites, and moral options" (134). M. Melfi provides "Some thoughts on the cult of the Pantheon ('All the Gods'?) in the cities and sanctuaries of Roman Greece". She argues that the concept – as properly developed "in both architecture and religion" in Rome itself by Hadrian – during this time, in contrast to the traditional identification in different cities with specific deities, "blurred the original individual meanings of the gods in assembly into a generality and abstraction" (146). F. Lozano's chapter deals with "Emperor worship and Greek leagues: the organization of supra-civic imperial cult in the Roman East". He encourages us to leave behind the idea that worship of the emperor on the next level up from the local, civic context was arranged by provincial *koina*. It is argued that the imperial power – in a show of 'divide and rule' – promoted actual hierarchies between the different leagues and hence created "a network of social, economic, and political control in the provinces that was decisive for ruling the empire" (168). Finally, in the only French paper in the volume, 'Le paysage culturel de la colonie romaine de Philippes en Macédoine: cosmopolitisme religieux et différentiation', A.D. Rizakes discusses the development of the religious patterns at *colonia Philippensium* in an ever more indigenous direction, with the sacred landscape over time rediscovering, as it were, "sa vitalité naturelle" (199).

Together, this strong set of papers illustrates nicely how "the religion of the Greek cities of the Roman Empire was both conservative and innovative at the same time, and that many (but not all) changes need the 'Roman factor' to be properly accounted for" (xv). All students of the Roman East will benefit from taking heed of this volume.

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