

ARTEMIS EPHESIA, THE EMPEROR AND THE CITY:
IMPACT OF THE IMPERIAL CULT
AND THE CIVIC IDENTITY OF ROMAN EPHEOS*

Abstract: Roman Ephesos had a diverse religious community. Numerous studies have focused on one or several Ephesian cults, but few have emphasised the intertwining of these cults. This article stresses the intimate connection between two of the most important cults of Roman Ephesos — the cult of Artemis Ephesia and the imperial cult — and the Ephesian civic institutions. Though approaching the cults as local institutions, and therefore acknowledging the power relations at play within the city of Ephesos, it also takes the involvement of the Ephesian community into account. The intertwining of both cultic institutions and the city, summarised by the term ‘Ephesian triad’, becomes evident through my discussion and interpretation of the urban topography, the religious activities and the civic coinage of Roman Ephesos. In view of its connection with the cult of Artemis Ephesia, the rise and impact of the imperial cult in Ephesos had fundamental consequences for the communal civic identity of Ephesos: did Ephesos continue to be the city of Artemis Ephesia it had been for so long?

This article aims to stress the impact of the imperial cult, the intertwining of emperor worship and worship of Artemis Ephesia and its role in the civic identity of Roman Ephesos. By emphasising the relevance of an empire-wide religious practice and one with local origins to the social cohesion within a Roman metropolis, it relates to the lively scholarly debates in archaeological and historical discourse about globalisation and identity.¹ In the last decade, research has mainly underscored the dialectic processes between ‘the global and the local’ and the heterogeneity and variability of the Roman empire and its communities. Also in studies of Roman religions and religious identities, local variety has

* This article has its origins in the master thesis I wrote at the University of Groningen. Therefore, first and foremost I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Lidewijde de Jong for both her motivation to convert my thesis into an article and her indispensable support during the writing of my thesis and the article proper. I also want to thank Dr. Christina Williamson and Prof. Onno van Nijf for all of their advice. In addition, I am grateful to the two anonymous reviewers, whose comments have helped me to improve the argument of my article, and to Dr. Stefan Groh for his permission to make use of his city plans of Ephesos. Last but not least, I thank the people who have been of great help for the improvement of my English: Alex Carnes, Olivia Jones and Adrian Saunders.

¹ Recent examples of these debates with references to previous publications: Gardner (2013) 3-9; Hales & Hodos (2010); Whitmarsh (2010).

been brought to the fore.² Apart from variety *between* local communities, scholars have stressed the diversity of identities and experiences *within* communities, even onto the level of the individual.³ Critics of this focus on diversity and variability have pointed out the relative neglect of power hierarchies amongst, and within, communities and of authoritative institutions.⁴

The tendency to emphasise diversity is also reflected in discussions of the imperial cult, in which this term is criticised, replaced, or even discarded because it creates the impression of a coherent and unified institution that existed throughout the Roman empire.⁵ Though I agree with the objections against a notion of an *empire-wide* institution controlling and distributing the worship of emperors, *within a single community*, the imperial cult was demonstrably institutionalised and characterised by its own organisation, representatives and officials.⁶ Accepting the imperial cult, like other cults, as an ‘institution’, this article puts its emphasis on the interconnectivity of the imperial cult, the cult of Artemis Ephesia and the Ephesian civic government, which I call the ‘Ephesian triad’ in this article. Moreover, I will stress their shared role in creating and maintaining a sense of Ephesian community, without ignoring the diverse nature, and active participation, of this community.

As regards religion, Roman Ephesos was indeed a diverse community. Evidence abounds for the worship of a variety of gods and goddesses.⁷ However, their role in Ephesian society and their importance in creating a sense of community differed. Guy Maclean Rogers has been very influential and convincing in discussing the civic identity of Roman Ephesos and, particularly, the significant role played by Artemis Ephesia in this matter.⁸ Meanwhile, several scholars have discussed the

² Kaizer (2008; 2013 II); Rives (2010) esp. 265-283. Imperial cult in local contexts: Hupfloher (2007).

³ Mattingly (2010) 287-290; Revell (2009) 150-190. The individual in studies of ancient religion: Chaniotis (2003); Rüpke (2013).

⁴ Gardner (2013) 9-11; Hingley (2010).

⁵ Friesen (2011) 24; Gradel (2002); Rives (2010) 256. Greg Woolf (1994, 127) already stated: “it is in any case probably a mistake to treat imperial cult as a unitary phenomenon, rather than as the product of countless recognitions of the emperor and insertions of him into existing contexts.”

⁶ Indispensable on the imperial cult: Price (1984). On imperial priests in the cities of Asia Minor: Frijja 2012 and the accompanying website www.pretres-civiques.org (27-03-2015). For my use of ‘institution’: Gardner (2013) 11.

⁷ Oster (1990).

⁸ Rogers (1991); now also: Rogers (2012).

increasingly dominant presence and influence of the imperial cult, through its religious buildings, rituals and festivities.⁹ Whilst these scholars have discussed the imperial cult as quite isolated from other cults, or only in relation to early Christianity, Rogers acknowledged the increasing integration of deified emperors in religious practices dedicated to Artemis Ephesia. Even so, he kept his primary focus on the rituals dedicated to Artemis Ephesia without truly emphasising the profound connection between the goddess and the Roman emperor. In this article, not only do I aim to emphasise the interconnectivity of the worship of these divinities, but also its role in gradually transforming the civic identity of Roman Ephesos. Did Ephesos continue to be the city of Artemis Ephesia it had been for so long?

The notion of diverse identities and experiences *within* communities begs the question: to whom did this 'communal' Ephesian identity apply? Whose civic identity are we talking about? Scholars have generally acknowledged that the higher classes of society are overrepresented in the material evidence and epigraphic record of the Roman empire. Therefore, they have questioned whether so-called 'communal identities' should, more often than not, be considered 'elite identities'.¹⁰ Though it is true that public initiatives were commonly introduced by elite figures, their resulting, continuous and repetitive effects in daily life involved many more actors: 1) even though public monuments were commissioned and dedicated by the elite, they also constituted the urban context, in which communal life was acted out; 2) even though public rituals and festivities were financed and organised by members of the elite, other community members acted as the participants and spectators of these activities; 3) even though only few individuals decided upon the imagery of a coin, civic coinage was used in daily commercial transactions. Though the daily experiences of citizens are underrepresented in archaeological and historical evidence, they were obviously present. Thus monumental buildings and building inscriptions, religious festivities and rituals as well as civic coinage are not solely indicators of an elite life, but of a more general community life. Therefore, the archaeological, epigraphic and numismatic evidence I present in this article, even though it resulted from initiatives of higher class members, because

⁹ Friesen (1993); Scherrer (2008); Thür (2004).

¹⁰ Alcock (2001); Woolf (2010) 194, 197; on the difficulty in identifying communal and individual interests: Chaniotis (2003) esp. 179.

of its subsequent impact on daily life, actively experienced by various social classes, lends itself for a discussion about a truly communal civic identity of Ephesos.¹¹

BUILDING AND BEHOLDING EPHESIAN IDENTITY: CULT PLACES AND THE URBAN SPACE OF EPHEOS

At Ephesos, imperial cult places were constructed throughout the Roman period. Many scholars have argued for an early imperial Ephesian cult place dedicated to the first Roman emperor.¹² Although no indisputable evidence has been discovered, such a cult place may reasonably be assumed to have existed. Temples dedicated to Augustus (and the goddess Roma) appeared throughout the province of Asia and as Ephesos was the capital of Asia in Augustan times, it is hard to imagine that this city did not partake in this development.¹³ Moreover, excavations have uncovered a life-size head of Augustus wearing a *corona civica*; an inscription mentioning the erection of a statue of Augustus by a certain Apollonios Passalas; and two more than life-size statues of a seated Augustus and Livia have been discovered.¹⁴ These discoveries do not convincingly evidence an imperial cult place by themselves, but together, and in relation to the historical context, support the interpretation that a religious space devoted to emperor worship must have existed in Ephesos from the beginning of Roman imperial rule.

The aforementioned pieces of evidence all originate from the Upper Agora. This agora was designed to function as the new political and

¹¹ For this approach I am highly indebted to the work of Louise Revell (2009). Also, performativity and the dynamic between structure and agency have been highlighted in several recent works on globalisation and identity in the Roman world: Gardner (2013) 9-11; Hodos (2010) 18; Revell (2009) esp. 1-23, 150-154. The reciprocal relationship between elite initiative and communal action was already acknowledged by Chaniotis (2003, 190): "Remembrance, performance and guidance appear as the responsibility of the members of the elite; at the same time they presuppose an audience; the people who are guided, the spectators of the performance, and the participants in the cultural memory."

¹² Alzinger (1985) 62; Jobst (1980) 250-259; Scherrer (1990) 98-100; Scherrer (2004) 5.

¹³ On Augustan imperial cult places: Hänlein-Schäfer (1985).

¹⁴ Life-size statue of Augustus wearing *corona civica*: Alzinger (1972-1975) 261-263, fig.16; inscription recording the erection of a statue of Augustus by Apollonios Passalas: Alzinger (1985) 62; Scherrer (1990) 93; more than life-size statues of Augustus and Livia: Alzinger (1972-1975) 260-263; Alzinger (1974) 26-37.

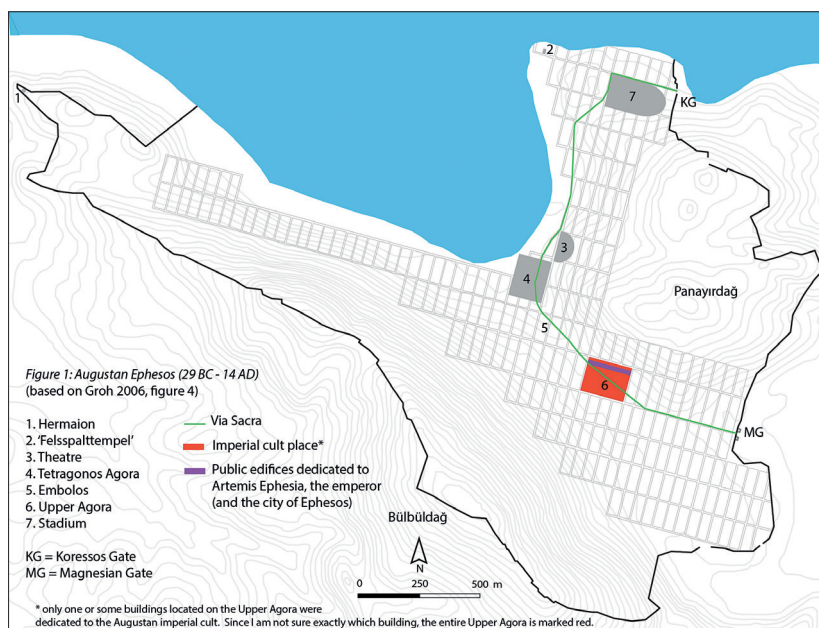


Fig. 1: Plan of Augustan Ephesos

religious centre of Ephesos.¹⁵ Two temple-like structures dating to the Augustan period adorned the Upper Agora, one on the agora itself and the other on its northern side. The Prytaneion, the Bouleuterion and a monumental Basilica were constructed on the northern side as well. Both temples on the Upper Agora have once been proposed to function as an Augustan imperial cult place. However, in my view neither temple provides conclusive evidence for a solid identification.¹⁶ Therefore, the precise location of an Augustan imperial cult place remains obscure, but it most likely formed part of the larger building project that resulted in the creation of the Upper Agora (Fig. 1).¹⁷ The discovery of several early imperial statues and statue bases in the area of the Basilica in any case suggests that this part of the agora fulfilled a clear representational

¹⁵ Alzinger (1972-1975); Alzinger (1974) 55-57; Scherrer (2007); Thür (2007).

¹⁶ Temple on the northern side: Scherrer (1990) 98-100; temple on the Upper Agora: Jobst (1980) 250-259; Thür (2007) 85; Rogers (2012, 99) simply accepts the view that the temple on the Agora was dedicated to Roma and Divus Iulius. On the difficulties in identifying an imperial cult place: Witschel (2002).

¹⁷ Burrell (2004) 59.

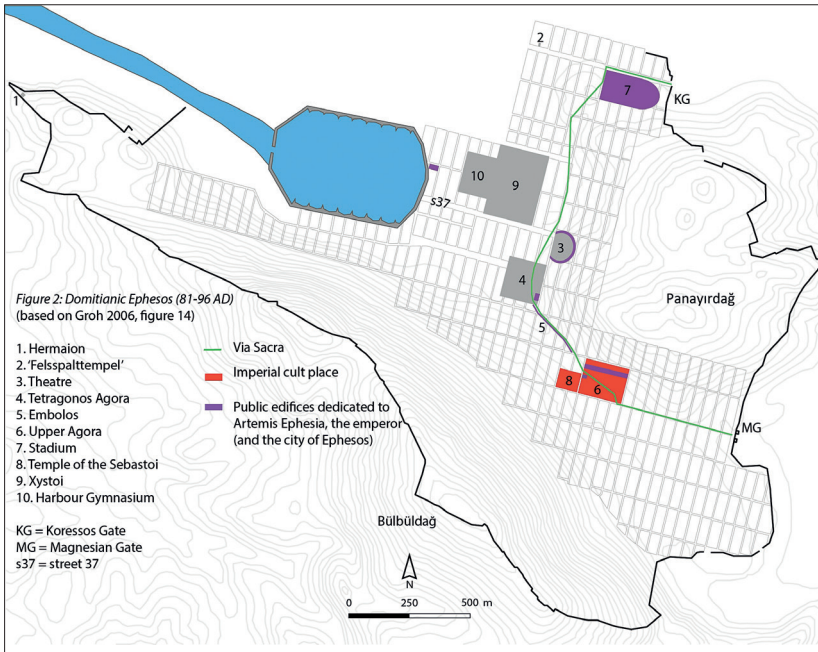


Fig. 2: Plan of Domitianic Ephesos

function.¹⁸ In this way, the introduction of the imperial cult went hand in hand with, and formed an integral part of, the creation of the Augustan political and religious centre.

In the Flavian period, the first provincial cult of the emperor was introduced at Ephesos. A massive temple, the so-called Temple of the Sebastoi, gave this cult its domineering presence (Fig. 2).¹⁹ Placed on top of a high terrace that was built over a Hellenistic residential area, the temple overlooked the entire city. People entering the city through the Magnesian Gate would have been astonished by the magnificence of the temple complex. Interestingly, due to its dimensions and proximity, it also overshadowed the Augustan agora that played such an important role in the Julio-Claudian period. A monumental altar and façade, both dating to the middle of the second century AD, demonstrate the

¹⁸ Stinson (2007) 93; Thür (2007) 84.

¹⁹ Friesen (1993) 63-68.

continued significance of this temple complex.²⁰ North of the Tetragonos Agora, a huge drained territory measuring 200 × 240m became the site for the construction of the Xystoi, a monumental area surrounded by porticoes mainly intended to be used for gymnastic contests. By way of a propylon, the Xystoi was connected with the Harbour gymnasium to the west, which was completed in AD 92/93.²¹ South of this building complex a monumental colonnaded street, measuring no less than 22m wide and replaced in the fourth century AD by the currently visible Arkadiane, led from the theatre to the harbour, construction of which had probably started in the Domitianic period as a response to the westward movement of the coastline.²² The theatre was enlarged by the addition of a second *diazoma*. The Embolos, which connected the Temple of the Sebastoi with the Tetragonos Agora, was paved with marble slabs and colonnaded halls with sculptural ornamentation aligned the street.²³ All of these investments in infrastructure and public edifices demonstrate the monumentalisation of the city's access and appearance. The contemporary establishment of the provincial cult that attracted people to Ephesos from far and wide seems to have been one of the motivators for this building activity. At times of religious festivals and processions, the city must have been crowded with people. Thus, the introduction of the provincial cult resulted not only in the construction of an appropriate house for the cult statues of the Sebastoi, but also triggered the transformation of the entire city in order to accommodate festivals and processions related to the provincial cult.²⁴ In this respect, it is significant that epigraphic evidence indicates that the Harbour Gymnasium was called Gymnasium of the Emperor or probably as Domitian's Gymnasium until the *damnatio memoriae* of emperor Domitian.²⁵

The Hadrianic period saw the drainage of another swamp territory to the north of the Xystoi and the Harbour Gymnasium, providing a suitable place for the second provincial temple of Ephesos. From AD 135-138, the Temple of Hadrian, measuring 85 × 57m, adorned the centre of

²⁰ Friesen (1993) 70-72. See for alternative views on the architecture and ornamentation of the facade: Schneider (1986) 125-128; Bammer (1988) 153-156.

²¹ Friesen (1993) 121-123; Steskal (2003) 167.

²² Scherrer (2008) 42. On the movement of the coastline: Kraft e.a. (2000) 189-191.

²³ On the theatre: Ataç (1999) 4. On the adornment of the Embolos: Thür (1999) 170.

²⁴ Scherrer (2008) 40-46; Thür (2004) 225-228. For religious festivals, birthdays, and processions at Ephesos, see next section.

²⁵ Karwiese (1997) 145.

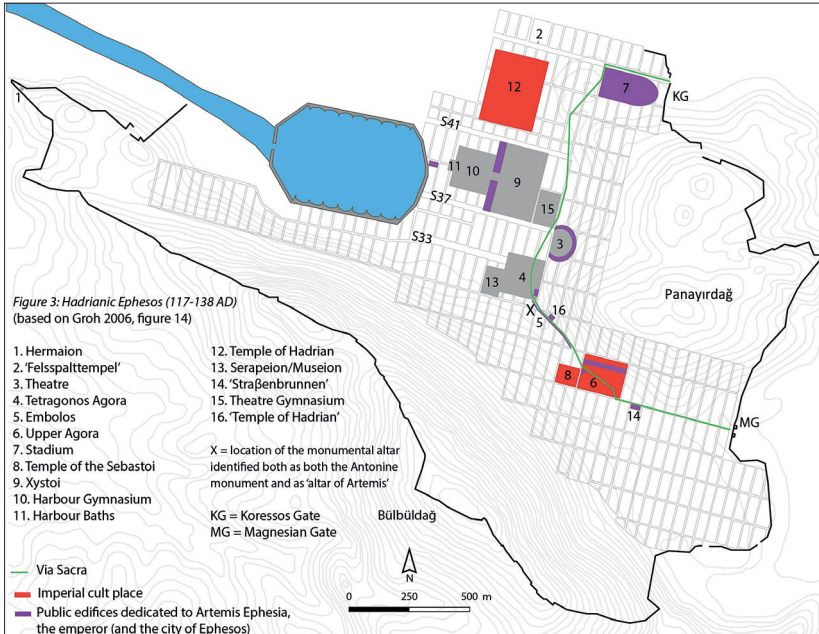


Fig. 3: Plan of Hadrianic Ephesos

a precinct surrounded by porticoes and measuring 286×231 m (Fig. 3).²⁶ This enormous building complex dominated the harbour area, making sure that everybody arriving at the harbour could not miss this expression of imperial grandeur and divinity. Meanwhile, the accessibility of the harbour was improved by the construction of monumental avenues, suggesting an increased importance of the harbour and a more 'international' character of Ephesos. In addition, the number of gymnasia increased, the theatre was enlarged a second time, a bathing complex was added to the Harbour Gymnasium and a multitude of public edifices including gates, nymphaea, fountains, a library and the so-called 'Temple of Hadrian' adorned the sides of the *Via Sacra*.²⁷ At the end of the Hadrianic period, Ephesos boasted several enormous edifices, notably the Temple of Hadrian in the vicinity of the harbour, the Temple of the

²⁶ Groh (2006) 82. On the date of the completion of the Temple of Hadrian, see: Burrell (2004) 67.

²⁷ Summarized in Scherrer (2008) 53-54; see also Rogers (2012) 193-197. The 'temple of Hadrian', located along the Embolos, was falsely identified as a temple of Hadrian, but it still carries the name. For a recent account on this edifice: Quatember (2010).

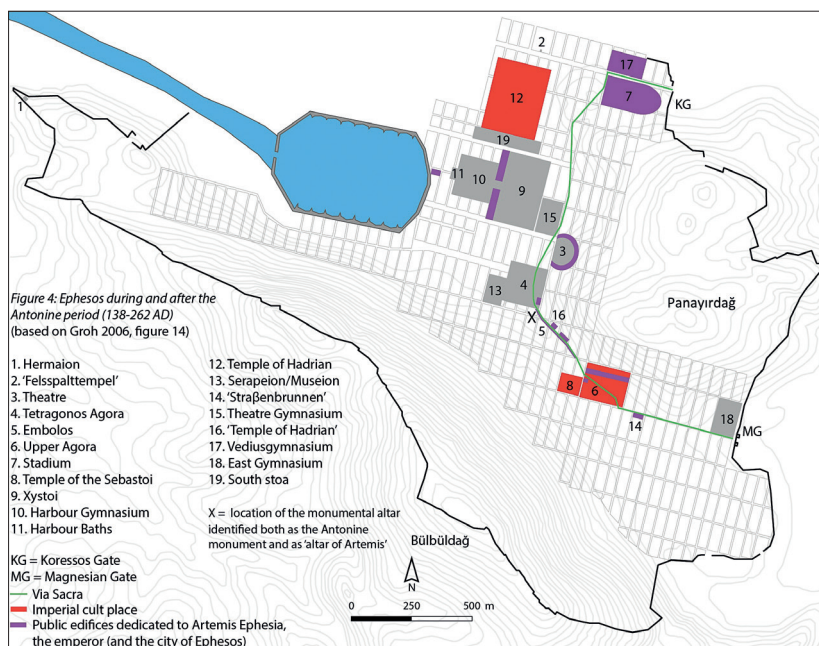


Fig. 4: Plan of Antonine Ephesos

Sebastoi, the Harbour Bath-Gymnasium, Xystoi and the enlarged theatre. Peter Scherrer has argued that buildings like the Xystoi and the theatre provided space for religious activities such as festivals and processions, especially those that were connected to the worship of the emperor.²⁸ So it appears that these new or enlarged edifices often, in one way or another, permanently or occasionally, played an important role in performances and celebrations of emperor worship.²⁹

Building activity decreased in the middle of the second century AD. No new imperial cult places were constructed. Noteworthy is the addition of an altar and a façade to the complex of the Temple of the Sebastoi, the construction of two gymnasia, the East Gymnasium and the Vedius Gymnasium, and the attachment of a large stoa to the precinct of the Temple of Hadrian around AD 200 (Fig. 4).³⁰ From then on, the urban

²⁸ Scherrer (2008) esp. 54-57. For rituals acted out in theatres: Chaniotis (2007) esp. 51-53. The Ephesian theatre is known to have provided space for rituals during the Salutaris procession (Rogers 1991, 100-106). For this procession, see next section.

²⁹ On religious festivities and processions in Roman Ephesos, see next section.

³⁰ Karwiese (2004) 314.

topography of Ephesos remained largely unaltered until the emergence of the first Christian buildings. Therefore, the imperial cult places, the Temple of Hadrian and the Temple of the Sebastoi in particular, continued to dominate the city during the first half of the third century AD. Clearly, the monuments of emperor worship had become a familiar and highly visible element of the urban topography of Ephesos.

Turning our attention to the territory northeast of the city, we find another familiar and highly visible monument. Here, the Artemision had functioned as the most sacred space and the primary religious attraction of Ephesos for centuries. The Temple of Artemis, rebuilt after its destruction in 356 BC, was even mentioned as one of the Seven Wonders of the World and it was still one of the largest temples of the Roman empire. While the temple itself remained largely unaltered, archaeological excavations have revealed several structures within the *temenos* dating to the Roman period. Most recently, a first-century Odeion has been uncovered, situated 180m southwest of the temple.³¹ Additionally, inscriptions tell us about the construction of a gymnasium, a banqueting hall, a stoa and a drain, all of which were built in the Roman period.³² Most importantly, two Ephesian inscriptions suggest that a Sebasteion, a cult place dedicated to Augustus, was located within the confines of the Artemision.³³ In one inscription (*IvE* V 1522) a so-called *fanum* and the Sebasteion are said to have had the same boundary wall. This *fanum* is commonly interpreted as referring to the Artemision and, therefore, the Sebasteion is thought to have been situated within the confines of this sanctuary. The mention of the proconsul C. Asinius Gallus dates this inscription to 6/5 BC. The second inscription (*IvE* II 412) refers to the restoration of the damaged enceinte of the Sebasteion during the reign of Titus. Based on the fact that the restoration was paid for from the treasury of the Artemision, the inscription demonstrates a connection between both sacred spaces. The combination of the information provided by both inscriptions, indeed, supports the view that a Sebasteion existed inside the *temenos* of the Artemision.³⁴ Even more so, Kirbihler and Zabрана have recently argued that the worship of the goddess Roma and Divus Iulius was instigated in the same *temenos* around 40 BC and archaeological evidence suggests that the Roman emperor was worshipped here at least

³¹ Muss (2007). On the Odeion: Zabрана (2011); (2012).

³² Engelmann (2001) 43.

³³ *IvE* II 412 and *IvE* V 1522; Scherrer (1990) 90; Engelmann (1993) 279-280.

³⁴ Muss (2007) 243-244.

until the end of the second century AD.³⁵ So, even before the start of the imperial period, the worship of the Roman ruler was closely associated with the cult of the Ephesian patron goddess and it remained that way for more than two centuries.

The ancient sacred road, referred to as the *Via Sacra Ephesiaca*, connected the sanctuary of Artemis Ephesia with the city.³⁶ In the Roman period, this road was still existent and in use and all main public edifices in the city were located along it (Fig. 1 to 4, green line). Constructed in the second century AD or the start of the third century AD, the so-called Damianus Stoa, besides protecting participants of the sacred processions from getting wet and providing shelter from the sun, constituted an impressive monumental structure, dominating the landscape between the sanctuary and the city.³⁷ As the investments in the infrastructure and architecture of the Artemision demonstrate, the traditional cult of Artemis Ephesia still played a significant role as late as the third century AD. In the city itself, no buildings are exclusively dedicated to Artemis Ephesia. The Prytaneion has been interpreted as a religious building intended for the worship of Artemis Ephesia.³⁸ However, Hestia Boulaia was frequently addressed as the primary deity, and especially from the middle of the second century AD, the variety of deities mentioned in inscriptions from the Prytaneion increased.³⁹ Amongst these deities, Artemis had a prominent, but not exclusive, place within this building. Her prominence is exemplified by the discovery of four second-century statues of the goddess: no other statues were found. However, the presence of these statues does not necessarily imply a cult of Artemis Ephesia. Though Rogers still refers to these statues as ‘cult statues’, Martin Steskal has convincingly criticised the evidence and assumptions, on which this classification relies.⁴⁰ In my opinion, therefore, evidence for the interpretation of the Prytaneion as a cult place dedicated to Artemis

³⁵ Kirbihler & Zabrana (2014).

³⁶ Knibbe & Langmann (1993); Knibbe & Thür (1995); Thür (1999).

³⁷ Knibbe & Langmann (1993) 16-27; Pietsch & Trinkl (1995) 26-33; Thür (1999) 165-166. Dieter Knibbe regarded the construction of the Damianus stoa as one of the last efforts to keep the cult of Artemis Ephesia alive. He argued for a decline of the cult of Artemis Ephesia since the second half of the second century AD: Knibbe (2004) 146-147, and he is now followed by Rogers (2012) 222-228. See next section on the decline of Artemis’s cult and my stance on this issue.

³⁸ Knibbe (1981) 101-105; Steskal (2010).

³⁹ Oster (1990) 1688-1691; Rogers (2012) 303-308.

⁴⁰ Steskal (2008); Rogers (2012) 303.

is lacking. In addition, a U-shaped structure located at the junction close to the Celsus library (Fig. 4, X) has often been considered an altar of Artemis.⁴¹ According to Rogers, this altar played a vital role in the ritual activities on the birthday of Artemis and functioned as a “stational” reference point, “where sacrifices to the goddess undoubtedly were made every year on the sixth of May, at least after A.D. 104” and “from which those who took part in the processions up to Ortygia departed.”⁴² However, its identification is quite controversial. Recently, Barbara Burrell, rejecting Hilke Thür’s interpretation, opted to identify the remains as the fundamentals of an auditorion instead.⁴³ The truth is that aside from the foundations evidence that might provide clues for a proper identification is scarce. This U-shaped structure cannot conclusively be interpreted as an altar of Artemis, neither is it possible to conclude anything about its alleged prominent role during rituals dedicated to Artemis Ephesia.

Other public buildings of Roman Ephesos do, however, reveal a close relation between Artemis Ephesia and the deified emperor. The majority of these buildings used to carry dedicatory inscriptions commemorating the completion and dedication of the structure. Artemis Ephesia and the emperor were by far the most frequently addressed deities in these inscriptions.⁴⁴ A substantial percentage of the dedicatory inscriptions even mentions both gods together as addressees (Fig. 5). As Figure 5 shows, the basic formula of the dedications frequently includes one, two or all three of the ‘institutions’ of Ephesos: the cult of Artemis Ephesia, the cult of the Roman emperor and the city itself, the latter most commonly referred to as the *demos*, *boulè* or *polis* of Ephesos. The relationship between these three ‘institutions’, I suggest, can be summarised by the term ‘Ephesian triad’. Important to note is that the dedicatory inscriptions do not testify to the sacred nature of the structures they belong to, but to the dedication itself as an ‘act of religious communication’. As Jörg Rüpke has argued: “most of the material remains, the sources by which ancient religion can be reconstructed, had been used in religious communication and, loaded with intentions and meanings, were part of

⁴¹ Thür (2005); Rogers (2012) 137-138, 169-170.

⁴² Rogers (2012) 138.

⁴³ Burrell (2009) 83-87.

⁴⁴ All dedicatory inscriptions are published in *Die Inschriften von Ephesos (IvE)*: *IvE* Ia: 20; *IvE* II: 404, 410, 411, 413, 414, 415, 416, 418, 421, 422, 422B, 423, 424, 424A, 425A, 429, 430, 431, 432, 435, 438, 441, 443, 455, 463, 469, 470, 492, 496, 499; *IvE* VI: 2034, 2035, 2037; *IvE* VII/1: 3001; 3003; 3005; 3008; 3092.

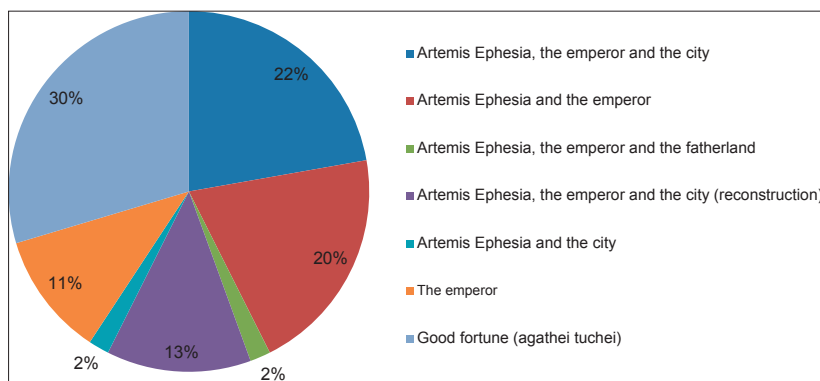


Fig. 5: Graph displaying the percentages of the addressees of religious dedications of public buildings in Ephesos (n=54)

acts of communication.”⁴⁵ The idea not to regard these inscriptions as indicators of sacred buildings, is supported by the fact that dedicatory inscriptions belonged to a variety of structures, including waterworks, a fishery customs house, the paving of a street, a latrine and a sundial.⁴⁶ Thus, most of the Ephesian dedicatory inscriptions communicated messages of gratitude directed to the ‘Ephesian triad’ for enabling the successful completion of a building project.

Two aspects of the dedicatory inscriptions deserve special attention. First of all, by mentioning all or some of the institutions of the ‘Ephesian triad’, the dedications emphasise the importance of, and connection between, the patron deity of Ephesos, the Roman emperor and the city. Second, by constituting an act of religious communication between the Ephesian triad and the commissioner, the dedications commemorate the public benefactors, who financed the construction of public buildings,

⁴⁵ Rüpke (2009) 33. Also Rogers (2012, 19) states in his introductory chapter: “(...) most people in the ancient world made vows to gods to achieve specific, well-defined, short-term goals, such as avoiding illness, ensuring a bountiful harvest, completing a voyage safely, getting rich, or attracting a desirable lover. If the goal was realized, the person who made the vow dedicated a statue or an inscription (or something else) to the god(s) to pay off the vow.” In our case, the goal was the completion of a building project. As soon as the construction of the building was finished, the structure, or at least the inscription, was dedicated to one or several gods. Therefore, the religious dedications should be seen as part of this religious communication between the people who dedicate and the gods to whom was dedicated.

⁴⁶ Waterworks: *IvE* II 415, 416; fishery customs house: *IvE* Ia 20; paving of the Embolos: *IvE* VII/1 3008; latrine: *IvE* II 455; sundial: *IvE* II 432; for a similar view on dedicatory inscriptions: Burrell (2006) 442.

as pious men. In this way, the construction, and completion, of the Ephesian structures were “publicly represented as expressions of piety toward Artemis and the emperors by the rich.”⁴⁷ Of importance is the fact that the dedications were visible throughout the Ephesian city centre, gradually increased in number during the second century AD, and continued to convey these messages of interconnection and of piety of the benefactors during their entire lifetime (Fig. 1 to 4, purple buildings). The quantity, permanence and public visibility of the dedicatory inscriptions made the message conveyed a very powerful and influential one.

Due to their quantity, permanence and public visibility, the inscriptions also became essential aspects of the social memory and discourse of Ephesos. This observation urges us to reconsider the idea that the dedicatory inscriptions on public buildings were simply expressions of their elite initiators. The question we need to ask here is: what degree of literacy was needed to understand an inscription? In this respect, Louise Revell has pointed out that “the repetitious nature of the wording and the epigraphic abbreviations mean that it was not necessary to be fully literate to read the average inscription.”⁴⁸ In the case of the Ephesian dedicatory inscriptions the dedicatees were always mentioned at the beginning, in the same sequence and using similar phrases. To understand that these inscriptions were dedicated to the institutions of the ‘Ephesian triad’ did not require a high degree of literacy. Therefore, the greater part of the inhabitants and visitors of Ephesos would have recognised the repeatedly mentioned interconnection between Artemis Ephesia, the Roman emperor and the city.

In addition, I should mention one particular dedicatory inscription that shows that both elites and non-elites could be involved in setting up dedications to the ‘Ephesian triad’. This inscription (*IvE* Ia 20) records the construction of a fishery customs house. However, instead of a single benefactor or his family, the dedication records a list of around a hundred names of individuals, who had contributed to the realisation of the building. Though these individuals most likely were well-off citizens, their payments are referred to as ‘additional’ to the contribution of the association of fishermen and fishmongers.⁴⁹ The beginning of the inscription mentions the addressees of the dedication:

⁴⁷ Rogers (2012) 199.

⁴⁸ Revell (2009) 180.

⁴⁹ Lytle (2012) 220.

... to Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus the Emperor and Julia Agrippina Augusta his mother and Octavia the wife of the Emperor and to the *demos* of Rome and to the *demos* of Ephesos ...⁵⁰

Preceding the Emperor, some letters of “Ephesia” are still legible, indicating that the dedication was originally addressed to the entire ‘Ephesian triad’. Thus, this inscription demonstrates that the act of dedicating a building to the ‘Ephesian triad’ was not an exclusively elite affair, but may have involved people from other social statuses as well.

In summary, places of emperor worship dominated the urban appearance of Ephesos and the cult of Artemis Ephesia continued to flourish by way of the famous sanctuary and its sacred road. The construction of a Sebasteion inside the *temenos* of the Artemision demonstrates the early interconnection of the worship of Artemis Ephesia and the deified emperor. This interconnection was also made manifest by the building inscriptions regularly recording Artemis Ephesia, the Roman emperor and the city (‘Ephesian triad’) as the intended dedicatees. In this way, the importance of Artemis Ephesia and the Roman emperor was clearly communicated in the urban space of Ephesos. The beholders of the temples and the multiple building inscriptions — not solely the elite, but practically anybody passing through the city centre — were reminded of this message, emphasising the interconnection of the three ‘institutions’. However, not only the urban context of communal life stimulated a general sense that Artemis Ephesia and the Roman emperor were integral to the city of Ephesos, also community life itself was interlaced with activities related to both the worship of the Ephesian patron goddess and the worship of the emperor.

ACTING OUT EPHESIAN IDENTITY: RELIGIOUS FESTIVITIES AND PROCESSIONS AT EPHEOS

In addition to the construction of imperial cult places, ritual activities and multiple festivities venerating the emperor as a deity were organised in Ephesos. The addition of a monumental altar to the *temenos* of the

⁵⁰ *IvE* 1a 20. For a detailed discussion of this inscription, see: Lytle (2012). I have quoted Lytle’s translation, but I have replaced ‘people’ by the original Greek word of ‘*demos*’, because I think that ‘people’ does not do justice to the political and civic nature of the *demos*.

Table 1: Religious festivals and birthdays in Roman Ephesos

Dedicated to the emperor		Dedicated to Artemis Ephesia	
Name	Date of introduction	Name	Date of introduction
<i>Koina Asias</i>	first century AD	<i>Artemiseia</i>	pre -Roman period
<i>Balbilleia</i>	first centuryAD	<i>Epheseia</i>	pre -Roman period
<i>Olympia?</i>	first century AD		
<i>Hadrianeia</i>	second century AD		
<i>Great Pythia?</i>	third century AD		
Birthday of the emperor		Birthday of Artemis Ephesia	

Sebastoi in the second century AD, for instance, testifies to sacrificial rituals acted out in front of the temple.⁵¹ Evidence for the precise nature of this kind of ritual activity is hardly available to us. However, epigraphic sources do enlighten us about the religious festivals (*agonè*) in honour of a deified emperor, which were very common in the cities of Asia Minor, especially from the second century AD.⁵² Ephesos was no exception: in his dissertation on the religious festivals celebrated in Roman Ephesos, Michael Lehner has gathered the epigraphic evidence for these festivities and the present discussion on festivals draws heavily on his work.⁵³ The left column of table 1 shows the Ephesian festivals that, certainly or probably, were dedicated to the deified emperor. As is true for the identification of imperial cult places, it is not an easy task to tell whether a festival was connected to the worship of an emperor or another deity. The best indication for the identification of a festival as an imperial one is the mention of an imperial priest, who at the same time functioned as *agonothete* of a festival. This festival is then likely to have celebrated the divinity of the emperor. At Ephesos, this was true for the festivals *Koina Asias*, *Balbilleia* and *Hadrianeia*.⁵⁴ No such evidence is present for the *Olympia* and the *Great Pythia* festivals, but they are still

⁵¹ It is, however, not unlikely that another altar preceded this altar. Also rituals and sacrifices were most probably carried out in front of the Temple of the Sebastoi before the second century AD, but the existence of this monumental altar explicitly evidences these kinds of religious activities.

⁵² Price (1984) 102-114; Van Nijf (1999) 176-181, 186-188.

⁵³ Lehner (2004).

⁵⁴ *Koina Asias*: Lehner (2004) 165; *Balbilleia*: Lehner (2004) 180; *Hadrianeia*: Lehner (2004) 203-204.

regarded as imperial festivals by many scholars.⁵⁵ Even if the latter two are not considered imperial festivals, many of the festivals introduced in the Roman period celebrated the divinity of the emperor. From the end of the first century AD, the number of Ephesian festivals gradually increased. As most of these festivals continued to be organized well into the third century AD, imperial festivals must have become familiar in the city of Ephesos, for both inhabitants and visitors alike. In addition, birthdays of the emperor are known to have been exuberantly celebrated throughout the Roman world and, at the time Hadrian was visiting Ephesos, he was welcomed in the theatre with hymns sung in his honour.⁵⁶

Religious festivals were part and parcel of the cult of Artemis Ephesia as well (table 1). The *Artemiseia* and *Epheseia* might have had their origins in pre-Roman times. However, inscriptions recording their celebration mainly date to the second century AD and reveal the frequent celebration of these festivals in the Roman period.⁵⁷ The first-century Odeion in the Artemision evidences the organisation of musical contests, which might have been part of one or both of these festivals.⁵⁸ An Antonine inscription even informs us that a certain T. Aelius Marcianus Priscus, *agonothete* and *panegyriarch* of the *Artemiseia*, installed a new competition for elder participants, increased the value of the prize and ordered that statues had to be erected for the victors.⁵⁹ These organizational changes probably increased the status and fame of the *Artemiseia*.⁶⁰ In the second half of the second century AD, inscriptions explicitly record the 513th, 516th, 517th and 518th celebration of the *Epheseia*, implying a clear connection with the origins of Ephesos and the cult of Artemis Ephesia. Though the numbering of the festival is probably better interpreted as an example of ‘invention of tradition’ than as a realistic record, it still demonstrates the connection between the festival and the

⁵⁵ Friesen (1993) 117-121, 140; Lehner (2004) 182-186, 214.

⁵⁶ For example, the birthday of emperor Antoninus Pius was celebrated at Ephesos for five consecutive days: Price (1984) 106, 112; Lehner (2004) 223. For the hymns: Chaniotis (2007) 53.

⁵⁷ Lehner (2004) 139-140. The *Epheseia* is mentioned as a general feast of the Ionians in the 5th century BC by Thucydides (3.104.2-4) and inscriptions dating to the first century BC and first century AD refer to this festival as well: Lehner (2004) 127-130. The *Artemiseia* is probably the subject of a description of a ‘local festival of Artemis’ in the *Ephesiaca* of Xenophon of Ephesos (2.1). Its origins are assumed to be pre-Roman, although evidence is absent: Lehner (2004) 139-140.

⁵⁸ Zabрана prefers the *Artemiseia*: Zabрана (2011) 361; Zabрана (2012) 81.

⁵⁹ Lehner (2004) 145.

⁶⁰ Van Nijf (1999) 180.

origins of the cult and the city.⁶¹ So, although the imperial period did not witness the introduction of new festivals for Artemis Ephesia, the significance of the patron goddess is evidenced by the remarkable continuity of the festivals dedicated to Artemis Ephesia.

Two particular ritual activities provide more detailed information about what happened during religious celebrations of Artemis Ephesia: the ‘mysteries of Artemis’, related to the birthday of the goddess, and the so-called *Salutaris* procession. Both of them have been thoroughly studied by Guy Maclean Rogers.⁶² Activities related to the mysteries took place on the birthday of Artemis Ephesia, which probably was the most important event of the Ephesian religious calendar.⁶³ To the southwest of Ephesos, at a grove called Ortygia, where Artemis and her brother Apollo were believed to have been born, the citizens of Ephesos celebrated her birthday at least from the end of the fourth century BC until the middle of the third century AD.⁶⁴ According to Strabo (14.1.20), writing in 29 BC, this celebration of Artemis’ birth involved a general festival as well as symposia and mystic sacrifices. So-called *Kuretes* have been recorded as the ones in charge of these rituals and mysteries. During the reign of Augustus, their office was relocated from the Artemision to the recently constructed Prytaneion.⁶⁵ Rather than signifying a divorce between the cult of Artemis Ephesia and the mysteries, this act should be seen as a “legal separation with custody of some cultic functions retained by the Artemision.”⁶⁶ Also, an Ephesian embassy used the sacred story of the birth of Artemis in front of the Roman Senate and the Roman emperor Tiberius in order to obtain imperial benefits (Tac. *Ann.* 3.61.1-2).⁶⁷ This account as well as the transfer of the *Kuretes*’ office to the Prytaneion demonstrate that the birth of Artemis, the mysteries of Artemis, as well as the responsible officials, were an integral aspect of the Roman city as early as the reign of Augustus and Tiberius.⁶⁸

⁶¹ Lehner (2004) 130-135.

⁶² Procession: Rogers (1991); mysteries: Rogers (2012).

⁶³ Oster (1990) 1711.

⁶⁴ Rogers (2012) 8; on the evidence for the celebration of the mysteries of Artemis in pre-Roman times: Rogers (2012) 33-88.

⁶⁵ Knibbe (1981) 75-76; Rogers (2012) 115-118.

⁶⁶ Rogers (2012) 156.

⁶⁷ Rogers (2012) 140-144.

⁶⁸ As was true for the emperor worship, see previous section.

An important source for our knowledge of the mysteries of Artemis are the so-called *Kuretes* lists.⁶⁹ These lists record the people who were responsible for the celebrations and rituals in any given year. Besides the *Kuretes*, these people included the head of the Prytaneion (*prytanis*) and several cult attendants. Originally, the *Kuretes* and the *prytaneis* were cultic officials, but in time these offices increasingly obtained a prestigious status, especially in the second century AD. Rich and powerful men belonging to the higher classes of Ephesian society held these offices and invested their money in the maintenance of the rituals performed on the birthday of Artemis Ephesia.⁷⁰ On the other hand, the mention of an increasing number of attendants, specialising in a certain aspect of the rituals, testifies to a professionalization of the mysteries in the course of the second century AD. The birthday of the Ephesian patron goddess turned into a major festivity, attracting a great number of people to the city and reinforcing a distinct Ephesian identity.⁷¹ Around AD 162-164, the sacred herald of Artemis started to distribute offerings of oil, not only on the birthday of Artemis, but on the sixth day of every month, and an entire sacred month, the Artemision, was dedicated to the Ephesian goddess and was barred to public business.⁷² These measures indicate that Artemis' divinity and rituals devoted to Artemis extended beyond her birthday and were fully integrated into the public life of Ephesos.

The birthday of Artemis, like other public rituals of Ephesos, was not immune to economic stagnation and decline, especially because all manifestations of Artemis-worship highly depended on the benefactions and generosity of the Ephesian rich. Repetitive adjustments to the celebration of the mysteries of Artemis in the second half of the second century AD, such as the extended distribution of oil and the dedication of the month Artemision, may suggest that the organization of the Prytaneion,

⁶⁹ These inscriptions were originally studied by Dieter Knibbe (1981). Recently, Guy Maclean Rogers (2012) has analysed them in his treatise on the mysteries of Artemis. My discussion of the birthday of Artemis heavily relies on the achievements of these scholars.

⁷⁰ Knibbe (1981) 78-90; Rogers (2012) 122-204. The same public figures were often responsible for the financial costs of the construction and renovation of the major public monuments and infrastructural projects. For local benefactors in Roman Asia Minor, in general, see: Zuiderhoek (2009). For a very influential Ephesian benefactor, T. Claudius Aristion, in particular: Scherrer (1997).

⁷¹ Rogers (2012) 153-158.

⁷² IvE Ia 24B; Knibbe e.a. (1989) 171-172, no.6; Chaniotis (2003) 184-186; Rogers (2012) 222-225.

and the association of *Kuretes*, was becoming unstable.⁷³ Contrastingly, one could interpret them as examples of more extensive veneration of the goddess. Though Rogers argues for a decline of popularity of the cult, he admits that the evidence is ambiguous.⁷⁴ Less ambiguous is the evidence that demonstrates the severe financial problems of Artemis' cult at the end of the second century AD and the start of the third century AD. The wealthy sponsors of the cult lacked sufficient funds to finance the expensive rituals and celebrations, and to set up elaborately worked stones inscribed with the names of the *prytanis*, the *Kuretes*, and the cult attendants. New or more benefactors were sought after and the celebrations and rituals were moderated.⁷⁵ The inscribed stones presenting the lists of *Kuretes* decreased in number and quality. The dependence of Artemis's birthday on the financial well-being of the Ephesian elite had had its repercussions in times of economic decline: the era of monumental and exuberant display of Artemis's divinity, supported by the local benefactors of Ephesos, had come to an end.⁷⁶

Inscriptions, found in the Prytaneion, however, evidence that there was more at stake than simply a lack of public sponsorship: people also started to turn to the worship of other gods. The third-century lists of *Kuretes* display several offices that were associated with the cult of Hestia Boulaia or Demeter and Kore. In addition, the reference to 'all the mysteries' in inscriptions is interpreted by Rogers as indicating a merging of the mysteries of Artemis with the other mysteries celebrated at Ephesos. Moreover, honorific inscriptions set up by the *prytaneis* after the completion of the mysteries, record several gods, again including Hestia Boulaia and Demeter and Kore; but they never mention Artemis

⁷³ Rogers (2012) 205-229. Both Knibbe (2004, 148-149) and Rogers (2012, 207-228) regard the late second-century expressions of reverence of Artemis as the last efforts to keep the cult of Artemis Ephesia alive.

⁷⁴ Rogers (2012) 225.

⁷⁵ One list of *Kuretes* exhibits thirteen *Kuretes* instead of the usual six: *IvE* III 974. Other lists do not record a local figure as the head of the Prytaneion, but Artemis Ephesia (*IvE* IV 1078) or the emperor himself (*IvE* IV 1057). Since the office of *prytanis* included the sponsoring of many cultic activities, this might indicate that there was no public figure who could afford to be the head of the Prytaneion. The public rituals, including the celebrations on Artemis's birthday, were now probably funded by the treasury of the Artemision, or the imperial treasury: Rogers (2012) 234-235.

The gradual moderation of the celebrations and rituals is indicated by the decreasing number of cult attendants during the late second and early third centuries AD. Less heralds, initiators, and musicians are recorded, implying the downsizing of the cultic activities on the birthday of Artemis: Rogers (2012) 233-238.

⁷⁶ Rogers (2012) 249-250.

Ephesia.⁷⁷ The same inscriptions do not highlight the *prytanis* and his colleagues, the *Kuretes* and the cult attendants, as they did before. Instead, they emphasise the role of the *prytanis*' wife and his children. Apparently, the religious focus in the Prytaneion was shifting from the public and communal to the private and familial.⁷⁸ Despite the presence of some fragmentary lists of *Kuretes*, testifying to the continued celebration of the birthday of Artemis conjoined with other mysteries or not, it is clear that the cult of Artemis Ephesia had lost her dominant position in the Prytaneion, and probably in the public life of Ephesos in general. Interestingly, as we will see, the decreasing dominance of Artemis Ephesia in the Prytaneion and in public life is contradicted by the continued prominence of her image on the third-century Ephesian coinage.⁷⁹

The birthday and mysteries of Artemis Ephesia were not always occasions intended solely for the veneration of the goddess, though. In the middle of the first century AD, the *Kuretes*, for the first time, are not referred to as simply 'pious' (*eusebeis*), but also as 'devoted to the emperor' (*philosebastos*).⁸⁰ This custom continued until the early 3rd century AD. Apparently, the officials responsible for the organization of Artemis's birthday, wished to be commemorated as such and, thus, to underscore their connection with the Roman authorities, and the Roman emperor in particular. The addition of *philosebastos* tells us, however, not only something about the private identities of these *Kuretes*, for it was prominently and publicly advertised on the architectural building blocks of the Prytaneion. In the words of Rogers: "The language of devotion to the emperors displayed in the later first-century lists of *Kuretes* therefore shows the extent to which the godlike power of the Roman emperors not only had led to the creation of new cults with entirely new priests in the Roman province of Asia, but also had had effects upon old cultic associations, traditional cults, and the ways in which members of those traditional cults permitted themselves and their sense of piety to be represented to the public."⁸¹ Moreover, an inscription dating to the reign of Commodus evidences that the deified emperor was unmistakably integrated into the annual rituals of Artemis's birthday. This inscription, a decree of the Ephesian *Gerousia*, mentions the

⁷⁷ Knibbe (1981) 91-92, 102-105; Knibbe (2004) 146; Rogers (2012) 237-243.

⁷⁸ Rogers (2012) 243.

⁷⁹ On the numismatic evidence, see next section.

⁸⁰ Rogers (1999); Rogers (2012) 158-169, 207, 245.

⁸¹ Rogers (2012) 166.

vation of and sacrificing to both Artemis and Commodus.⁸² There is no doubt, then, that the Roman emperor was officially one of the main subjects of worship during Artemis's birthday.⁸³ It is interesting to note that the first clear record of the integration of the emperor into the birthday rituals of Artemis Ephesia dates to a period in which the cult of Artemis Ephesia starts to experience financial problems. This observation might be interpreted as support for the view of a declining popularity of Artemis: the incorporation of the Roman emperor was intended to make the rituals of Artemis more attractive. However, it was not the first time that rituals were simultaneously dedicated to the patron goddess of Ephesos and the Roman emperor.

The famous Ephesian inscription concerning the procession set up by the benefactor Salutaris provides interesting insights into the nature and organization of that procession.⁸⁴ This procession was organized for the first time in AD 104 as part of the Salutaris foundation. Named after its initiator C. Vibius Salutaris, the foundation entailed an act of *liberalitas* and a procession of statues. Interestingly, the foundation was, in its entirety, intended "to adorn the city magnificently with the greatest and most remarkable gifts for the honour of the most manifest and greatest goddess Artemis, and of the house of the emperors, and of your city."⁸⁵ Details of the procession also reveal an intrinsic connection between these three 'institutions', comprising the 'Ephesian triad'.⁸⁶ First, the procession started and ended in the sanctuary of Artemis Ephesia, following the *Via Sacra Ephesiaca* through the city that, in AD 104, was dominated by the Temple of the Sebastoi. Second, the procession carried nine images of Artemis Ephesia, five statues of the emperor or other symbols of Roman power, and fifteen representations of institutions and tribes that made up the city.⁸⁷ The images of Artemis Ephesia were made of gold and silver, while it is specifically noted that Salutaris himself took care of the silver images of emperor Trajan and his wife Plotina and that they had a prominent place among the statues during assemblies

⁸² *IvE* Ia 26; Rogers (2012, 215) argues that this custom of reverencing and sacrificing refers to the rituals performed on Artemis's birthday.

⁸³ Rogers (2012) 214-217.

⁸⁴ *IvE* Ia 27; fundamental on this inscription and the procession: Rogers (1991).

⁸⁵ *IvE* Ia 27, 342-346. See also: *ibid.*, 366-368; 384-386. Translation taken from Rogers (1991) appendix I, 173.

⁸⁶ This connection is also manifest in the religious dedications of public edifices, see previous section.

⁸⁷ *IvE* Ia 27, 22-31.

in the theatre.⁸⁸ Third, the procession “threaded its way through the streets of Ephesos on the day when the high priest of the common temple of Asia in Ephesos took office, during the twelve sacred and regular assembly meetings fixed by law and custom, at the time of the *Sebasteia*, the *Soteria*, and the penteteric Great Ephesia, during all gymnastic games, and on other occasions determined by the *boule* and *demos*.”⁸⁹ All of these occasions are either religious events related to Artemis Ephesia or the deified emperor, or they constitute civic assemblies. Therefore, they too reflect the focus of the procession on the ‘Ephesian triad’. Finally, persons that violated any of the regulations recorded by the inscription itself, had to pay “forward the further adornment of lady Artemis 25,000 denarii, and to the *fiscus* of lord Caesar another 25,000 denarii (...).”⁹⁰ The procession, therefore, forms a clear example of an Ephesian ritual which emphasised the ‘Ephesian triad’ in all its facets. Interestingly, this ritual combining both Ephesian cults was enacted on the birthday of Artemis Ephesia and during ‘all gymnastic games’: in other words, during all imperial festivals and festivals of Artemis Ephesia.

The religious activities highly depended on financial input from the Ephesian public benefactors (*euergetes*). The same *euergetes* held the prestigious religious offices and as *prytaneis*, priests, *Kuretes* and *agonothetes*, they were in charge of the rituals, the festivals and the processions. The activities proper involved many more people, though. At the mysteries of Artemis flute and trumpet players, sacred heralds, inspectors of the entrails of sacrificial victims and other cult attendants assisted in carrying out the necessary rituals.⁹¹ Upon entering the city through the Magnesian Gate, the *Salutaris* procession was joined by 250 *ephebes*: the same group of young Ephesians who would later sing songs in praise of the emperor Hadrian in the theatre of Ephesos.⁹² Numerous athletes competing with one another during the *Artemiseia*, the *Epheseia*, the *Hadrianeia* or any other festival in Ephesos are attested

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 150-158.

⁸⁹ Rogers (1991) 83. Lehner (2004) did not include the *Sebasteia* and *Soteria* in his treatise on Ephesian religious festivals. As no more information on these festivals is known, I have not mentioned them either.

⁹⁰ *IvE* Ia 27, 112-113. Translation taken from Rogers (1991) appendix I, 157.

⁹¹ Rogers (2012) 148-150, 173-180.

⁹² Rogers (1991) 59; Chaniotis (2007) 53.

in inscriptions.⁹³ But the greatest group of people involved in ritual activities in Ephesos were the anonymous spectators. They were the ones sitting in the theatre and the Odeion of the Artemision and attending the rituals and musical contests; they were the ones supporting the athletes and wrestlers in the gymnasia and they were the ones who either joined a procession or needed to get out of the way, when a procession made its way through the streets of Ephesos.⁹⁴ In case of the mysteries of Artemis, it is unfortunate that we have no information about the people who were initiated, as we have for the mysteries on the island of Samothrace. It is significant, though, that the list of initiates (*mystai*) from Samothrace records people from all layers of society.⁹⁵ Although the spectators and participants of rituals in Ephesos were rather invisible in the archaeological and epigraphic evidence, the frequency of ritual activities staged in public spaces and central buildings created a communal life, to which the divinity of Artemis and the Roman emperor were integral.

In this respect it is useful to take a swift look at a religious context that was less communal. Several associations have been attested for in the city of Ephesos. Philip Harland has demonstrated that emperor worship played a significant role within some of these associations and was closely related to the worship of other deities.⁹⁶ The association of Demetriasts, for example, performed mysteries and sacrifices each year in Ephesos to Demeter Karpophoros and Thesmophoros and to the *Sebastoi*.⁹⁷ In addition, a group of physicians is known to have sacrificed to Asklepios and to the *Sebastoi*.⁹⁸ Emperor worship, thus, was integrated into religious activities of particular groups of Ephesian society, and not only in communal life. Noteworthy is the fact that the subjects of these rituals consisted of the Roman emperor and a deity other than Artemis Ephesia. Therefore, according to the particular context, emperor worship could be interconnected with the worship of any other deity, but in the communal and daily life of Ephesos, the emphasis was laid upon the interconnection of Artemis' cult and the imperial cult.

⁹³ *Epheseia*: Lehner (2004) 137-138; *Artemiseia*: 149-151; *Hadrianeia*: 205-206; also, *Koina Asias*: 168; *Olympia*: 196-197.

⁹⁴ For the suggestion that traffic is halted at procession time: Rogers (1991) 86.

⁹⁵ Dimitrova (2008) 245.

⁹⁶ Harland (1996); more general in Roman Asia: Harland (2003).

⁹⁷ Harland (1996) 329, 331-332; Harland (2003) 90-93.

⁹⁸ Harland (1996) 330.

Most festivities, organised in the city of Ephesos for decades, were dedicated to Artemis Ephesia or a Roman emperor. Religious activities did not tend to be exclusive, though, and, especially in the second century AD, the Ephesians integrated emperor worship into their rituals in honour of Artemis, even during the birthday celebrations of the patron goddess. Like the religious dedications, the *Salutaris* procession had the 'Ephesian triad' as its core focus, as reflected by its route and timing as well as the statues that were carried along. Apart from the Artemision and the imperial cult places in Ephesos, the theatre, gymnasia and the Ephesian streets regularly and repetitively formed the scene for these activities: activities that presented Artemis Ephesia and the deified emperor as essential sources for the Ephesian identity. Organisers, participants and spectators of the rituals, festivals and processions all played their own role in confirming and reconfirming this particular identity.

DISTRIBUTING EPHESIAN IDENTITY: THE EPHESIAN COINAGE

Cult places and religious activities were not the only ways a city could express a cult's significance and its civic identity. Civic coinage was an important tool to symbolise the city as a sacred place. The depiction of deities, cult statues, sacred architecture as well as prize crowns and wreaths related to religious festivals on the reverse side of a coin was a common practice in the Roman period.⁹⁹ A coin's obverse generally showed the portrait of the Roman emperor or a member of the imperial family. Representations of the imperial cult, depicted on the reverses of Ephesian coins, are, however, quite scanty, although some coins exist displaying imperial temples or prize crowns of imperial festivals (Fig. 6). Due to the *neokoros* status¹⁰⁰ of Ephesos, the imperial cult appears to

⁹⁹ Williams (2007). Particularly on the depiction of prize crowns and wreaths on coinage: Klose (2005).

¹⁰⁰ In general, the term *neokoros* meant a temple warden. In the Roman period, cities of Asia Minor started to apply this term to the cities themselves in order to propagate themselves as 'guardians' of provincial temples dedicated to the Roman emperor. Being a 'guardian city' of a provincial temple was a great honour as permission for the construction of such a temple had to be granted by the emperor himself. Especially since the second century AD, the *neokoros* title became highly sought-after, as it constituted a primary instrument to distinguish one city from another. In Asia Minor, more and more provincial temples were granted and constructed: in the first half of the third century AD Ephesos could boast that it was 'four times *neokoros*'. Fundamental on the *neokoros* title: Burrell (2004).

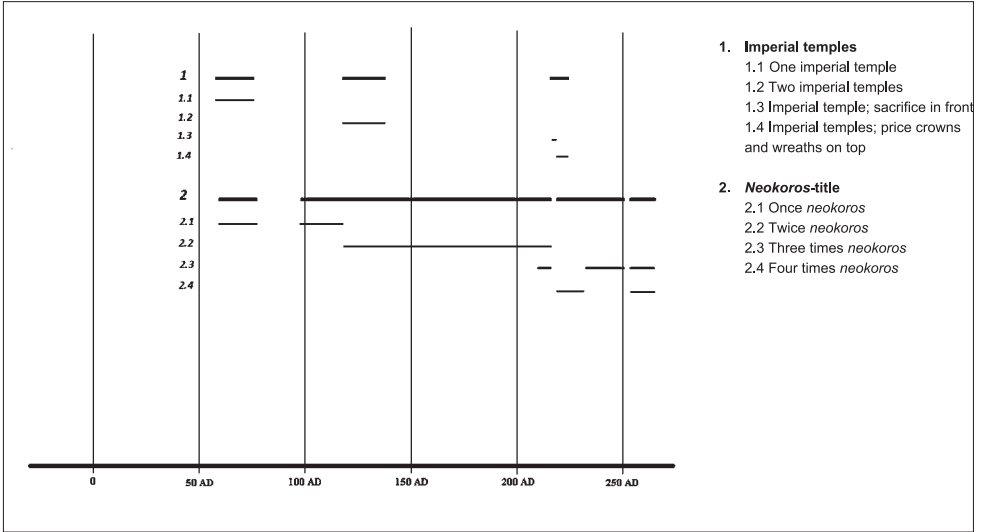


Fig. 6: Timeline of imagery and legends associated with the imperial cult on Ephesian coinage (based on Karweise (1970), Burrell (2004) and *RPC I/I*)

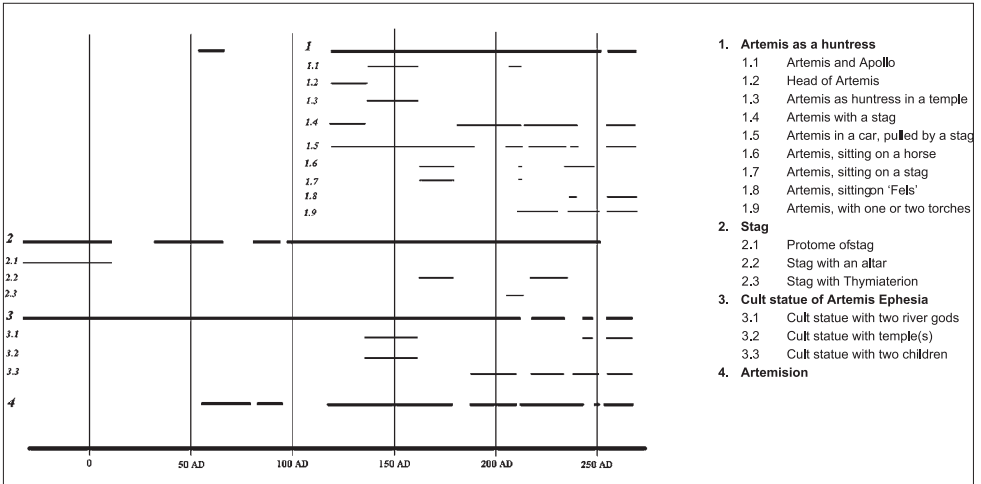


Fig. 7: Timeline of imagery associated with the cult of Artemis Ephesia on Ephesian coinage (based on Karweise (1970), *RPC I/I* and *RPC VII/I*)

have had a profound impact on the legends that were placed on Ephesian coinage.¹⁰¹ As a designation of the presence of imperial temples and festivals, the recurring mention of this status on coins reflected the importance of the imperial cult. The first evidence of the *neokoros* status was a legend on a coin of Nero.¹⁰² In the Domitianic period, mention of the *neokoros* status continued, but it was from the beginning of the Hadrianic period, when Ephesos received its second *neokoros* title, that this status was almost constantly signified on Ephesian coins. This practice continued to the middle of the third century AD, when Ephesos gained its fourth *neokoros* title. In this way, symbols of the imperial cult pervaded the Ephesian coinage and became an important aspect of the Ephesian identity.

Since minting activity had started at Ephesos in the sixth century BC, symbols of Artemis Ephesia (her cult statue, the bee and the stag) constituted the only images depicted on coinage.¹⁰³ In the first century AD this did not fundamentally change and beginning in the reign of Nero the Artemision regularly appeared on Ephesian coinage as well. In the Hadrianic period, the range of images was greatly expanded, but the majority retained a connection with the cult of Artemis Ephesia (Fig. 7). Sometimes the cult statue of the goddess or the Artemision appear alongside river gods or other deities as well as in combination with imperial symbols. In these cases, the symbols of Artemis Ephesia were generally depicted in a central position. One coin, minted during the reign of Gordian III (AD 244-249) and celebrating the good relationship (*homonoia*) between Ephesos and Alexandria, still used the cult statue of Artemis Ephesia to symbolize the city.¹⁰⁴ So, although Ephesian coinage was used to propagate the imperial cult in the Roman period, the numismatic evidence clearly shows the continued significance of Artemis Ephesia as the primary symbol of Ephesos, even as late as the middle of the third century AD.

In AD 211, emperor Caracalla ordained that the third *neokoros* title of Ephesos needed to be reassigned to the cult of Artemis Ephesia, instead

¹⁰¹ The *neokoros* status was apparent in public inscriptions as well: Burrell (2004) 79-83.

¹⁰² Burrell (2004) 60-61; RPC I/I 433; RPC I/II plate 114, no. 2626-2628.

¹⁰³ Karwiese (1970) 315-316.

¹⁰⁴ RPC VII/I 192, 199-201; plate 34, 401. A similar representation of the *homonoia* between Ephesos and Alexandria is visible on a relief: now in the Ephesos Museum, no. 457. I am grateful to Adrian Saunders for this suggestion.

of his own cult. Ephesian inscriptions and coins mention Ephesos as *twice neokoros and of Artemis*, emphasizing the uniqueness of this situation. Other coin types of Caracalla and his mother Julia Domna, as well as public inscriptions, simply refer to Ephesos as *three times neokoros*.¹⁰⁵ Apparently, specific mention of Artemis Ephesia was not always, or was no longer, required. In this way, the cult of Artemis Ephesia was incorporated into the system of *neokoros* titles that, previously, had been restricted to the imperial cult. The status of *neokoros* therefore constituted another instance of the interconnection of emperor worship and worship of Artemis Ephesia. More generally, especially from the Hadrian period onward, the majority of Ephesian coins had the emperor depicted on the obverse, whilst an image of Artemis Ephesia as well as a legend mentioning the *neokoros* title adorned the reverse. Therefore, all these coins showcased the significant position of both Artemis Ephesia and the deified emperor in the city of Ephesos.

As is true for constructing religious space and organising ritual activities, issuing of coinage is only part of the story. Coins circulated for a long time and were used by everyone in commercial transactions.¹⁰⁶ Nowadays, coins are one of the most common finds discovered on archaeological sites. The ubiquity of civic coinage in daily commercial activities and public life, therefore, also reflects the distribution amongst the people in Ephesos of the symbols representing Artemis Ephesia and the deified emperor as inherent to the city and its communal identity.

IMPACT OF IMPERIAL CULT AND CIVIC IDENTITY

In this article I have highlighted the impact of the imperial cult and the interconnectivity between emperor worship and the worship of Artemis Ephesia in Ephesos. The term ‘the Ephesian triad’ usefully encompasses both the intertwining of the cults and their intrinsic relation with, and significance to, the city as well as its civic identity. Approaching these cults as institutions of a city acknowledges the power hierarchies at play in a city without reducing the evidence to manifestations of the ones in charge. In the following, a review of the Ephesian institutions as

¹⁰⁵ Burrell (2004) 70-75, 84.

¹⁰⁶ Van Heesch (2007) 89.

expressions of Ephesian society and communal identity demonstrates the advantages the approach advocated in this article provides.

Already at its introduction prior to and during the Augustan period, the worship of the Roman ruler and emperor received a place in the civic centre and in the sanctuary of Artemis Ephesia. A number of decades afterwards, other imperial cult places like the Temple of the Sebastoi and the Temple of Hadrian dominated the 'skyline' of Ephesos and continued to do so until the third century AD. Public edifices, designated to facilitate public gatherings including games and rituals, were closely related to the rise of the imperial cult. During imperial festivals, the number of which gradually increased, these spaces temporarily served as ritual spaces too. In addition, an increasing number of coins and inscriptions carried texts mentioning the *neokoros* status of Ephesos. In this way, the permanent presence of imperial cult places, the continued celebration of imperial festivals until well into the third century AD, and the prominent representation of the imperial cult on Ephesian coinage, reveal the definitive impact and the ultimate significance of emperor worship. Gradually, but especially since the second century AD, the imperial cult infiltrated the fundamental essence and identity of Ephesos.

Meanwhile, the traditional cult of Artemis Ephesia kept on having a central position in Ephesian life. The famous Artemision continued to play a significant role until its destruction by the Goths in AD 262. Its infrastructural connection with Ephesos was monumentalized by the construction of the Damianus Stoa and the *Via Sacra Ephesiaca* still functioned as the primary route for religious processions. The age-old festivals celebrating the divinity of Artemis Ephesia, the *Artemiseia* and the *Epheseia*, continued to be organized throughout the centuries of Roman dominion. The dominance of images of the goddess on Ephesian coins demonstrates that Artemis Ephesia was still the primary symbol of Ephesos as late as the third century AD. However, although the cult kept its traditional significance, it certainly did not remain unaffected by the developments of the Roman age.

Both the imperial cult and the cult of Artemis Ephesia thrived on the financial prosperity and sponsorship of the higher classes of Ephesian society. The public monuments, public inscriptions, religious festivities, and ritual activities could not have existed without the financial contributions and organizational efforts of the local elite. Not surprisingly, the exuberant public display of the imperial cult and the cult of Artemis

Ephesia started to evaporate at the end of the second century AD. The grant of the third and fourth *neokoros* title were not accompanied by monumental buildings anymore, and the birthday of Artemis Ephesia clearly suffered from insufficient funds. People, including the head of the Prytaneion, even started to lay their hopes in the hands of other gods. Still, the third-century Ephesian coinage undoubtedly showcases the perseverance of Artemis and the emperor in the symbolic expression of the city: the combination of its *neokoros* status and the dominant image of Artemis Ephesia only ceased to be displayed, when the minting of Ephesian coins had stopped in general. It was only the destruction of the Artemision in AD 262 that fundamentally altered the way people thought of the city of Ephesos, and its position in the Roman empire.

Returning to the first two centuries, the rise of the imperial cult and the continuity of the cult of Artemis Ephesia created a new religious reality, in which both cults played a dominant role. Throughout the city of Ephesos, public buildings had dedications to Artemis Ephesia, the emperor and the city ('the Ephesian triad') prominently on display. As the number of edifices and structures increased, so did the number of these religious dedications. The Salutaris procession signified a similar emphasis on 'the Ephesian triad'. The dedication of the foundation, the route and timing of the procession, the statues carried during the procession, and the fines for violation of the rules all reveal the intertwining of these cults and their utmost importance for the city. Also the incorporation of the Roman emperor into the rituals of Artemis's birthday as well as the prominence of images representing Artemis Ephesia and of legends mentioning the *neokoros* status on the Ephesian coinage demonstrate the integration of Artemis Ephesia, the Emperor and the city.

The initiative for this integration certainly lay in the hands of the Ephesian *euergetes*. However, turning our scope to the lived experience the discussed pieces of evidence imply, the idea of a strictly elite involvement, and thus an exclusively elite identity, appears as unsatisfactory. The dominance of the cult places of the emperor and of Artemis Ephesia, the wide-spread distribution of dedications in the city centre and the circulation of symbolic messages on coinage had a visual impact on passers-by and the users of Ephesian coins. Enormous crowds came as spectators or participants to the Ephesian rituals and festivities, which were staged in public buildings or, in case of processions, throughout the entire city. Most of the time, we have no names of the people participating in the celebrations of Artemis' birthday, neither can we determine

the number of people viewing the rituals acted out in the theatre, nor their social status. Still, the repetition, continuity and prominence of the message emphasising the 'Ephesian triad', as reflected in the built environment, as acted out during religious celebrations and as distributed by Ephesian coinage, does imply the involvement of more segments of society than the elite class alone.

Cults formed an integral part of a city's identity and the urban topography, the religious activities and the civic coinage were suitable means to express and reinforce this identity. Thus, Ephesos experienced not only a transformation of the tangible aspects of the city, but also of the fundamental essence of Ephesian society. In various ways Ephesian society emphasised its position in the new Roman world order and its affinity with Roman authority. Meanwhile, it also showcased its traditional significance as the cult centre of Artemis Ephesia. Both these roles, as a highly significant metropolis of the Roman empire and as a centre of a rooted and local cult, defined what Ephesos was all about. Together, they constituted the main elements of the specifically *Ephesian* identity. In this way, the communal identity of Ephesos was redefined: it was no longer simply the city of Artemis Ephesia, but had gradually turned into the city of *both* Artemis Ephesia *and* the Emperor.

Admittedly, emperor worship was widely distributed and interconnecting emperor worship and the worship of other divinities obviously was not limited to the city of Ephesos. The impact on communities and civic identities was diverse, though. Adopting the approach which perceives the imperial cult as a local institution bound up with other cults and with the city itself, and using the entire range of archaeological, epigraphic and numismatic evidence, enables a better understanding of the impact of Roman emperor worship on an individual city, its community and its civic identity. On top of the acropolis of Pergamon, for instance, we find the temple of Trajan and Zeus Philios overlooking the city and its environment.¹⁰⁷ Like Ephesos, Pergamon participated in the competition for *neokoros* titles. Unlike Ephesos, a single cult building was dedicated to both a Roman emperor and another deity. At Adada, a small city in the mountainous region of Pisidia, multiple dedicatory inscriptions, addressed to the emperors and other gods, have been discovered.¹⁰⁸ Because every dedication records an emperor in relation with

¹⁰⁷ Schowalter (1998).

¹⁰⁸ Büyükkolancı (2013) 202-204.

another deity, worship of the emperor was not primarily connected with the worship of a single patron deity. These examples, in differing from the situation at Ephesos, provide a swift glance onto the various strategies adopted to integrate emperor worship into local communities and to give it a place in the life of a city.

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