

# **The Function of the Roman Spectacle in Ephesos**

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Figure 1

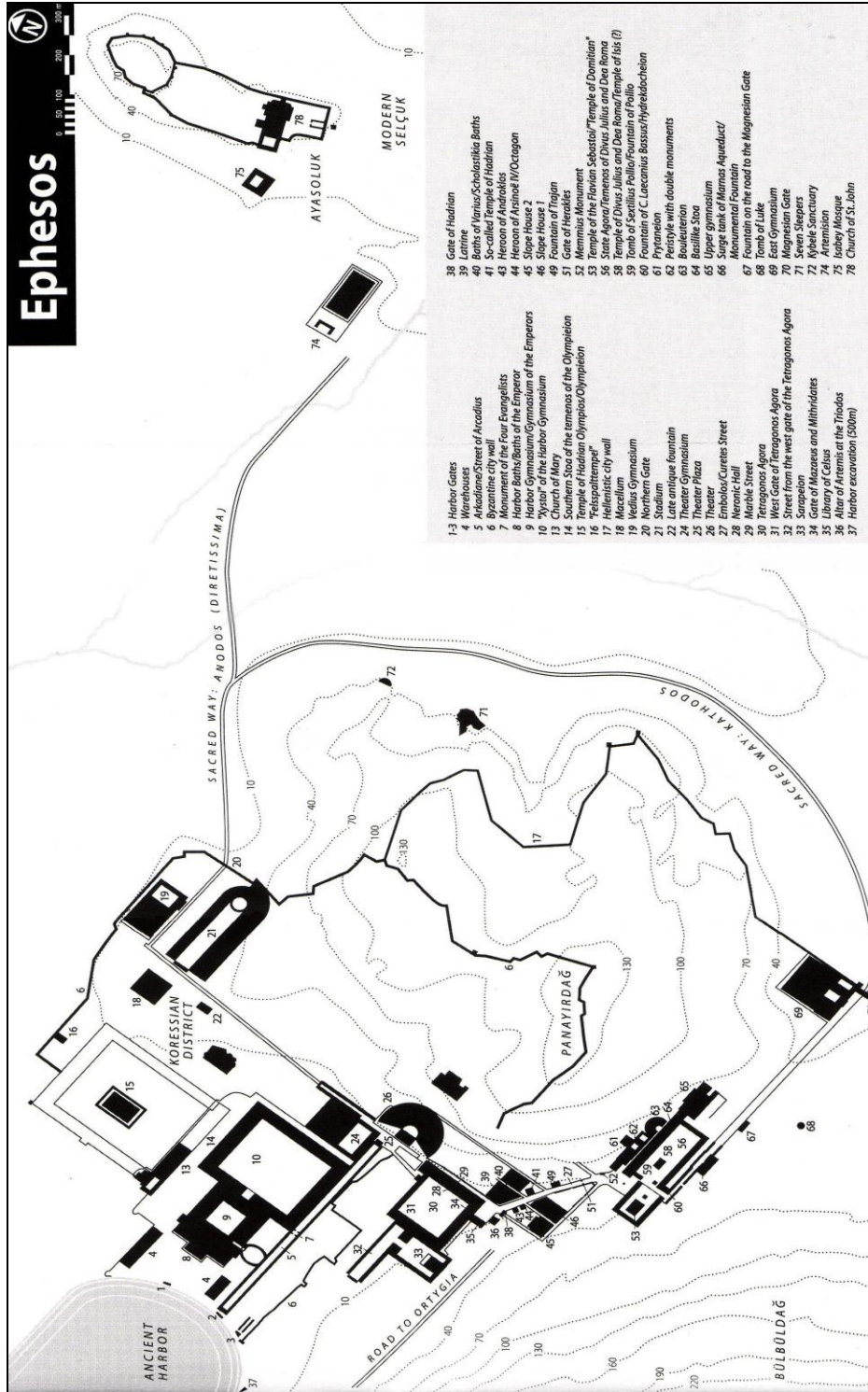


Figure 2

## Chapter One: Introduction

When Rome acquired the province of Asia in the will of Attalus III in 133 BCE, it was faced with a challenge: how to rule a hostile populace effectively while continuing to expand its hegemony elsewhere. The curtailment of civic liberties, the introduction of burdensome taxes, and the imposition of a Roman identity all contributed to building resentment among the new subjects. But subjection to Rome was not without its advantages. If a city was deemed compliant, Rome promoted, to a degree, native traditions and invested in its monuments and infrastructure. In newly acquired territories, the Roman authorities also introduced their preferred form of entertainment – the spectacle.

The Roman spectacle has fascinated the modern imagination. For many, it represents a dark past for human history: a time when human life was of little value, when slaughter served to entertain bloodthirsty crowds, when depraved emperors manipulated mobs from towers of marble by the allure of gore and prizes, and when violence was institutionalized in sadistic rituals. Donald Kyle states that because of “martyrology, historians such as Edward Gibbon, artists such as J.-L. Gérôme, novels and Hollywood epics such as *Quo Vadis*, the enduring image of Rome will forever be stained with the blood of the arena” (3). Until recently, scholars had viewed the spectacles in a similar light, and when trying to account for their popularity in the East, have attributed Greek acceptance of the games to the seductive qualities inherent within them. Though this is true to an extent, it ignores some deeper issues that are at play. An examination into how the Roman spectacles were received at Ephesos can shed answers to the larger context involving the Greek-speaking East and Roman shows.

Ephesos played a prominent role for the Roman Empire in the East. According to Strabo the Geographer, “because of its advantageous situation, [Ephesos] grows daily, and is the largest emporium in Asia this side of the Taurus” (14.1.24). Its level of preservation also makes it an invaluable source for information about Antiquity. Yet students of the Roman spectacles have largely ignored this important city. Much of the scholarship on Ephesos has focused on its relationship with Christianity – a driving factor in the area’s current tourism industry. G. H. R. Horsley acknowledged this fact in the introduction to his work on the city when he wrote that “for the contemporary tourist with an interest in antiquity [...] [and] for the student of the New Testament, Ephesos is a name to conjure with” (106). The “century-long archaeological attention” that Ephesos has received, shows it to be representative of other Greco-Roman cities that have not received the same attention. The city’s spectacles, however, have been largely ignored in the rich scholarship produced on the city and the greater part of the Greek East. For this reason, a study of the function of the Roman spectacle in Ephesos can be useful in better understanding the city itself and the border lands of the Roman Empire as a whole.

Traditional scholarship has tended to view the relationship between Rome and its Greek subjects assuming that the identities developed by each culture were mutually exclusive and could not coexist with the other. This assumption led to the view that panhellenic cultural traditions and practices predisposed Greeks to reject Roman sensational exhibitions in favor of their established athletic games and theatrical productions. Recent scholarship, however, has shown that Roman spectacles were as popular in the Greek East as they were in other

parts of the empire.<sup>1</sup> This study will continue in light of that work and pay special attention to the city of Ephesos.

This paper will demonstrate, through an analysis of Rome's use of spectacles in its capital and Hellenistic regions, how the narrative symbolically encapsulated in the arenas of wild animal shows, public executions, and gladiatorial combat was one that had more similarities between Romans and Greeks than differences, and because of these similarities, its use contributed to a taming, rather than an antagonizing, of subjected peoples. It will begin by tracing the origins and development of the Roman spectacle, and will identify those elements in Greek spectacles that account for the popularity they had in the East. This is not to argue, however, that the spectacles were used as tools of a highly centralized Roman state consciously employing the games in order to spread its hegemony. Rather, it will be shown that the wealthy Hellenistic East was predisposed to enjoy Roman spectacles because of their own historical experience in which similar traditions developed, such as recognition of wild animal destruction as something positive and an overall appreciation for the visual entertainment value of activities in the theater. This conclusion will also be supported by an analysis of archaeological remains of monumental architecture and public works in Ephesos and other Roman territories in its province of Asia.

## 1.2: VIEWS

Modern scholars' differing views on the function of the Roman spectacle often reflect their conceptions of the nature of the Roman state. Alison Futrell finds that the spread of amphitheaters corresponded with the spread of Romanization (4). The amphitheater, according to Futrell, created "communal bonds" in the highly diverse environment of the early Principate (6), which were constant reminders of Roman hegemony (41). In addition, colonists reminded locals who was in charge through inscriptions on the structures (an important point when testing this theory in Ephesos, where the construction of an amphitheater was not required) (42). She views Rome as a "Totalitarian" state, which consciously used its amphitheaters to Romanize "barbarian" peoples (4). Her analysis of the distribution of amphitheaters reveals that the size of a city did not determine whether it should have an amphitheater; rather it was the projected sociopolitical potential for "quelling political unrest" or "incorporating non-Roman peoples into the Roman worldview (5)."

Futrell's analysis is compelling and will certainly be useful for this paper. Yet her conclusions rely on the assumption that Rome was highly centralized and able to dictate policy in a top-down fashion. Fergus Millar, however, has demonstrated decades ago that Rome was primarily a reactive entity. In his view, the "emperor's role in the 'government' of the empire must have been such that it could be carried on while he spent years (like Hadrian) traveling through the provinces or (like Marcus Aurelius) on campaign" (6). Millar's conclusions allow for an Ephesian identity to persist alongside Roman imperialism, even though Romanization undoubtedly occurred.

## 1.3: SOURCES

Evidence for the Roman spectacles comes primarily from two sources: objects and texts. Evidence from objects includes the arenas where shows were performed and other

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<sup>1</sup> Gladiatorial combat was particularly popular in Iberia. Some scholars have proposed that Iberia had developed their own form of duel spectacles prior to Roman conquest.



monumental structures, artwork such as frescoes, statues, and pottery, and finally, surviving inscriptions (which double as texts). Material evidence is becoming increasingly important to the historian. Jas' Elsner identifies this importance:

Monuments, houses and works of art help to construct a collective sense of subjectivity within culture [...]. However, monuments may work not only on the *collective* level by propagating generally accepted sensibilities. They may also work on the *individual* level, helping an individual to construct a private and more personal sense of the self. Images and monuments embody a history. (125)

Monumental structures grounded a history for the community, a particularly important aspect for illiterate members of the society. Each structure carried a story that was passed down through generations, reinforcing an Ephesian's sense of identity through their function (communal centers of entertainment in the case of stadiums and theaters) and visual presence. In Ephesos, the Great Theater, the stadium, and the newly discovered gladiator cemetery, represented the interactions between Greek and Roman forms of entertainment, and how those forms competed and fused over time. These structures were powerful institutions, able to develop a culture's identity, and, as we will see below, mold Ephesos along Roman lines. In addition, the importance of these structures can be gauged by their location: along prominent routes with high volumes of pedestrian traffic.

Inscriptions allow for an examination of official dogma and, when produced by commoners, for a peek into the lives of the less illustrious. Even illiterate residents would have been able to make out at least a few words inscribed on monuments, or could have been told by others what various inscriptions said. Many inscriptions were placed in areas difficult, or impossible, for even literate members of the community to read. One did not have to read an inscription to extract value from it. Their visual presence and ability to transcend mortality by transmitting messages throughout generations convinced many of their value as sound investments.

Graffiti provides insight into spectator response to spectacles. Viewers often produced inscriptions depicting popular performers or spectacular scenes from the shows. These sources give us a glimpse into what the audience deemed important – they chose what images to represent in their art. Finally, a great deal of information, though not necessarily the most *accurate*, will be produced from an examination of documents, both Latin and Greek from the second century BCE to the fourth century CE. These types of evidence do not necessarily reflect the larger sentiments of a community, since those who produced literature in antiquity almost always came from the elite class; nevertheless, through careful examination, a wealth of information about the spectacles can be discovered.

#### 1.4: BACKGROUND

In the spring of 70 BCE, Roman consul and de facto governor of Ephesos, Lucius Licinius Lucullus was completing preparations for a campaign against the ambitious Hellenistic king, Mithridates the Great, and his ally, Tigranes II, the king of Armenia. Mithridates was a formidable enemy, and his efforts would present the last major threat to Roman hegemony in the East for many decades. Before setting off, however, Lucullus paused to hold games. This event marked Ephesos as the first city in Asia to witness a Roman spectacle. By that point, Ephesos had been under Roman rule for about seventy

years. Initially, life under new rulers did not drastically alter the lives of urban Ephesians.<sup>2</sup> In accordance with the will of Attalus III, Ephesos's sacred lands and the legendary Temple of Artemis remained sacrosanct, Ephesians were granted tax-free status, and the city was more or less allowed to govern itself in the city-state fashion – so long as Roman interests were not harmed (Knibbe 21). Yet the countryside did not fare nearly so well. Once a Roman province was established in Asia, Roman tax collectors were free to secure themselves and their interests in the region. Rome auctioned tax contracts for periods of five years allowing collectors to charge whatever amount they wished. The taxes gathered from former royal mines (*metalla*), grazing lands (*scriptura*), tithes derived from land usage (*decuma*), and especially the port and land custom duties (*portorium Asiae*), brought in huge revenues to private contractors and the Roman state.

In 89 BCE, Mithridates moved upon Ephesos in his campaign to unite the Hellenistic lands under his rule and rebuild the empire of Alexander the Great. Because of the ruthless manner in which they had been taxed, the Ephesians received Mithridates as a kind of savior, and even, according to Appian, eagerly carried out the notorious *Ephesian vesper* in which 80,000 Italians were massacred in a single day.<sup>3</sup> When the Roman military commander Lucius Cornelius Sulla retook the city, the Ephesians paid dearly for their transgression; their liberty was stripped away and heavy financial penalties were imposed on them.<sup>4</sup> It would take two decades for their situation to improve. Lucullus, however, treated the Ephesians differently when he took control of the region, and one expression of his new governing style was his financing and hosting of spectacles. These games represented a fresh approach to Rome's relationship with Ephesos, and an ambitious commander like Lucullus understood its importance as a city. But in order to comprehend the magnitude of the role the games played in the evolving political culture, we must first look at how they developed in the Greco-Roman world, and how the blending of Roman spectacles with Ephesian traditions exemplified the emergence of a new syncretic culture. Then, we will see how the onset of Roman imperialism triggered the consolidation of a definable Ephesian identity, and how the fear of its dissolution into the greater Roman cultural matrix encouraged efforts to preserve it.

The Greek-speaking East was for the most part unacquainted with these types of shows before Roman rule, having established their own spectacles long before. After succumbing to Rome, and after the Principate was established, they associated Roman spectacles with imperial cult celebrations in both the provinces and independent cities.<sup>5</sup> Ephesos's urgent request for permission to establish the imperial cult was motivated by a desire to

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<sup>2</sup> Most people in antiquity lived in the agricultural countryside. Only one-fourth of Athenians lived in Athens during the fifth century. Similarly, most Ephesians would have lived in the surrounding area and not in the city.

<sup>3</sup> Appian *Roman History* 21: "After appointing satraps over the various nations he proceeded to Magnesia, Ephesos, and Mytilene, all of which received him gladly. The Ephesians overthrew the Roman statues which had been erected in their cities – for which they paid the penalty not long afterward." Livy *Periochae* 78: "Mithridates occupied Asia, cast into chains proconsul Quintus Oppius, did the same to his deputy Aquilius, and on Mithridates' command all Roman citizens in Asia were killed in one single day."

<sup>4</sup> App. 61: "Most infamous of all, you obeyed the order he gave to kill all the Italians in your communities, including women and children, in one day."

<sup>5</sup> Dio Cassius *Roman History* 20: "[Caesar] gave permission for the dedication of sacred precincts in Ephesos and in Nicaea to Rome and to Caesar, his father, whom he named the hero Julius. He commanded that the Romans resident in these cities should pay honour to these two divinities; but he permitted the aliens, whom he styled Hellenes, to consecrate precincts to himself [...] also received authority to hold the 'sacred' games, as they called them, in honour of Caesar's temple."

demonstrate loyalty early in the new regime. Fusing Roman-styled spectacles with imperial worship increased the chances of winning the imperial administration's favor and tangible benefits. This is evident in the financial investments placed in the city by various Roman emperors (see Chapter 3.5).

The imperial cult's provincial highpriest (ἀρχιερεὺς) was expected to maintain a troupe of gladiators at his expense. It appears that the highpriest sponsored the spectacles in order to sustain the support of his provincials, for his only reward was the cheers of the audience and an inscription commemorating his sponsorship of the events. Along the so-called Marble Road (see Fig. 2) were situated monuments that depicted gladiators fighting, with the victorious gladiator being identified by name (Pietsch 10). As residents walked past this monument, they would be reminded of their favorite gladiator, the spectacular battles he had fought, and, of the highpriest who sponsored the show. This could also, however, place heavy burdens on the *archiereoi*, whose sponsorship of shows would need to take into account the previous priests' games and the potential of being overshadowed by them. This snowball effect placed heavy financial burdens on sponsors, because not matching or succeeding the extravagance of previous games could be translated by spectators as a lack of interest in them. Certain peculiar inscriptions, however, compel different interpretations of the function of the office. At the end of the second century CE, five days of games were held under the *archiereoi* Marcus Aurelius Mindios Mattidianos Pollio, a successful equestrian and Ephesian citizen. This is known from an inscription produced under the reign of the emperor Commodus. The inscription states that Pollio was awarded the magistracy of "highpriest of Asia of the temple in Ephesos for five days."<sup>6</sup> Because the office lasted for only five days, and because during those five days spectacles were held, we can conclude that the office's sole purpose was to hold games. It is possible that wealthy members of the region's elite sought out this magistracy in order to hold the games – a kind of sanction or permit authorized by the Roman bureaucratic infrastructure. It is also possible that those who sought after this honor did so specifically to warrant an inscription, thereby increasing their prestige and securing their identity in the historical recollection and narrative of the city.

Another magistracy, that of the asiarch (ἀσιάρχης), also appears to be associated with the spectacles, although not as frequently. A third-century inscription honors Marcus Aurelius Daphnus as "asiarch of the three temples in Ephesos."<sup>7</sup> During his office he hosted gladiatorial combat and wild animal hunts. The similarity between the highpriest and asiarch seem to indicate that they were in fact the same office with different labels; both offices were responsible for the presentation of games and the ownership of troupes of gladiators (*familia*) (Carter 203). The connection between the asiarch and the hosting of gladiatorial games, however, is only found in large concentrations in Ephesos (*ibid.* 205).

Elsewhere the connection becomes scarcer, and other roles are seen on inscriptions attributed to that office. The highpriest, on the other hand, is almost always associated with the shows, and unlike the asiarch, is clearly connected to the imperial cult. This has led some scholars to believe that the asiarch was not associated with the imperial cult, but rather, held a more diverse range of civic functions. Nevertheless, both offices derived their members through the wealthy elite of the city due to the heavy financial requirements necessary for financing the games. In the third century, a thirteen-day period presentation of games

<sup>6</sup> Carter 198 (no. 247): "ἀρχιερέα Ἀσίας ναῶν τῶν ἐν Ἐφέσῳ κατὰ τὸ ἐξῆς ἡμερῶν πέντε, ἐν αἷς καὶ ἀνεῖλε ζῶα λιβυκὰ εἰκοσιπέντε..."

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid* 200: (no. 249): "ἀσιάρχη ναῶν τῶν ἐν Ἐφέσῳ τρίς..."

occurred (Pietsch 11). By the fourth century, however, heavy financial burdens contributed to the decline and eventual abolishment of gladiatorial combat.

## Chapter Two: Origins of the Spectacles

The spectacles produced in the stadium and in the Great Theater of Ephesos had originated on the Italian peninsula. The program for the shows followed a similar pattern throughout the late Republican and Imperial periods. Under Augustus, they increased in frequency and became more extravagant in design (Suetonius Augustus 43). The *venationes*, or wild animal hunts, were held in the mornings. These events pitted animals against one another or set them in combat with humans (Fig. 3). Noon was reserved for the execution of criminals, in a variety of creatively grotesque methods, while the afternoons featured the gladiatorial duels. The Greek-speaking East had developed a culture that had traits similar to the Roman ones, and because of this they would eagerly accept Rome's implementation of the shows.



Figure 3

## 2.2: MUNERA

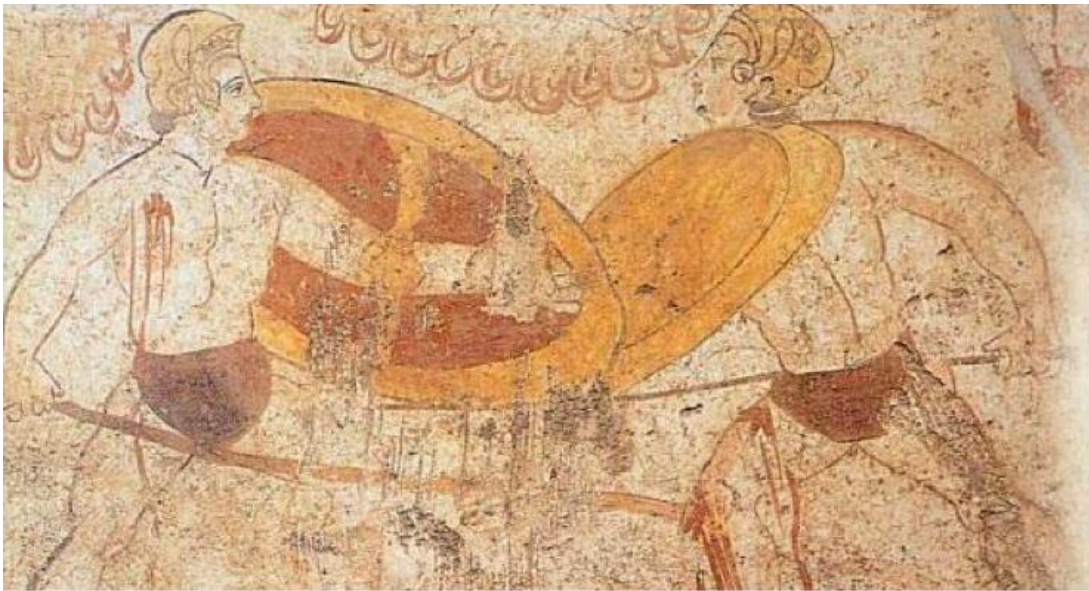
Traditional scholarship found that gladiatorial combat (*munera*) reached the Romans from the Etruscans (Jacobelli 5). This explanation was accepted by scholars for quite some time and seemed reasonable because Roman culture undoubtedly derived many customs from the Etruscans. This theory, however, is mainly derived from much later literary sources such as Athenaeus's *Deipnosophistai* (early third century CE) and Isidore of Seville (early seventh century CE) (Kohne & Ewigleben 11). Little to no archaeological evidence existed to substantiate these literary sources. (Jacobelli 5; Wistrand 32)<sup>8</sup> With the discovery of a plaque from the necropolis in Laghetto, however, an Oscan-Lucanian origin for the *munera* has gained much credence.<sup>9</sup> In addition, the “Samnite,” a member of the Oscan-

<sup>8</sup> 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>-century Etruscan tombs contain wall paintings depicting funerary games, but none are of gladiatorial combat.

<sup>9</sup> Lucania: a region extending from central Italy down to the southern coast, including Campania. The Samnites, who frequently fought against the Romans, inhabited this region and sided with invaders such as Pyrrhus of Epirus, Hannibal, and fought against Rome in the Social War. Livy (9.40.17) recounts the

Lucanian language group, is a category of gladiator most frequently mentioned in various sources (Kohne & Ewigleben, 37).

This funerary painting (Fig. 4) depicts a duel between two men, their shields angled and braced against one another, while their hands tightly clench their spears in preparation for a decisive blow to their opponent. The inclusion of fist fights, chariot racing, and a referee in Campanian frescos, and the fact that the two men have seriously wounded each other (*ibid.* 11), all indicate that these were representations of fighting associated with games and not military combat or mere training. The scene does not represent military combat because the figures lacked body armor, are dressed nearly identically, and thus did not represent opposing forces. In addition, such early games were almost certainly intended for funerary rite commemorations,<sup>10</sup> and after being adopted by the Romans, the tradition continued in the same context for some time (Kohne & Ewigleben, 11).



**Figure 4**

The earliest literary evidence for the first gladiatorial contest held in Rome comes from the historian Livy (Jory 537). He described the funeral ceremony of Decimus Junius Pero of 264 BCE, for which his sons had arranged three pairs of gladiators to honor their father through ritual combat.<sup>11</sup> In many ancient Mediterranean cultures, rituals associated with death required the shedding of blood to reconcile the world of the living with that of the dead (see Wiedemann, 1992). According to Polybius, the deaths of prominent Romans necessitated a funeral that publicly displayed the status and continuity of the family through an elaborate procession, orations, and the holding of games (*munus*).<sup>12</sup>

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origins of the “Samnite” gladiator: “So the Romans made use of the splendid armour of their enemies to do honour to the gods: while the Campanians, in consequence of their pride and in hatred of the Samnites, equipped after his fashion the gladiators who furnished them entertainment at their feasts (*gladiators, quod spectaculum inter epulas erat*), and bestowed on them the name of Samnites” (Kyle 46).

<sup>10</sup> Intended for funerary rite commemorations due to its situation in the necropolis.

<sup>11</sup> Livy *Epit.* 16; Valerius Maximus 2.4.7.

<sup>12</sup> Polybius *Histories* 63.53-4.

As time passed, spectacle games developed more elaborate characteristics and ambitious Romans began to exploit them in order to achieve political ends. In the mid-first century BCE, Julius Caesar consciously employed the *munera* to increase his prestige (*auctoritas*) in Rome.<sup>13</sup> By holding games after the death of his daughter, Julia, an honor traditionally reserved for men, he broke from established tradition with regards to the *munera* and introduced a new use for such shows.<sup>14</sup> The state was also in turmoil following the murder of Publius Clodius, a popular, albeit pugnacious, figure at the time.<sup>15</sup> By hosting spectacles, Caesar's games contributed to bringing about stability, an achievement that a wide spectrum of society appreciated. Through such shows, Caesar "won the favour of the people,"<sup>16</sup> and he became so popular that "on a number of occasions [...] many people were crushed to death" by the massive crowds at his shows.<sup>17</sup> Caesar, who similarly hosted games in turbulent times, might have very well noted Lucullus's example in Ephesos decades earlier.

The increase in population of well trained gladiators in Rome provided ambitious Romans with a means of gaining power through force of arms. This was particularly evident during the first century BCE, when the traditional republican institutions began to crumble. In this politically turbulent environment, wealthy Romans raised their own militias to pursue their agendas. And what better militias than those composed of gladiators? Publius Clodius Pulcher used his tribuneship in 56 BCE to exile Marcus Tullius Cicero for his extra-constitutional execution of the Catilinarian conspirators. The following year, a friend of Cicero, Titus Annius Milo, made a move to recall Cicero from exile (Berry 163). A group of gladiators who worked for Clodius blocked this attempt.<sup>18</sup> Milo arrested those gladiators, but then was attacked by Clodius's gangs.<sup>19</sup> After a failed attempt to prosecute Clodius, Milo, in turn, recruited his own gangs, and clashes between the gangs and supporters of the two rivals became a regular occurrence in the city.<sup>20</sup>

Julius Caesar also utilized gladiators, not only for their value in spectacles, but also to intimidate his opponents. According to Suetonius, the large numbers of gladiators at Caesar's disposal "struck such terror into his opponents that a bill was passed limiting the number of gladiators which any individual might keep in the city."<sup>21</sup> Gladiators were so important to Caesar that he even personally arranged their training, "not in the gladiatorial school or by professional trainers but by Roman knights in their own homes and even by senators experienced in warfare, exhorting them with entreaties [...] to take the greatest care in the training of individuals and to direct their exercises in person."<sup>22</sup>

The vast majority of gladiators were selected from slaves procured in wars, or from convicted criminals sentenced to slavery. The frequent warfare of the late Republic, from Caesar's conquest of Gaul, to the bloody civil wars, turned large numbers of people into slaves. During this period it is probable that most gladiators were slaves gathered under these circumstances. Accordingly, gladiators were composed of many different ethnicities and social backgrounds. Though becoming a gladiator placed one at the bottom of the

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<sup>13</sup> Suet. *Jul.* 10-11.

<sup>14</sup> Suet. *Jul.* 26.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Suet. *Jul.* 10.

<sup>17</sup> Suet. *Jul.* 39.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Suet. *Jul.* 10.

<sup>22</sup> Suet. *Jul.* 13.

social hierarchy, gladiators developed a strong sense of unity among themselves as fighters (Pietsch 11). This unity was most evident in the initial successes of Spartacus's rebellion. After the Third Servile War (73–71 BCE), the Senate passed laws to reduce the numbers of gladiators concentrated in any one area. By the early Principate, gladiators appear to have been derived mostly from criminal convictions. This might explain Plutarch's shock that a group of Gauls and Thracians, "who had done nothing wrong," were kept for gladiatorial combat by the "cruelty of their owner."<sup>23</sup> With the relative peace established by Augustus after the defeat of Mark Antony and Cleopatra, the influx of slaves into Rome slowed down, and slave owners would require justifications before condemning their slaves to the arena.

That an excess of gladiators in cities represented a serious threat was clear to Romans after several uprisings – most notably, the revolt led by Spartacus. Many people, such as murderers, arsonists, and religious offenders, found themselves condemned to be gladiators (*ad gladium*) (Pietsch 11). These judgments were essentially death sentences, and those condemned had very little chance of survival. We must pause here to imagine what it must have been like for these convicts. Many of them had been spectators and knew all too clearly what their fate had in store for them. Consequently, the pure terror they experienced as their moment in the spectacle neared led many to attempt suicide – by no means an easy task.

To illustrate that even in the most desperate situations individuals could rise to moral excellence (*virtus*), Seneca used stories about people condemned to the spectacles. In one story, a man being led to the arena in a cart pretended to be asleep, and when the moment was right, placed his head between the cart's moving spokes, which instantly snapped his neck, killing him. In another, a condemned German awaiting execution *ad bestia* asked for permission to use the latrines. After his request was granted, he made his way to the public facilities, where he proceeded to use a sponge-on-a-stick (intended for those who relieved themselves to clean with) to choke himself to death.<sup>24</sup> The final story describes how a man fighting in the arena with a spear decided to use that spear to kill himself, asking "Why, oh why have I not long ago escaped from all this torture and all this mockery? Why should I be armed and yet wait for death to come?"<sup>25</sup>

A judge could, however, sentence offenders *ad ludos*, whereby they were taken to gladiatorial academies. These schools trained the condemned in the art of combat, and their chances for survival substantially increased. This sentence allowed personal skill to enable a gladiator to survive. Because he (or in rare cases, she) was given the opportunity to perform before a large number of Romans, the gladiator, though possessing the lowest possible social status in Roman society, was in a position to demonstrate his *virtus*. The Christian author, Tertullian (c. 160–c. 220), noted this apparent paradox of honoring those whom they condemned when he wrote "*amant quos multiant.*"<sup>26</sup>

Gladiatorial combat allowed the average citizen to see for themselves the glorious conquests of the Roman army through reenactment and representation. Gladiators were divided into types, some of which symbolized conquered Roman enemies. The *sammis*, *gallus*, and *thraex*, represented the Samnites, Gauls, and Thracians respectively (Fig. 5). Evident by their names, these categories probably originated by placing prisoners captured in war into the arena. As time passed, cultures that had previously been enemies of Rome, but had long

<sup>23</sup> Plutarch *Crassus* 8.

<sup>24</sup> Wistrand 19; Seneca *Epist.* 70.20.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Pietsch 10; *Spec.* 22.2: "The very same skill for which they glorify them, they debase and degrade them."



been subdued and incorporated into the system, were no longer appropriate to be represented as gladiators. The popular Samnite category was decommissioned in the early imperial period, but reemerged in more politically correct forms, the *murmillo* and *secutor*. The *galli* too ceased to be used after Gaul was well incorporated as part of the Roman Empire. The *thraex*, however, survived the reforms of the imperial system (Kohne and Ewigleben 37).

At Ephesos the *thraex* was the most popular type of gladiator (Pietsch 10). Early *thraex* wore Attic crested helmets and Hellenistic styled grieves. Perhaps their Hellenistic uniform made them easy to relate to the Greek spectators of Ephesos, who could cheer for them against other types. Scenes of gladiator combat are depicted by graffiti on the inside of the proscenium of the Great Theater (*ibid.*).

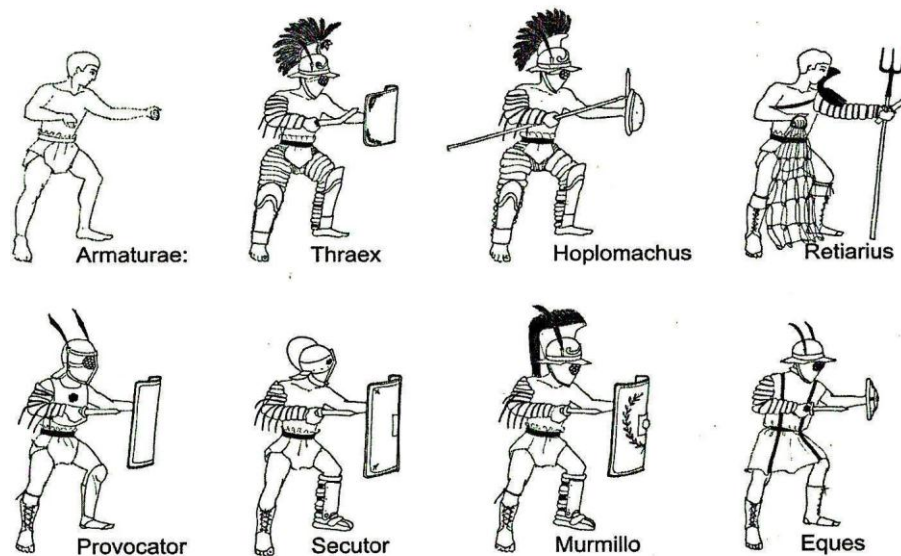


Figure 5

Among the few paths allotted for slaves (*ad bestia*, *ad metella*,<sup>27</sup> or field work), becoming a gladiator was, perhaps, the most desirable. Here, at least, they had a chance of survival, and though rare, could even rise out of their destitute condition and win their freedom. Many gladiators were seen as heroes to the masses of Rome and Ephesos, as is testified on numerous inscriptions. Gladiators continued to play an important role in Roman society until their gradual decline in the fourth century.<sup>28</sup>

### 2.3: VENATIONES

<sup>27</sup> *ad metella*/ to the mines: was essentially a death sentence. Pliny the Elder describes the extraction of gold in mines as “surpass[ing] the labours of the Giants.” He records that frequently “clefts are formed on a sudden, the earth sinks in, and the workmen are crushed beneath” (Pliny 33.21.15-16); also see Polybius 34.9.8-11.

<sup>28</sup> Christian emperors issued edicts banning gladiator shows, but they appear to have been ineffective. For example, Constantine condemned the practice in 315, but there is evidence of later games.

In the second century CE, Tertullian wrote in his *On Spectacles* that the *munera* were the “most famous and most popular of all spectacles.”<sup>29</sup> Similarly, Suetonius derided non-gladiatorial spectacles as “nothing more than wild beast fights” when discussing a set of games provided by Augustus.<sup>30</sup> The belief that Romans preferred *munera* to *venationes* has been accepted well into the modern period. Steven Cerutti suggests, however, that the “massive substructures of amphitheatres such as those at Pozzuoli, Capua, or the Colosseum itself in Rome, with their elaborate housing of animals and coordination of their release into the arena during shows, may indicate that these events were what Romans really wanted to see” (Cerutti 816). The popularity of the *venatio* is certainly demonstrated in countless works of art, such as the 241 CE medallion of Gordian III (Fig. 6), which depicts combat between a lion and bull before a packed Colosseum.<sup>31</sup> Even Tertullian admitted that over time festivals were “not good enough unless human bodies were also taken apart by wild beasts.”<sup>32</sup> By the late republic, the fascination with seeing animals in spectacles became such a pressing concern for the Roman citizens that it influenced political considerations. When Lucius Cornelius Sulla ran for the praetorship after his return from campaigning in Africa in 106 BCE, his own plebeian supporters blocked his bid for nomination. Instead, they forced him into the aedileship. As an aedile, Sulla would be responsible for organizing religious events and public festivities. Because of Sulla’s friendship with Bocchus, king of Mauretania, Romans believed that he had special access to exotic beasts and that if he was made aedile, they would be “treated to some particularly fine hunting shows and combats with wild animals from Africa.”<sup>33</sup> Plutarch suggested that Sulla merely used this as an excuse in order to vindicate his unsuccessful bid to the praetorship. Even so, Sulla’s use of such an explanation reveals the growing importance of the *venationes* to Roman audiences. By the third and fourth centuries CE, as gladiatorial combat became less frequent, the *venatio* became more popular (Pietsch 10). Scholars long attributed this change to the growing influence of Christianity in the fourth century; however, it is now believed that the *munera* were too expensive to sustain in a declining economy (*ibid.*).

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<sup>29</sup> Tertullian *Spec.* 12.

<sup>30</sup> Suet. *Aug.* 43.

<sup>31</sup> For examples of *venationes* in Ephesos see Fig. 19-20.

<sup>32</sup> Tert. *Spec.* 12.

<sup>33</sup> Plut. *Sulla* 5.



Figure 6

Beasts from Africa and Asia Minor increasingly became commodified as the demand for their appearance in Roman arenas grew, and ambitious Roman politicians understood their exotic shock value. After returning from suppressing the remnants of Marius's supporters in Africa, Pompey wanted to hold a triumph in which he would ride in a chariot drawn by four elephants instead of the customary white stallions.<sup>34</sup> Unfortunately, the gates were too narrow to let the elephants pass, and he had to settle for a horse. Nevertheless, Pompey took the time to gather elephants, transport them across the Mediterranean, and preserve them in Rome – a costly and expensive task. Pompey's shows' audiences understood and appreciated the enormous effort involved in bringing these animals for their enjoyment. Dio Cassius described a situation in which elephants captured from Libya refused to board a ship for Rome, and only agreed when "they received a pledge under oath from their drivers that they should suffer no harm."<sup>35</sup> The anthropomorphic treatment of the elephants in Dio Cassius's anecdote underscores the fact that transporting wild animals across great distances was quite dangerous. Hauling elephants aboard ships and across the Mediterranean was not a career for the fainthearted. The potential for an elephant to run amok during this process created a serious threat to the handlers and seamen.

Wild animals were collected from the farthest regions of the empire and pitted to fight one another in arenas across the provinces. Martial's *Book of Spectacles* represented the zenith of this development, and demonstrates the extent to which Romans enjoyed pitting large animals against each other. A rhinoceros, presumably from Africa, was released in the arena with a bull.<sup>36</sup> In another example, the Romans placed a tiger in the arena together with a

<sup>34</sup> Plut. *Pompey* 14.

<sup>35</sup> *Roman History* 39.38.

<sup>36</sup> Martial *Spec.* 11: "The rhinoceros was shown off for you throughout the arena, O Caesar, and offered even more battles than he had promised. O what a terrible rage burned him as he lowered his head! Such a bull he was that a bull was a football for him."

lion. The tiger, as one might expect, “violently [tore the lion] to pieces with her savage teeth – a new thing, not known to any era.”<sup>37</sup> What is important in this passage is how Martial stresses the exotic shock value in having a tiger fight a lion, an animal fight that had never been arranged before, and was only possible due to the ever-reaching power of the empire. With each production, Romans became more desensitized and craved more elaborate ways to destroy animals.

It is hard to stomach the extent to which Romans were so thoroughly fascinated with the suffering of wild animals. Their humiliation and killing demonstrated and celebrated the civilizing powers of the empire. Martial captured the killing of a pregnant wild sow in poetry and enthusiastically described the novelty of an unexpected “surprise” towards its conclusion:

A light spear pierced a sow heavy with young. A piglet leapt from the wretched mother’s wound. Cruel Lucina, what kind of birthing was this? She would have wanted to die from more weapons’ wounds if the sad way would lie open for all the litter [...]. How sure was the hand of the well-balanced steel! [...] Weighted down by the ripeness of her womb, gave birth, made a parent by a wound, nor did the newborn lie still but ran off as its mother died. What a clever surprise!<sup>38</sup>

This passage, though grotesque, reveals an important characteristic about Roman attitudes towards the slaughter of animals. Notice the admiration Martial expressed towards the skill of the hunter. Just as gladiators were given the opportunity to demonstrate their *virtus* directly to the civilized world (to which they were not considered to belong), *venatores* (to a lesser extent *bestiarii*), and even the animals were allowed similar opportunities. Pliny the Elder echoes Martial’s admiration of the hunter’s demonstration of skill during a show hosted by Pompey in the late Republic. That audience rejoiced when a *bestiarii* killed an elephant “by a single blow, for the javelin thrust under its eye had reached the vital parts of its head.”<sup>39</sup> In the preceding passage of the same game, the elephants also demonstrated their *virtus* by performing bravely and intelligently. “One of these animals fought in a most astonishing manner,” wrote Pliny, “being pierced through the feet, it dragged itself on its knees towards the troop, and [...] tossed them aloft into the air [which] greatly amused the spectators [because it was] as if they had been thrown up with a certain degree of skill, and not by the frantic fury of a wild beast.”<sup>40</sup> Two aspects of this moment made a great impression on the spectators: first, because the elephant demonstrated courage in its battle against the *bestiarii*, and secondly, and more importantly, because the elephant appeared to have been tossing its enemies with “a certain degree of skill.” These giant beasts, wild when in nature, had already exhibited signs of the civilizing process that the Romans cherished. In addition, both these examples show that the hunters and elephants were considered by the audience to be on the same social level – they were all outcasts from the civilized world. Their only redemption was to fight with *skill* and courage.

As time passed, each production had to top its predecessors in the use of exotic beasts. If one magistrate produced a particularly suspenseful and impressive show, the following magistrate would have to outdo him in order to gain prestige. Ephesian magistrates were

<sup>37</sup> Mart. 11: “A tigress, a rare glory from the Caspian mountain, who would often lick her fearless master’s hand, tore a wild lion violently to pieces with her savage teeth—a new thing, not known to any era. While she lived in the high forests she never dared do such a thing, but since she has been with us she has become more fierce.”

<sup>38</sup> Mart. 14-16.

<sup>39</sup> Pliny *Nat.* 8.7.

<sup>40</sup> Plin. *Nat.* 8.7.

required to host games in honor of the Imperial cult – an expensive, albeit potentially rewarding responsibility. The financial burdens led to imperial edicts regulating the frequency with which a magistrate was allowed to put on a show, most notably under Marcus Aurelius in the later half of the second century CE (Pietsch 10). Nevertheless, the demand for hunts created a snowball effect that led to more and more beasts being slaughtered throughout the empire. The use of these animals in spectacles became so popular that they became increasingly scarce throughout the Mediterranean region. Strabo recorded the effect this had on the Numidians, who had previously abandoned their “land to wild animals” and lived a “migratory and wandering life.” It was not until Roman domination, and their systematic destruction of the region’s wild life, that the Numidians “transformed [...] into citizens and farmers.”<sup>41</sup> Cicero’s correspondence with his younger friend Marcus Caelius Rufus,<sup>42</sup> who was elected aedile in 50 BCE, shows the urgency (as a result of scarcity) with which those producing shows sought such animals, writing: “In just about every letter I’ve written to you about the panthers. Paticus has sent Curio 10 panthers; you’ll be put to shame if you don’t send a great many more.”<sup>43</sup> In addition, Curio’s plea to Cicero makes clear the pressure faced by up and coming magistrates. The high cost of maintaining an infrastructure that provided viewers with these creatures, and the increasing difficulty of gathering them became particularly pressing concerns. It appears that Cicero had some difficulty in fulfilling his friend’s request. “As for the panthers,” responded Cicero to Caelius, “those who are in the business of hunting them are diligently complying with my instructions. But there is an amazing shortage, and those panthers that we do have are complaining that there are no traps laid in my province except for them. Therefore the panthers state that they have decided to depart from our province and take up residence in Caria.”<sup>44</sup> The urgency of Caelius’s need for panthers radiates from his letters to Cicero. It is clear that the audience at Rome expected Caelius to produce wild animals for spectacles. If he failed, he would lose credibility, and Cicero, who as his friend was expected to gather and send such animals, would be “put to shame.” Rome was only one of the many places caught up in this headlong scramble. Every amphitheater, theater, and stadium, in the Roman Empire, from each major city in Gaul to the stadium and Great Theater of Ephesos, had similar struggles.

Animals did not have to kill each other to appease Romans or to demonstrate the enormous power of Roman imperialism. Augustus placed on display exotic animals throughout the city, in rather curious locations, for residents to see when they were not at the amphitheater. According to Suetonius, a “rhinoceros was shown in the voting enclosures, a tiger in the theatre, and a serpent of fifty cutits in front of the Comitium.”<sup>45</sup> Exhibiting wild animals offered proof to those who did not see conquests first-hand that military campaigns were successful and that humanity was, through the guidance and power of the emperor, able to pacify nature (Shelton 368). The placement of these beasts that viewers were accustomed to seeing acting aggressively in the arena in cages at various strategic spots around Rome, drove home to people the lesson that the Roman emperor and state possessed staggering powers. These animals could be either destroyed or forced into

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<sup>41</sup> Strabo *Geo.* 17.3.15.

<sup>42</sup> See Appendix I for relevant transcripts of the correspondence.

<sup>43</sup> Cicero *Letters* 8.6.

<sup>44</sup> Cicero *Letters* 2.11.

<sup>45</sup> Suet. *Aug.* 43.

passive submission. The animals that wildly demonstrated their natural ferocity in the arena were then placed in a cage so the spectators could see them at close hand.

Elaborate non-lethal shows, requiring vast amounts of preparation and training of wild animals, were also produced. Seemingly ferocious beasts, such as lions, were tamed by animal trainers and presented to Romans in the arena. Martial attributes the credit of such acts to the “emperor who orders the nature of wild beasts to be gentler.”<sup>46</sup> Making elephants perform tricks was a particular delight to Roman audiences. Elephants walking on tightropes at the command of very small people,<sup>47</sup> or (under Nero) across high points of a theater,<sup>48</sup> demonstrated the strong hand of the state. Indeed, such shows may have been even more effective than the slaughtering of animals at making that point. To Romans, the sight of a bulky elephant, with its floppy ears and snake-like nose, successfully balancing and walking across a thin rope, was both humorous and astonishing.<sup>49</sup> Viewers marveled at the extent to which human domination, particularly that established by their civilization, could bring about the performance of such unnatural acts.<sup>50</sup> In another example, Pliny wrote of a procession of groups of four elephants carrying a litter bearing another elephant, in which the elephant in the litter was trained to resemble a woman in childbirth.<sup>51</sup> Watching this scene both amused spectators and reassured their faith in their ability to participate in the domination of the natural world (Shelton 382). According to Aelian, there was a Roman practice of choreographing “tea parties” using people and wild animals. In one example, six pairs of costumed male elephants and female elephants took their place around a table and fed themselves using great care with their trunks.<sup>52</sup> In a similar example, elephants made their way to the table without crushing the humans already seated.<sup>53</sup> These shows made crowds wild with delight because the act of forcing giant beasts into submission and training them to do humiliating and absurd acts assured viewers that they were superior to the natural world. Ultimately, such striking reversals of the natural behavior of wild animals could only be explained as their subjection to a power greater than nature – the emperor’s *numen*, or divine power (Wistrand 20).

The frequency with which animals were subjected to cruelty in the arenas of ancient Rome is difficult for a modern person to stomach, since in today’s society sympathy is often expressed more for animals than for humans. With countless animal rights agencies and laws in many countries regulating their treatment today, the cruel and brutal treatment animals were subjected to in antiquity is horrifying. This is to impose modern biases on our understanding of how Romans were capable of witnessing and producing such carnage. Ours is a world in which wildlife is increasingly absent from our day-to-day experience, and concern to preserve those animals that remain is deeply felt. In the antiquity, the world that existed outside the walls of the city was developed little, and wild animals still roamed and presented a threat to humans.

The origins of the *venatio* can be traced from human fear and competition with animals in the rural environment. Roman farmers were constantly faced with damage to their livestock and crops from pests, such as foxes and wolves (Shelton 118). In response, agricultural

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<sup>46</sup> Martial *Spec.* 12.

<sup>47</sup> Seneca *Ep.* 85.41.

<sup>48</sup> Dio Cassius *Roman History* 61.17.

<sup>49</sup> Shelton, 381.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Pliny *Natural History* 8.2.

<sup>52</sup> Plin. *Nat.* 8.2.

<sup>53</sup> Plin. *Nat.* 8.2.

communities held festivals in which such pests were gathered and destroyed (*ibid.*). This ritual was raised to an extravagant level in the Roman *venationes*, but retained the same underlying meanings. The wholesale slaughter of animals in amphitheaters and Greek theaters all contributed to the definition of civilization as, in the words of Shelton, the “triumph of rationality over the chaos of the natural world” (116). In his *Geography*, Strabo described the land of the Numidians as “blest by nature, except for the fact that it abounded in wild animals.”<sup>54</sup> So destructive were these beasts, that, according to Strabo, they were the reason the Numidians had lived as nomads instead of “civilized” farmers. Though his passage is clearly biased, intended to demonstrate the positive effects of Roman rule, it nevertheless demonstrates the understood animosity of Mediterranean peoples towards wild animals.

To Romans, animals often stood as representatives of the human cultures that shared geographical regions with them. As we have seen, the *munera* categorized gladiators into groups representing former enemies of Rome. The arena offered Romans who did not serve in the military an opportunity to see foreign powers conquered by the Roman army. Similarly, animals substituted for human actors and their destruction symbolically represented the destruction of an enemy of Rome; animals were cheaper to maintain, and some, more impressive to watch. Elephants, for example, represented African enemies, particularly Carthage, while panthers could represent Greeks or other “Asian” cultures (see Appendix I).

Roman association of animals with the cultures of a shared region led them to administer punishment to those animals in their natural setting as well. After defeating Domitus, Pompey invaded Numidia to make “the natives feel again, what they had almost forgotten, a healthy fear of and respect for the Romans. The very animals, he said, who lived in Africa ought to have some experience of Roman strength and Roman daring; and so he devoted a few days to the hunting of lions and elephants.”<sup>55</sup> Pompey’s actions show us that Romans considered the systematic destruction of animals as beneficial; Pompey was contributing to the reduction of an element of danger present in the world. At Ephesos, a relief depicting the god Eros as a *bestiarius* in combat with a bear adorns the city’s theater. By placing a powerful god in a role normally reserved for a slave, the practice was further legitimized through symbolic visual representations of divine sanction.

#### 2.4: GREEK VENATIONES

The similarity of Greek to Roman fear of and attitude towards beasts demonstrates a shared concern for which *venationes* presented an ideal solution. The threats posed by animals to humans are a common theme in Greek myths. In one story, Zeus seduced the Phoenician princess Europa by disguising himself as a bull. After luring her to mount him, he darted off to the island of Crete and copulated with her. Their offspring, Minos, became the legendary Bronze Age king of Crete. To legitimize his reign, Poseidon presented a gift to Minos – a pure white bull. Expecting Minos to sacrifice the bull in his honor, instead, Minos tricked Poseidon by substituting a less valuable one. In retaliation, Poseidon enchanted Minos’s wife Pasiphae to become sexually obsessed with the bull. She then ordered the master craftsman Daedalus to construct a wooden bull shell, which she used to lure the white bull into copulating with her. Their offspring was the vicious half-man half-bull

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<sup>54</sup> Strabo *Geography* 17.3.15.

<sup>55</sup> Plut. *Pompey* 12.

Minotaur. The Minotaur was placed in a labyrinth by Minos and used to execute Athenian youths ritually after Minos's son was murdered by one of them. It was Theseus who finally destroyed the Minotaur. In a related myth, Heracles captured a bull that was ravaging the Cretan countryside and released it in Marathon, where it continued to wreak havoc. Again, Theseus intervened to destroy the bull.

In each of these stories the terror evoked by bulls is evident. The myth of Pasiphae's seduction, and her subsequent progeny, indicated the dangers that could arise from an unholy union between humans and animals. The Minotaur was the product of a human and a bull; it possessed features of both and retained the untamed urges of beasts. This story reminded audiences that humanity distinguishes us from animals, in that we can control savage urges through reason. When Greeks were exposed to the *venatio*, the carnage would have been justified and morally sound, because beasts were often feared and represented a world without civilization. The arena became a symbol of the ordered world's mission, where the struggle between civilization and nature were visually presented to Romans, Greeks, and barbarians. According to Wiedemann, "to kill wild beasts was to share in the divine mission of Hercules, and indeed of all other great heroes" (179).

Though the Romans were responsible for developing and promoting extremely elaborate productions of *venatio*, they were by no means the only peoples to enjoy animal fights. In fact, Greeks had developed their own versions of spectacles involving animals before Roman domination. One such spectacle, cockfighting, was particularly popular. The popularity of cockfights in the Greek world is testified in art, such as on fifth-century Attic kraters (Jennison 101; Columella 8.2). These images depict men commanding their cocks into battle with one another. Cocks are naturally aggressive animals, and when placed together in an arena they fight to the death (Shelton 102). Unlike the modern view of chickens in many Western cultures, Greeks did not view the cocks as cowards. Because of perceptions of roosters as brave creatures, their adornment on hoplite shields was not only appropriate, but popular as well (Fig. 7). In fact, they even bred them to enhance their aggressive qualities. First-century Roman author Columella described the differences between Roman and Greek breeding practices; Romans bred animals to tame and increase productivity in them, while Greeks desired birds that were as wild and ferocious as possible.<sup>56</sup> It should be noted, however, that Columella, a Roman writer, might have erected this dichotomy between Greek and Roman breeding practices in order to illustrate his conceptions of the differences in their cultural traits. Thus, Greeks, reflected in the way they train their animals, are wild and ferocious, however noble their crest might be. Romans, on the other hand, are masters of law and order, and train their animals accordingly.<sup>57</sup> In Athens, cockfights were private and state-funded events, probably held in the Theater of Dionysius, located on the slopes of the Acropolis.<sup>58</sup> The use of the theater for spectacles in the Greek East would factor heavily in Ephesos's acceptance of the Roman *venationes*.

The courage and bravery displayed by roosters in combat encouraged Athenians to emulate them. This was also true for Romans, who pitted animals against each other in the arenas. Be it cocks or lions, the principles underlying the appeal for spectators were essentially the same. It is likely that the popularity of cockfights was a feature of the pan-Hellenic world.

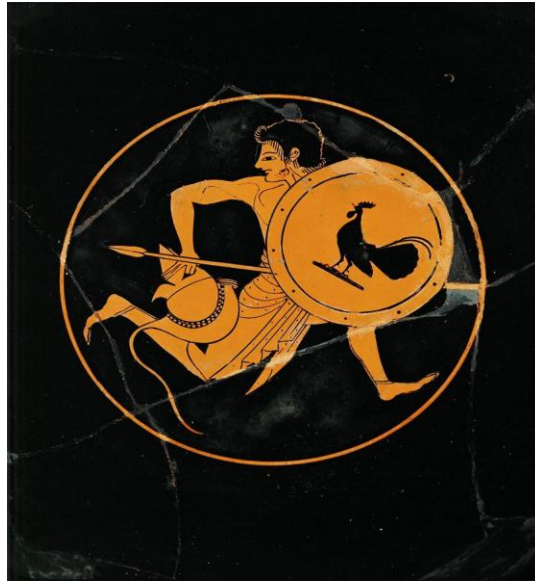
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<sup>56</sup> Columella *De Re Rustica* 8.2.

<sup>57</sup> For similar observations on Rome's promotion of its image as the bringer of law and order, and of the image of Greeks as needing taming, see chapter 3.2.

<sup>58</sup> Columella *De Re Rustica* 8.2.





**Figure 7**

## 2.5: AD FLAMMAS, AD BESTIAS

“Criminals destined for a fate without hope were nevertheless well fed in order to fatten the animals [...]. A special effort had been made to bring these brave animals from abroad to serve as executioners for those condemned to death,” wrote Apuleius in *The Golden Ass* (4.13). Romans used their spectacles to administer capital punishment, and in addition they used persons convicted of capital crimes to produce elaborate and grotesque spectacles. Often capital punishment cases were conducted as theatrical executions or severe torture in the form of reenactments intended to benefit the public. Romans first used animals to execute people in a military setting; Aemilius Paullus crushed deserters to death with captured elephants from his campaigns against Perseus in the Third Macedonian War (171–68 BCE). This method of execution was imported to the shows in Rome. Without a doubt, however, the worst fate that befell the condemned was *damnati ad flammam* or *ad bestias*.

Legendary tales of the Roman past were presented live using condemned slaves and wild animals. One such story was of the heroic Mucius Scaevola. According to Livy, Scaevola, a noble Roman youth outraged by an Etruscan siege of Rome, became determined to take matters into his own hand. The city had continued for quite some time, and grain supplies were growing thin. Scaevola sneaked into the enemy’s camp and attempted to kill their king Porsenna. His plan was thwarted when he mistakenly killed the king’s secretary. He was apprehended and presented before the king himself. Lacking all fear, Scaevola proudly declared before the king, “I am Gaius Mucius, a citizen of Rome. I came here as an enemy to kill my enemy,” and informed the king that his life would constantly be at risk, for there were many more Romans willing to do exactly what he had done. The angry king ordered that Scaevola be taken away and burned alive. In a demonstration of Roman courage and strength, Scaevola responded by instantly placing his hand in a torch that was used for sacrifices. As his hand withered away under the flames, Scaevola made no sign of pain. The king, impressed by such a display of bravery, lifted the siege and returned home.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Livy 2.13.

Martial enthusiastically described the gruesome reenactment in which the “performer” was forced to repeat what legend had ascribed to Scaevola:

He who is now seen playing in Caesar’s arena in the time of Brutus was the highest glory. See how he endures the flames and enjoys his punishment; his brave hand rules the astonished fire! [...] After such a noble exhibition, it is painful to know what came before: it is enough for me to know that I have seen this hand. (*Epigrams* 8.30)

In another production of the same historical event, Martial hinted at what might happen to a condemned person who refused to play his assigned part: “In the arena this morning you saw Mucius, who put his hand in the fires. If he seemed to you brave and strong and long-enduring, then you have the brains of an Abderitan. Because when the *tunica molesta* is standing by and you’re told, ‘Burn your hand,’ it’s a greater accomplishment to say no.”<sup>60</sup> The *tunica molesta* was a tunic soaked in a highly flammable substance.

Others were tied to stakes for leopards to tear to pieces or “just as Prometheus, tied to his Scythian rock, fed the bird constantly pecking at his breast, so Laureolus, hanging on a genuine cross, offered his naked guts to a Caledonian bear. The torn-off limbs were still alive and dripping, but in the entire body there was no body [...] what was once a play is now punishment.”<sup>61</sup> Depictions of *ad bestia* served as popular themes for Roman art. From mosaics, we learn about the methods developed by Romans for executing the condemned. Where some were thrown unarmed into the arena with wild animals (Fig. 8), others, perhaps those who proved to be uncooperative, or, when arenas were particularly small (for example, theaters in the Greek-speaking East), were secured to a poll attached to a cart and wheeled into the arena to be mauled by animals (Fig. 8). Another particularly sadistic punishment was to force a convict to unlock large, and certainly aggravated, beasts that were chained together (see Fig. 9). After accomplishing this precarious task, the convict would then presumably be attacked by the freed animals.

Women were also thrown to animals and forced to perform grizzly acts to satiate the Roman lust for carnage. In fact, the spectators were fond of women and disfigured performers because of their novelty (Wistrand 23). Using Greek mythology as the setting, Martial describes one particularly horrible scene: “Believe in Pasiphae joined to the Cretan bull: we have seen it; the old story is believable. Nor, O Caesar, should antiquity be amazed at itself: whatever Fame sings of, the arena presents to you” (*Spec.* 6). As we have seen with the *venationes*, *ad bestia* was similarly used to illustrate Rome’s triumph over Greek mythology. Martial was challenging those who looked towards a glorious past for inspiration by displaying the glories of his present. It should be noted that ideas of progress did not exist in antiquity as they do today. Martial’s praise of Rome’s shows was intended to illustrate the glorious present, not a forecast of better times to come.

<sup>60</sup> Mart. *Ep.* 10.25; *Albertian*: A derogatory term named after people from a town in Thrace of which Democritus, the Laughing Philosopher, was a native; hence, given to laughter; inclined to foolish or incessant merriment (Webster’s New International Dictionary, 1919).

<sup>61</sup> Mart. *Spec.* 9.



Figure 8



Figure 9

Ultimately, those executed in the arena served as a reminder of civilization. The arenas scattered throughout the empire functioned as spaces where the *wild* could be presented to the civilized. Those who committed crimes, or opposed the empire, were ejected from civilization – they violated the sacred social contract of the civilized. These forums of entertainment also instilled fear into members of the Roman public by serving as a constant reminder of what might become if the structures erected by Rome were to collapse.

## Chapter Three: Functions

The function of the Roman spectacle in Ephesos changed as the political environment altered in Rome and the Greek-speaking East. We have so far traced the origins of the *munera* and *venationes*, their evolution in Rome for political uses, and analogous practices in the Greek East. We will now identify the spectacles' functions, and how they evolved over time. This will first involve an examination of the spectacle as, according to Juvenal, "*panem et circenses*" (*Satire* 10). We will then see how Lucius Lucullus's hosting of games at Ephesos was received, and finally, by examining the Great Theater of Ephesos and relevant archaeological remains, we will identify the evolution of the spectacle's function from the reign of Augustus to Domitian. This will involve analyzing key literary records and archaeological remains.

The spectacle throughout most of the imperial period allowed authoritative power structures and a populace with progressively eroding liberties to coexist by providing the masses a state-sponsored image of civic virtue. The arena not only became a symbolic relic of lost Roman virtues and liberties, such as electoral politics, but also encapsulated the very definition of civilization. Initially, Rome greatly admired the achievements of Hellenic civilization and adopted many of its cultural traditions. Towards the end of the first century CE, according to literary sources, Rome began to push its own image upon its Greek-speaking subjects with greater energy. The archeological remains, however, seem to depict a different story.

In his *Liber spectaculorum*, Martial (40–104 CE) depicted the grand opening of the Flavian Amphitheater (Colosseum) (Fig. 10), and his detailed descriptions of the events give us valuable information about the types of shows that were presented in the amphitheaters and the attitude that Rome was developing in relation to its subjects. Because of the great importance of this particular grandiose venue, its shows would have set a standard which other arenas would try to emulate, albeit on a smaller scale. Ephesos was greatly impacted by the shows produced in Rome's new amphitheater. It was no coincidence that the completion of the Colosseum coincided with massive renovations to Ephesos's Great Theater. Spectacles, and the monumental venues to host them, were part of the new Flavian dynasty's agenda. The catastrophe resulting from Nero's capitulation wrought havoc across the empire. In addition to the general mayhem, attempts to secure the vacant throne by ambitious generals disrupted the frequency of shows established under Nero.<sup>62</sup> Generals, such as Galba, Otho, and Vitellius utilized their resources to secure the loyalty of their troops and attempt to hold control over the empire. Vespasian realized the necessity of restoring the public festivals (*ludi*), not only in Rome, but in the Eastern provinces as well. It was through the shows that Romans and provincials could see their newfound peace. Monuments were constructed and refurbished by the Flavians to return stability to the empire and remind the empire's residence of who was responsible for it. The shows held in those monuments symbolized stability through the systematic destruction of unstable elements – animals, criminals, and enemies.

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<sup>62</sup> According to Suetonius, Nero, like Augustus, "provided a great many games" (*Aug.* 43-45; *Nero* 11).

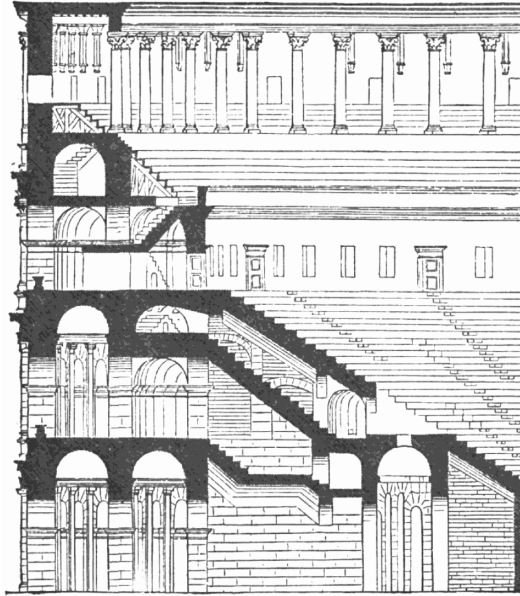


Figure 10

In this context, Martial functioned as a spokesman for the new regime, and subsequently, for Roman imperialism. His work provided information about how the games were symbolically interpreted. The Roman authorities delighted in presenting their achievements and glories (*gloria*) visually before their community. The amphitheater was the ideal place to do this because its size enabled a large segment of that community to be present at any one time. Martial's introduction to the inauguration of the amphitheater declared that it was a new wonder of the world that overshadowed all its predecessors:

May barbarous Memphis be silent about the marvels of the pyramids; may Assyrian labor not boast about Babylon; may the soft Ionians not be praised for the temple of Diana of the Three Ways;<sup>63</sup> may the altar crowded with horns keep Delos secret; may the Carians not praise the tomb of Mausolus to excess as it hangs in the empty air. Every work yields to the Amphitheater of Caesar, and Fame shall speak of this one work instead of all the others.<sup>64</sup>

Regarded as one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World in antiquity, the Temple of Artemis in Ephesos (Fig. 11) had long served as a popular landmark for pilgrims and "sightseers." Yet in Martial's poem it is dismissed as the obsolete work of "soft Ionians." It is true that Romans long regarded their Greek subjects as "soft" and in need of the "taming" which the Romans were more than willing to provide, but it is also true that they admired them for their works and strong historical recollection. Yet by the time Martial produced his work, Roman spectacles and monuments sought to undermine the distinction of traditional Hellenistic landmarks. Martial's poetry captures this new approach in dealing with their

<sup>63</sup> *The temple of Diana of the Three Ways*: a.k.a. the Temple of Artemis of Ephesos.

<sup>64</sup> Mart. *Spec.* 1. Martial's passage echoes Antipater's mid-second century poem on several wonders, most notably, the temple of Artemis in Ephesos (*Greek Anthology* 9.58): "I have gazed on the walls of impregnable Babylon along which chariots may race, and on the Zeus by the banks of the Alpheus, I have seen the hanging gardens, and the Colossus of the Helios, the great man-made mountains of the lofty pyramids, and the gigantic tomb of Mausolus; but when I saw the sacred house of Artemis that towers to the clouds, the others were placed in the shade, for the sun himself has never looked upon its equal outside Olympus."

Greek-speaking subjects. Under the Flavian emperors, a massive public works project would be aimed at projecting the omnipotence of Rome. One of the ways Romans demonstrated their *gloria* visually was to denigrate that of their Hellenic subjects in the arenas. By dismissing the architectural achievements of the Hellenic past, cities like Ephesos were founded anew, but this time in the image of Rome.

In addition to subverting past architectural wonders, the Roman spectacles challenged Greek mythological narratives. As the games developed, Romans began poking fun at Greek mythology by producing reenactments in the arenas of their amphitheaters. Martial recounted one such event: “Noble Fame used to sing of the work of Hercules and the lion brought down in the vast Nemean valley. May the ancient story be silent: after your *munera*, O Caesar, we have seen these deeds done by a woman’s hand” (*Spec.* 9). These productions asserted Rome’s dominance over not only the Hellenic peoples of the East, but also the very achievements of their glorious past, and even more ominous, the actions of their gods.

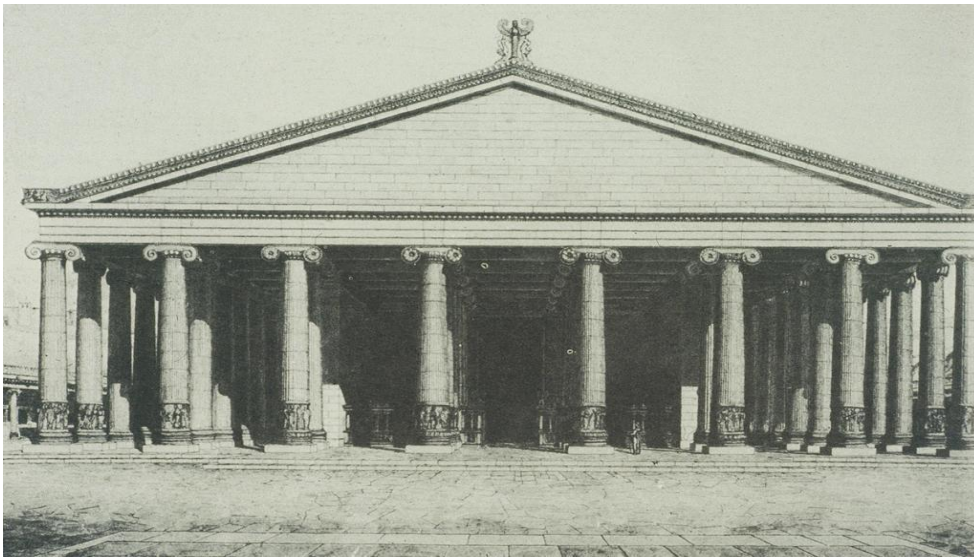


Figure 11

### 3.2: THE ILLUSION OF CIVIC RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES

The illusion of voting has been epitomized in the image of the thousands of spectators gesturing with their thumbs the fate of a fallen gladiator. This image first exploded in the imagination of European society with Jerome’s painting “Thumbs Down” (see Corbeill 1-21) (Fig. 12) and more recently, in Ridley Scott’s cinematic production, *Gladiator* (2000), starring Russell Crowe (Fig. 13). Though much can be written about the historical inaccuracy in the representation of the gesture itself (a fiery debate in highest echelons of academia), the importance here lies in that acts function as a substitution for “real” voting practices. By allowing citizens the ability to determine the fate of a defeated gladiator, the spectacles could elicit the *sensation* of voting in lieu of real political rights. Anthony Corbeill’s comprehensive study on how the Romans perceived the *pollex* (thumb) has significance for the function performed by spectators during the shows. According to the jurist Ateius Capito, the Latin word *pollex* was derived from *pollet* (“has power”, Corbeill 4). “In Roman practice,” summarizes Corbeill, the Roman thumb “could both bestow and withhold favor, grant and deprive life” (4). The “thumb,” therefore, held almost supernatural powers in

Roman beliefs. Though many of the empire's residents lost traditional civic rights under the Principate, the spread and increase in frequency of spectacles provided a forum where *real* power could be wielded. Amphitheaters, theaters, and stadiums assembled residents into a communal space, where a type of civic ritual could be practiced, not just by magistrates, but also by members throughout the stratified social hierarchy, and those great many peoples newly incorporated into the Roman cultural and identity matrix.



Figure 12

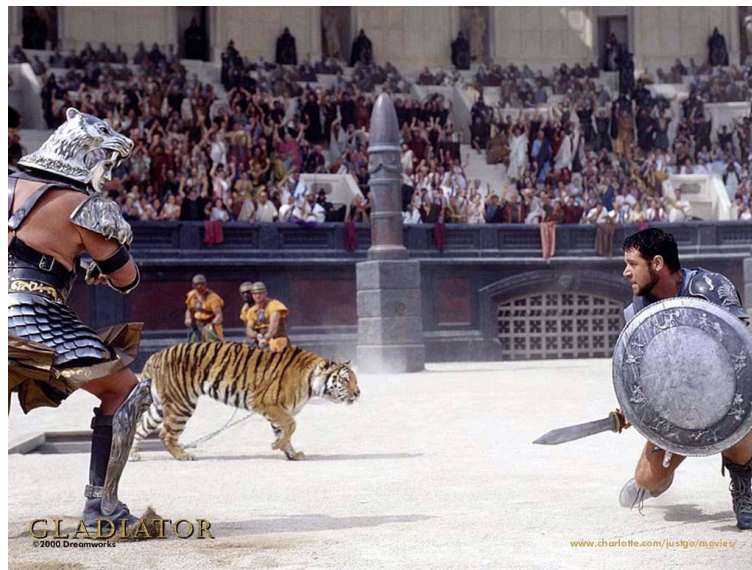


Figure 13

In addition, the amphitheatre provided a forum in which the emperor could meet face-to-face with his subjects, and could use the intimate setting to promote a desired image. Where late Republican spectacles saw ambitious Romans promoting their fame by hosting extravagant shows, the Imperial period allowed emperors to use spectacles to downplay their regal attributes. This was particularly important in the early Principate, where Romans still clung to the possibility of re-establishing the Republic. Augustus, for example, was “careful to avoid the criticisms which he was aware had been made by the people of his father Julius

Caesar” (Suet. *Aug.* 45). According to Suetonius, Caesar spent his time at the games completing unfinished bureaucratic work instead of watching the struggles in the arena. To the rest of the audience Caesar appeared somehow above them. In contrast, by devoting his full attention to the games while in attendance, Augustus created a down to earth image that resonated well with the spectators. The arena provided the visual and symbolic demonstration of authority for rulers and audiences alike.

Being in such close proximity to the sponsor also meant that Romans could voice their concerns directly to authority figures. Whether to the emperor in Rome or the provincial governor in Ephesos, spectators could express their discontent through chanting or, even, rioting. The spectacles did not always promote harmony. Occasionally they could produce unexpected reactions from the crowd, and instead of increasing the sponsor’s prestige, actually harm it. In 55 BCE Pompey held five days of public spectacles that included an assortment of animals imported from Africa; 600 lions, 400 leopards, baboons, and a rhinoceros, were all slaughtered in the arena for the pleasure of Roman audiences.<sup>65</sup> For the closing spectacle, twenty elephants were presented, but the crowd reacted to the impending slaughter in an unusual way. Cicero was present at this spectacle and wrote about it in a letter to his friend Marius. After expressing his boredom at the unoriginality of the first few days’ performances, Cicero wrote, “the final day belonged to the elephants. The common crowd had great admiration for them and no pleasure at what they saw. No, indeed; they pitied the elephants, and felt that there was a kind of community between those beasts and the human race.”<sup>66</sup> Cicero’s interpretation of the event suggests that Romans felt sympathy towards the elephants. In *Natural History*, Pliny the Elder echoes Cicero, but his account explains *why* the audience reacted differently:

The elephants attempted, too, by their united efforts, to break down the enclosure, not without great confusion among the people who surrounded the iron gratings . . . When, however, the elephants in the exhibition given by Pompeius had lost all hopes of escaping, they implored the compassion of the multitude by attitudes which surpass all description, and with a kind of lamentation bewailed their unhappy fate. So greatly were the people affected by the scene, that, forgetting the general altogether, and the munificence which had been at such pains to do them honour, the whole assembly rose up in tears, and showered curses on Pompeius, of which he soon afterwards became the victim. (Plin. *Nat.* 8.7)

The audience’s uncharacteristic reaction to Pompey’s games gives us a clue as to one of the functions of the Roman spectacle. In Pliny’s account, the spectators expressed sympathy towards the beasts only after their secure position in the amphitheater’s seats was threatened. The spectators became anxious about the potential of being harmed by the coordinated attempt of the elephants to escape. As a consequence, their role as spectators and judges was disturbed. When the elephants realized that escape was impossible and began to act as if they were begging for mercy, the audience’s authority, according to Shelton, was reestablished, and because of this, they decided to demand mercy for the elephants (375).

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<sup>65</sup> Plin. *Nat.* 8.7.

<sup>66</sup> Cicero *Letters to Friends* 7.1: “There were *venations*, twice a day for five days; magnificent, no one denies that; but what possible pleasure can there be for a civilized man in watching some weak man shredded by a very strong beast, or a strikingly beautiful animal run through by a hunting spear? And if you’ve seen one *venatio*, you’ve seen them all; we who saw this one certainly saw nothing new. The final day belonged to the elephants. The common crowd had great admiration for them and no pleasure at what they saw. No, indeed; they pitied the elephants, and felt that there was a kind of community between those beasts and the human race.”



Thus, the spectacle functioned to visually demonstrate Roman identity and brotherhood by placing those included in the ambiguous concept of Roman membership as spectators in the stands, and the Other in the arena to be killed. It should also be noted that the unexpected reaction to the slaughter of elephants in 55 BCE was, however, the exception to the rule. In most cases, Romans wallowed in the indiscriminate destruction and abuse of wild animals.

At times, however, the arena's attempt to reinforce order and social harmony failed, and chaos erupted within its walls. Included in the wealth of artifacts preserved by the eruption of Vesuvius is a fresco (Fig. 14) depicting a riot between two rival city factions in 69 CE: the Pompeians and Nuceriaans. This remarkable and fortuitous surviving work immediately compels the modern viewer to conjure up images of seemingly irrational savagery that surrounds sporting events depicted in today's media. The fresco captures the chaotic environment of that day; the action in the arena spills out around the walls of the amphitheater, and spectators become indistinguishable from gladiators as the fighting ensues. The scene is a reminder of a breakdown in law and order, the vulnerability of the emperor, and the limitations to which the spectacles functioned for the promotion stability. Yet the scene also stands as a symbol for the frustrations that swelled among a people whose liberties had been suppressed.



Figure 14

In today's culture, most people think of sports as just games,<sup>67</sup> yet for the Romans the associations embodied in their version of "sports" were, at least theoretically, far more

<sup>67</sup> Sport fanatic and hooligan culture challenge this claim. Nevertheless, these groups represent significantly small portions of the population. One of the reasons for the difference in attitude to sports between moderns and ancients is that today, entertainment comes in greater varieties, whereas, in antiquity, the theater was where the far majority of the urban population went for entertainment. In 2007, the Italian football federation (FIGC) suspended all league matches indefinitely after a hooligan riot erupted at the

fundamental to their conceptions of civilization. For the Romans, the spectacle games manifested symbolic representations of civilization's virtues and its triumphs over barbarity, wildness, and criminality, all the while pragmatically providing the Roman citizenry and the subjected Greeks an attractive substitute for lost political liberties. In the arenas, audiences were constantly reminded of what it meant to be civilized. Those who violated the law or rebelled against Rome damaged the fabric that was thought to hold society together. These transgressions were punished in the arena. Though ownership of the spectacles may have initially caused Greek resentment in some areas on the Greek mainland, with Roman provincials using them to flaunt their power (by emphasizing their Roman-ness) over their Hellenistic neighbors, ultimately, the narrative of civilization's triumph over nature and barbarity applied as much to Greeks as to the Romans who initiated it within the walls of amphitheaters and other venues (Wiedemann 43). This was particularly imperative to Roman success in Ephesos, where the fading of Hellenistic traditions, their yearning for lost liberty and autonomy, and the burdens imposed by Roman tax farmers, all contributed to making the Roman province of Asia potentially volatile.

Yet to argue that Greeks resisted Roman spectacles because of such resentments is mistaken. In fact, the documentary record suggests the opposite; Greek elites not only willingly sponsored Roman-style games and shows, but also competed for the honor of doing so. Entertainment is often an eagerly sought after release from stresses in life. Hosting gladiatorial games allowed individuals in Roman colonies, regardless of their ethnic origin, to express their identity as Romans and effectively distinguish themselves from the surrounding Greek communities (Pietsch 9). This trend played an interesting role in Ephesos where native Greek speakers or Italian colonists could choose their identity by either emphasizing "Greek" or "Roman" qualities. According to the Greek sophist Philostratus (c. 170–247), Athens introduced gladiatorial games solely out of rivalry with Corinth. Corinth had been designated as the seat of the provincial governor after its destruction and later reconstruction by Rome, while Athens had long considered itself (and was considered by Rome) as a cultural capital.<sup>68</sup> Rome rewarded conquered cities that acquiesced in its rule by subsidizing public infrastructure and festivals. Many conquered cities endeavored to gain Rome's attention and subsequent perquisites. One way of accomplishing this was through adopting, or giving the appearance of having adopted, Roman culture. Hosting *munera* was an exceptional way for a city to convey its good behavior to Rome. For Greeks whose traditional forms of entertainment had long established traditions, holding *munera* in the same traditional spaces where Greek festivals and games had and still occurred signaled to Rome that locals were embracing Roman culture. They allowed Greeks, as colonized peoples, an active role in the construction of their identity, avoided "negative sanctions from the more powerful," and were a strategy for "negotiating benefits from those who dominated them" (Thomas 132). To Rome these efforts meant that a city was integrating well into the empire and was less likely to resist taxes or rebel.

As discussed above, the narrative that Rome embraced and legitimized its imperial expansion was based on the virtues embodied in their conception of civilization. Roman

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conclusion of a game between the clubs of Catania and Palermo. Here we see that hooliganism is not a phenomenon unique to contemporary Italy or modern society, but rather, instances of such outbreaks of violence can be traced as far back as ancient Rome.

<sup>68</sup> The numbers of inscriptions found at Athens illustrate the transition of a Greek city into a new Roman colony. See Reynolds, Beard & Roueche.

control over Greece was partially validated by adopting Greek traditions (Thomas 138). As Thomas points out, Roman authors often praised Greek culture but “only as long as it lay in the past. They constructed a narrative of Greek decadence, a decline from greatness, to describe the Greeks with whom they concretely interacted” (139). This attitude is clearly illustrated by comparing representations of Pegasus at Corinth in Hellenistic and Roman periods. Before Roman conquest, Pegasus usually appeared alone. After the destruction of the city and its reconstruction along Roman lines in the early first century BCE, Pegasus was paired with a tamer. Though Romans and Greeks shared compatible narratives with respects to the virtues of civilization, the Romans attested that they were the only ones responsible and competent enough to manage and sustain it. This propaganda was so successful that Greek scholars, such as Polybius, were quick to submit, accepting not only Roman rule, but also actively developing theories to rationalize it.<sup>69</sup>

Yet it was once thought by historians (and still believed by many Hellenists) that the Greek East fiercely resisted Romanization – especially with regards to Roman spectacles. Lafaye epitomizes nineteenth-century attitudes towards Greek perceptions of Roman shows, stating that “le génie propre de la race grecque lui inspira pour les combats de gladiateurs une répugnance ne surmonta jamais complètement” (quoted in Wiedemann 128). Though racially based arguments are no longer in style, the conclusions derived from them have in many ways remained. Jennison introduced his 1937 study on animals of Roman shows by stating that “Greeks had not the Roman taste for watching wild beasts being killed in large numbers,” however, he did caution that “bull-fighting was a Thessalian sport, and cock fighting and quail-fighting were popular in the Greek world” (10). But what evidence is there that Greeks did not have the taste for watching the destructions of animals in large numbers? In fact, the opposite is closer to the truth. From epigraphy, especially the work conducted by Robert in *Les Gladiateurs dans l’Orient grec* (1940), it becomes clear that Greeks eagerly adopted gladiatorial combat (Lendon 400). He demonstrated that the eastern provinces produced gladiatorial games in proportion to the extent to which members of the upper class identified themselves as members of the Roman Empire (Pietsch 9). In Rhodes, according to Robert, Roman influence was fiercely resisted, and thus, fewer games were held. Yet even Robert, writing as late as 1940, could not bring himself to accept the conclusion that the far majority of Greek-speaking residents of the eastern Roman Empire eagerly accepted the Roman spectacles (Wiedemann 128). The myth of a pure Hellas had taken root deep in scholarly circles, and, even today, continues to be propagated by Hellenist interest groups.

If Greeks initially rejected Roman spectacles, the allure of the spectacle quickly overcame the prejudices of even the most virtuous of Greeks. The spectacles became so popular in the Greek-speaking East that audiences quickly left performances in the theater before their plays had ended in order to not miss the beginning of a spectacle in the amphitheater (Pietsch 10). An inscription dating to the reign of Antonius Pius (144 CE) recording a dispute between citizen Publius Veditius Antonius III and the citizens of Ephesos, testifies to the popularity of the spectacles in the city. In the inscription, the emperor takes a critical tone towards the Ephesians for not properly appreciating Veditius for his benefactions towards the city:

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<sup>69</sup> The Greek historian Polybius was captured and sent to Rome after Perseus’s defeat at Pydna. Polybius developed a relationship with the Scipio family and accompanied them on military expeditions, most famously, the capture of Carthage. He produced a history of Rome in which he sought to “explain more clearly how [Roman] supremacy was acquired,” to the Greeks who knew “little” of Rome’s history (1.3-3).

...ἀλλ' ὑμῖς οὐ[κ] ὀρθῶς ἀποδέχεσθε αὐτόν. κἀγὼ καὶ συνεχώρησα αὐτῷ [...] ἃ ἠτήσατ[ο] καὶ ἀπεδεξάμην ὅτι [οὐ] τὸν π[ολλῶν τῶ]ν πολειτευομένων τρόπων, οἱ τοῦ [παρ]αχρῆμα[α] ? εὐδοκίμ[ε]ιν χά[ρ]ιν εἰς θέα[ς κ]αὶ διανομὰς καὶ τὰ τῶ[ν ἀγώνων] θέματα ? δαμν[ῶ]σιν ? [τῆ]ν φι[λοτιμ]ίαν, ἀλλὰ δι' οὗ πρὸς τὸ [μέλλον ἐλπίζει ? σ]εμνο[τέρων ποι]ῆσειν τὴν πόλιν προήρη[ται]. τὰ γράμματα ἔπε[μψεν] [Κλ. Ἰου]λιανὸς ὁ κράτιστος ἀνθ[ύ]πατος. εὐτυχεῖτ[ε]. (Kalinowski 111)<sup>70</sup>

From Antonius's critical tone towards the Ephesians, we can infer that the shows became considerably popular with the local residents because of their lack of appreciation towards Vedius's choice of benefaction. In short, the residence of Ephesos desired spectacles, however, some elements of the Roman elite believed them to be wasteful. Instead, elites, such as the Emperor Antonius Pius, preferred investments that held more enduring long-term value such as structures, a point that led to contentious situations.

Even though Ephesos lacked an amphitheater, its existing structures were modified to hold *munera* and *venatio* (see Chapter 3.5). Even Roman critics of the games, most notably the first-century CE Stoic Seneca, commented on the seductive qualities of “plain butchery.” In a letter to his friend (*Letters* 7, 1-5) he wrote: “There is nothing so ruinous to good character as to idle away one's time at some spectacle. Vices have a way of creeping in because of the feeling of pleasure that it brings. Why do you think that I say that I personally return from shows greedier, more ambitious and more given to luxury?” (Mahoney 93-4). Ultimately, Seneca expressed his repulsion toward the spectacle, and because of its potential to “corrupt” people, he felt compelled to advise his friend against exposure to it.

It is important to note that Seneca's repulsion was not based on humanitarian grounds, and he certainly did not feel sympathy or compassion for the humans and animals being slaughtered in the arena. His concern was for the effect the spectacles were having on Roman audiences, along the lines of Plato's belief that the “cultivation of strong feelings on behalf of others will interfere with our restraint over ourselves.”<sup>71</sup> In fact, Seneca belongs to an elite group who believed that public executions and spectacles should be used as moral exemplars; they should visually demonstrate *virtus* and serve as deterrents instead of displaying pure cruelty (*crudelitas*) and sadism (*saevitia*). Least of all should they provide mere entertainment (Wistrand 18). By displaying their *virtus*, gladiators, a category of people at the lowest end of the social spectrum, could serve as examples for the rest of the population. With every performance, a lesson in how to die was performed for viewers. For Seneca, death was ultimate freedom. In Petronius's *Satyricon*, the character Echion reveals what spectators wanted to see from spectacles. Gladiators were expected to be well-motivated, brave, skilled fighters who conducted mortal combat to the bitter end. It was important that spectators had a good view, so neither bloodshed nor death were missed. Most importantly, both Pliny and Martial saw the games as practical illustrations of moral stature (Wistrand 20).

Summarizing an idea developed by Wiedemann, Lendon writes that “single combat had a talismanic importance in Roman culture; Roman greatness could be viewed as founded upon it.” “*Virtus*,”<sup>72</sup> explains Lendon, was “the most perfectly admired and perfectly Roman

<sup>70</sup> “Now I have granted him all that he asked, appreciating that he prefers to make the city more majestic not in the customary manner of public figures, who for the sake of immediate popularity expend their generosity on spectacles and distributions and the prizes of games, but in a manner that looks to the future. The letters were transmitted by his Excellency, the proconsul Claudius Julianus. Farewell”.

<sup>71</sup> Plato. *Rep.* 10.605-06.

<sup>72</sup> *Virtus* was a specific virtue in Ancient Rome. It carries connotations of valor, manliness, excellence, courage, character, and worth, perceived as masculine strengths (from Latin *vir*, “man”).

of qualities” (401). Thus, gladiators who for the most part were despised as social outcasts, could exhibit their *virtus* to virtually the entire city,<sup>73</sup> if not directly, then by word-of-mouth or through the graffiti<sup>74</sup> produced by elated spectators (Fig. 15). This was because rumors of their actions in the arenas would spread throughout the city after games, and, like after modern sporting events, make for popular conversation. Furthermore, a gladiator did not have to win a fight to express *virtus*. According to Wiedemann, “a brave fighter might rise from the socially dead, and re-join the society of the living” (quoted in Lendon 401). This apparent paradox is exactly what justified and made acceptable the sheer carnage facilitated within the arenas of the empire to the Roman mind and which designated it as a popular theme for works of art.



Figure 15

### 3.3: FOOD DISTRIBUTION

Spectacles promoted an environment where the community gathered and practiced a ritualized form of food distribution. The practice initially developed out of post-sacrificial food dispensations in the Roman West and the Greek East. Though many distinctions existed, their fundamental essence was relatively similar. According to Louis Robert, “throughout antiquity there was an intimate connection between butchery and sacrifice, even for the meat that was sold commercially in shops” (511). As time passed, the distribution of meat became institutionalized as a vital function of Greek festivals and Roman spectacles.

Large public sacrifices in the Greek East were followed by a distribution of meat to citizens, usually without charge, though some portions were collected by meat sellers and

<sup>73</sup> “One-sixth or even a quarter of the population could have attended the races (Circus Maximus) simultaneously. In terms of modern television, that would correspond to a staggering audience figure of 16 to 20 per cent, and the citizens of Rome were physically present, not just sitting in front of a screen at home” (Kohn & Ewigleben 9).

<sup>74</sup> Graffiti are extremely important sources for understanding Roman spectacles because they provide evidence for what the spectators considered important – through graffiti, the spectator chose what images to produce. The characters depicted in figure 15 reveal the various actors involved in the production of a spectacle from Pompeii (gladiators, musicians, and the emperor), and more importantly, how the spectator interpreted their roles during the games. The image also includes a duel between two gladiators, with their names inscribed above their heads. The importance of musicians during the shows is also evident. Because of the noisy and chaotic environment of the arena, music was likely used to issue commands and coordinate the shows.

sold in the agora (Zaidman & Pantel 33-4). (Pseudo) Xenophon identified the importance of communal sacrifices as one of the many valuable institutions of Athens, because of the inability of “every poor person to [...] [individually] sacrifice and feast, to erect temples, or to live in a great and beautiful city.” Athens remedied this problem by producing sacrifices at the public expense, so that “the common people [could] enjoy the feasts and obtain a share in the sacrifices”<sup>75</sup> A fundamental difference between Greek and Roman practices lies in how they reinforced the structure of social hierarchy. While Greek-speaking peoples were independent of Rome, public sacrifices, and the distribution of meat that followed, were organized on fairly egalitarian grounds. Greek rites also necessitated domestic animals for sacrifice, while Roman spectacles, and taste preferences, saw a greater use of wild animals.

Rome also distributed meat to its citizens through sacrifices, but spectacles were Romans’ main venues for access to meat. Prominent leaders such as Sulla and Caesar provided banquets during their triumphs, however, the animal shows were where most of free meat was to be found. Kyle argues that the large numbers of animals slaughtered in Roman *venationes* produced astonishing quantities of meat due to the nature of their shows, which were eagerly desired by a society where the common people were mostly “protein-deficient [...] hungry, and malnourished” (191). After animals were killed for entertainment and ritual, their meat was processed and distributed in communal feasts, or as prizes to be offered for those attending the games. Under the Julio-Claudian emperors, tokens inscribed with various redeemable prizes were scattered to crowds, some of which included inscriptions denoting meat redemptions. Spectators were on occasion made to scramble for gifts themselves, a practice instigated by Augustus while spending time on Capri (Suet *Aug.* 98). As with Greek festivals, some of the meat could be acquired by meat vendors and sold in the forum.

Because Ephesos celebrated both Greek and Roman festivals, its residents had the benefit of frequent opportunities for access to meat. The sacred procession of Artemis, which ran around Mt. Panayırdağ (see Fig. 2), was marked along the way with stops at which sacrifices were held (Thomas 128). As Romans increasingly turned towards the amphitheater to be entertained and fed, so too would Ephesians have abandoned their traditional festivals and sought out the exhilarating carnage of the Roman spectacle, where free meat could be acquired.

### 3.4: SPECTACLES AND STABILITY

Curiously enough, there is evidence to suggest that Greek-speakers in Asia Minor had been exposed to Roman spectacles before becoming completely dominated by their western Latin neighbors. In the early second century, the Hellenistic monarchies of the Greek East had already begun to come under the influence of Rome, particularly through Roman magistrates and governors. Polybius recalls how the Seleucid King Antiochus Epiphanes adorned “a white toga” and sauntered about the “market-place like a candidate [...] taking some by the hand and embracing others, would beg them to give him their vote, sometimes for the office of aedile and sometimes for that of tribune” (26.1.5). In another example, Prusias of Bithynia dressed in the clothes of a Roman freedman before meeting a delegation of the Roman Senate (Diodorus 31.15.2). The adoption of Roman customs by Hellenistic monarchs was reciprocated by late Republican Roman magistrate’s emulation of those very monarchs. Office-holders like Pompey Magnus assumed a monarchical role similar to those

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<sup>75</sup> Xenophon *Ath. Pol.* 2.9.

of Hellenistic monarchies during his exploits in the East. Pompey “allotted and removed kingdoms, founded cities named after himself, and laid down the rights and laws of others; and before whom kings had solemnly laid down the diadem which was the established symbol of royalty, to receive it back at his hands” (Millar 612). Millar has found these early interactions between monarchs and magistrates to be processes that sowed the seeds for the functions attributed to the Roman emperors (614).

The cultural exchange between Rome and the Greek East also exposed foreign rulers to the Roman spectacles and the advantages that a ruler could gain by producing such events. While being held hostage by the Roman Republic, the Seleucid King Antiochus IV saw how the *munera* reinforced the authority image of the *editor*,<sup>76</sup> and how the power of Rome was illustrated directly to the Roman people in the arena. While the Roman commander Aemilius Paullus had been holding games (probably only *munera*) in Amphipolis to celebrate his victory over Macedonia, Antiochus IV, possibly to upstage him, held his own in Antioch in 166 BCE, and according to Livy, those games became regular events in the city (Wiedemann 42).

Although spectacles were held in Syria in the second century, in Asia the first *munera* and *venatio* were presented by Roman military commander Licinius Lucullus. He sponsored gladiatorial fights in 69 BCE and wild animal fights and hunts the year before (*ibid.* 43). Lucullus was an ambitious and successful general who served as *quaestor* under Sulla and was primarily responsible for defeating Mithridates and securing Asia for Rome in the first Mithridatic War. As discussed above, subjection to Roman taxes after being incorporated as a province in 133 BCE, and the punishments that ensued as a result of supporting Mithridates in 89 BCE, placed enormous stress on the provincials of Asia. Plutarch describes how the lack of “law and justice” caused great suffering in the cities in Asia, including Ephesos. Because of Sulla’s extortionate taxes, the people of Ephesos “were plundered and reduced to slavery by tax-gatherers and money-lenders. Families were forced to sell their comely sons and virgin daughters, and cities their votive offerings, pictures, and sacred structures” (*Lucullus* 20.1). Plutarch concluded that

at last men had to surrender to their creditors and serve them as slaves, but what preceded this was far worse, — tortures of rope, barrier, and horse; standing under the open sky in the blazing sun of summer, and in winter, being thrust into mud or ice. Slavery seemed, by comparison, to be disburdenment and peace. Such were the evils which Lucullus found in the cities, and in a short time he freed the oppressed from all of them” (20.2-3)

He accomplished this by introducing three reforms: (1) he established a maximum monthly limit to interest at 1%; (2) he eliminated interest that exceeded the principle; (3) “and most important of all [...] he ordained that the lender should receive no more than the fourth part of the debtor’s income” (20.4). Obedience in Ephesos would have been imperative to his successes. If the Hellenistic populations had been initially resentful of the games, or if the games in any way contributed to disorder in the city, then hosting them could have compromised his ambitions. For Lucullus to reap the benefits of producing these games, the expenses for them would have had to come out of his own pocket. Hosting grand animal shows and gladiatorial fights were extremely expensive affairs.<sup>77</sup> In addition, the summer of 68 saw Lucullus campaigning against Tigranes II of Armenia for

<sup>76</sup> *Editor*: organizer of the show.

<sup>77</sup> Gladiatorial combat was extremely expensive, and by the third and fourth centuries CE, was increasingly substituted by *venatio* (Pietsch 10).

offering sanctuary to the fleeing Mithridates. This campaign involved trekking across the harsh and hilly environment of Northern Armenia and battling against fierce armies. It is clear that Lucullus would have produced these shows only if he was certain they would provide him with immediate benefits. All who hosted games, wherever they might be, expected to derive an advantage from them, or at least to not compromise their security in a vital part of Asia. It can be concluded that the Ephesians welcomed these new shows and perhaps, like the citizens of Amphipolis, demanded more spectacles in the future.

Lucullus's program signaled a new epoch for Ephesians. The old policy towards Ephesos had no longer worked, as was demonstrated during Mithridates's first invasion. Lucullus's decision had practical benefits for himself, Rome, and Ephesians. He gained personally by winning the favor of the local residents and made a show of force not only to Mithridates and Tigranes, but also to his Roman rivals – most notably, Pompey Magnus. Plutarch writes that Tubero the Stoic referred to Lucullus as “Xerxes in a toga” (*Luc.* 39.3) while Velleius Paterculus ascribes the title “Roman Xerxes” to having been originated by Pompey (2.33.4). Nevertheless, according to Plutarch, Pompey “hated Lucullus,” and “altered every single arrangement that had been made by [him], remitting many penalties, taking away many rewards and indeed, out of pure jealousy, doing everything he could to show that admirers of Lucullus that he was now entirely without *power*.”<sup>78</sup> Pompey's propaganda was aimed at making Lucullus appear weak. We can view Lucullus's spectacles as an attempt to display his *power* in the East.

The Ephesians honored Lucullus by “celebrating festivals” with his name, and more importantly offered him “their genuine good will”; in other words, they assured him of their loyalty.<sup>79</sup> With stability in the region secured, Lucullus was free to pursue Mithridates and Tigranis, as well as all the wealth that flowed from campaigning in Asia. The eagerness of Ephesian approval can be attributed to the condition of their lives prior to Lucullus, the entertainment value of the spectacles, and as shown above, the lack of opposition to the spectacles among most Greeks. Finally, as with Athens and Corinth, a successful demonstration of loyalty to the Roman state provided highly desirable material benefits.

### 3.5: STRUCTURES OF SPECTACLES IN EPHEOS

Though Rome tolerated Ephesos's desire to retain and express its traditions, Romanization undoubtedly occurred. Through monuments, Hellenistic and Roman elements competed for the dominant expression of identity, and sponsoring the construction of buildings, or renovations for them, was an effective investment, due to their longevity. According to Elsner, monuments “are the most visually potent assertion of a culture's relationship with its past and hence are a paramount cultural mechanism for evoking the history of identity – for grounding collective subjectivity in a historical valorization” (125). As the Roman Empire expanded, amphitheaters were constructed in its wake in order to provide spaces where spectacles could be held. The construction of amphitheaters, however, only characterized the western half of the empire, where structures to host spectacles did not exist. Many parts of the Greek East did not require the construction of

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<sup>78</sup> Plut. *Pompey* 30-31; for an analysis on the relationship between Pompey and Lucullus, see. Hillman 315-318.

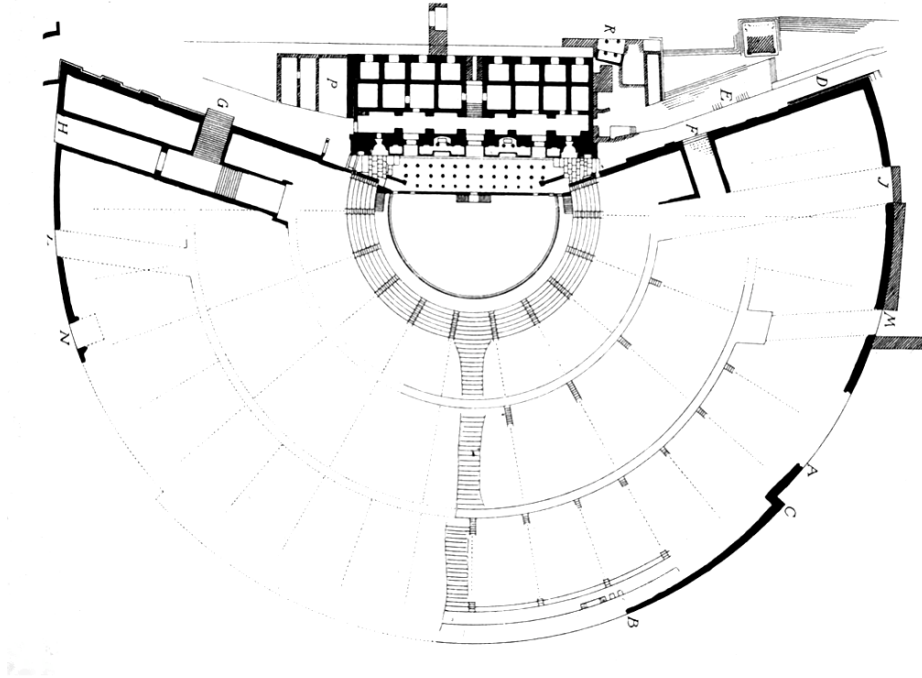
<sup>79</sup> It can also be argued that Lucullus was a Greco-phile. According to Plutarch the “object of his ambition” was to “show kindness to the Greeks” (*Luc.* 32). It is more likely, however, that Plutarch added this characterization to embellish the personal qualities of Lucullus, as he did with all his subjects in his *Lives*.



new buildings dedicated exclusively to the *munera* and *venationes*, because structures with the potential to host such spectacles could readily be found (Pietsch 9). At Ephesos, the Great Theater (Fig. 16 and 17) was used for *munera* and *venationes*, after renovations were made to it by Rome. An early second-century inscription honoring Titus Flavius Montanus, located on a statue base of the Great Theater, attests to this, stating that he “finished the theater, dedicated it during his highpriesthood and gave gladiatorial combat and wild beast hunts” (Carter 275).



Figure 16



**Figure 17**

The present condition of the Great Theatre is due to the renovations of the late Roman period. Much of our information on the construction of theaters and their functions comes from sources such as Vitruvius (*On Architecture*) (Boatwright 184). Scholars once assumed that Lysimachus, one of Alexander the Great's generals, was the first to build the theater, but this has never been substantiated archaeologically. Instead, it is now believed that the theater came into existence soon after Rome's acquisition of Asia in 133 BCE and was to function as the new city center (Scherrer 154). Under Roman renovations, the Great Theatre would be designed to accommodate the *venatio* and *munera*.

True to the "Greek" style, the theater was built directly into the slope of a mountainside. In its early stages it would have been a small structure consisting of a simple stage, an *orchestra*, a drainage channel, an auditorium, and, perhaps, one tier of seating. According to Scherrer, "the ground plan would have extended beyond a semicircle, with its diagonal side entrances (*parodoi*) already extant" (158).

The historical consequences of Mediterranean events greatly altered both the topography of Ephesos and the distribution of power and influence of Hellenistic societies. Throughout the Hellenistic period, Pergamom had reigned as the supreme city in western Anatolia, and its primacy continued after 133 BCE. Yet when Augustus "reorganized" the province of Asia in 29 BCE, he chose Ephesos as Asia's administrative center and capital (Price 158). Under Augustus, the city experienced rapid growth and the need for an enlargement of the theater became apparent. Additions were made under Nero, but during the building boom (87–92 CE) of Domitian, the theatre saw the majority of its additions (Scherrer 158).

In fact, Ephesos probably fared significantly better under Domitian than under any prior emperor. In Ephesos, his "oppressive" policies would have done much to reduce corruption and abuse amongst officials and thus alleviate many burdens upon the lowest classes (Price 159). Domitian's most severe critics (Tacitus, Pliny, Titus, etc) were all wealthy aristocrats and had lost many of their privileges under his rule. This does not necessarily

imply that Domitian was concerned with poor people, but rather, that his attitudes towards Ephesos reflect that city's importance. In other words, Domitian, like Lucullus and Augustus before him, was attentive to the interests of Ephesians and took measures to secure their gratification.

Under Domitian, the upper storey of the stage building was erected with a richly structured aediculated façade, a *logeion*<sup>80</sup> was built in the orchestra, the orchestra itself was enlarged, and a second tier of seats was added, with the seating built on vaulted substructures adjacent to the lateral retaining walls (Scherrer 158). The raised seating allowed for a wall to separate viewers from the orchestra and position them at a safer distance from beasts and projectiles. In addition, removable fences or meshes could further ensure the safety of spectators.<sup>81</sup> Most residents, especially the less affluent, would have certainly appreciated these expenditures. An improved theatre would also boost Ephesian pride because their city included monumental structures reflecting the emperor's favor. As we saw with Athens and Corinth, this favor was actively sought after by Greek cities.

Theaters and stadia were integral structures to any major Hellenistic city. Theaters, however, did not provide spectators with the same levels of protection of amphitheatres, because their lowest levels of seating were dangerously close to the orchestra-arena (Fig. 18). Amphitheatres had evolved together with spectacles under Rome, and were thus adequately designed with the audience's safety in mind. Accounting for audience's safety during *munera* was initially easily achieved by leaving the first few rows of seating empty. This is what Lucius Licinius Lucullus would have done when he held his shows in the early part of the first century BCE. The Theater of Dionysius adopted similar means when it hosted spectacles in its orchestra. "The Athenians," wrote Dio Chrysostom, "look on at this fine spectacle in their theatre under the very walls of the Acropolis [...] so that often a fighter is slaughtered among the very seats in which the Hierophant and other priests must sit" (*Discourse* 31.121). Though Dio does not explicitly state that the honored officials occupied different seating during the gladiatorial combat, the fact, however, is implied due to the tone of the passage. Dio is critical of the practice; had these gladiators actually spilt blood on the robes of the officials, and not merely on where they "must sit" in the theater, then he would have certainly emphasized that point to further substantiate his condemnations (Carter 271). The Theatre of Dionysius was also structurally altered to accommodate Roman spectacles (Pietsch 9). To provide additional safety to spectators, the foremost seats that reached the orchestra were removed from many theaters. This not only increased the distance between the spectators and performers, but also had the added benefit of increasing the size of the orchestra – a necessary requirement for *venationes* involving large beasts. The three tiers of seating of the Great Theater begin from a raised position behind a podium. This provided sufficient protection against harm from gladiatorial duels; gladiators, after all, were professional entertainers, and rarely threw their weapons. The *venationes* and *ad bestia*, however, involved wild animals in their productions. The unpredictable nature of these animals necessitated additional protective measures to ensure that they would not harm the audience. The raised podium alone could not secure large or agile animals, such as bears and

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<sup>80</sup> *Aediculated*: an architectural frame consisting of two columns over which is an entablature with pediment. *Logeion*: Greek stage; performances in the Hellenistic period included actors placed on a raised platform or stage behind the orchestra and in front of the skene; the roof of the proskenion could be employed for this purpose.

<sup>81</sup> Because *venationes* were likely held in the Great Theater, elements to ensure the audience's protection would have been added.

leopards, in the arena. Bears are capable of climbing trees and walls, and panthers could jump as high as 13 feet (Jennison 155-6). Panthers were contained in the arena by the use of a system of posts and nets (Fig. 21) (Carter 273). Such a system could be installed for the morning *venationes* and afternoon *ad bestia*, then removed before the afternoon *munera*. It is unlikely that elephants performed in the Great Theater – the stadium would have been a more appropriate venue for them due to space requirements, however, evidence for the use of tigers and bears in the Great Theater exists in relief works that adorned it (Fig. 19–20).

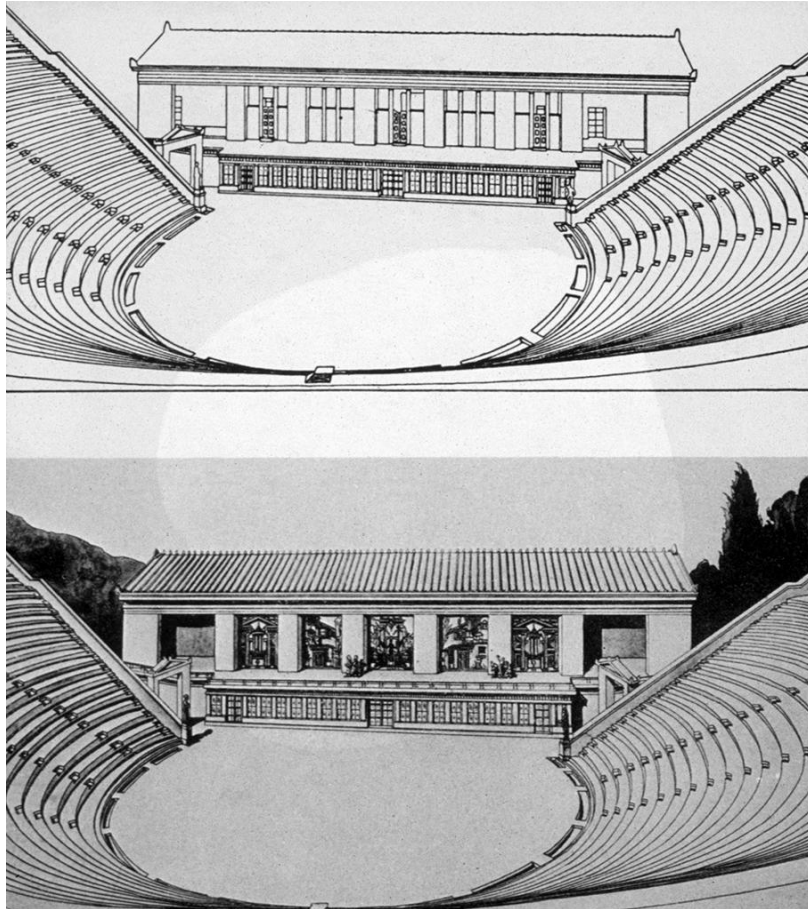


Figure 18

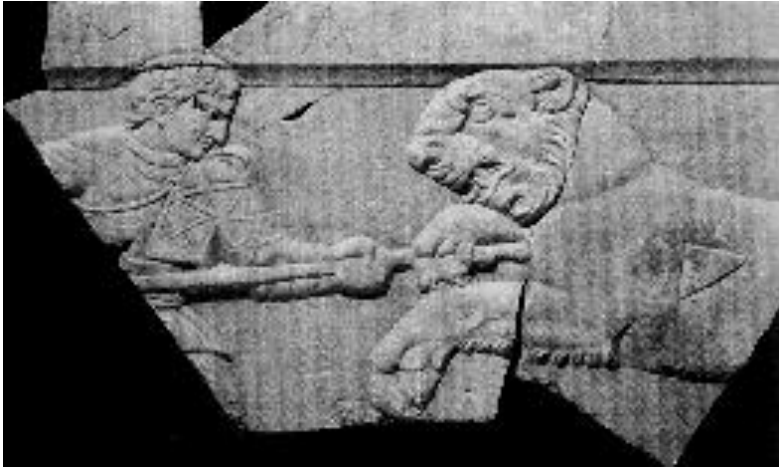
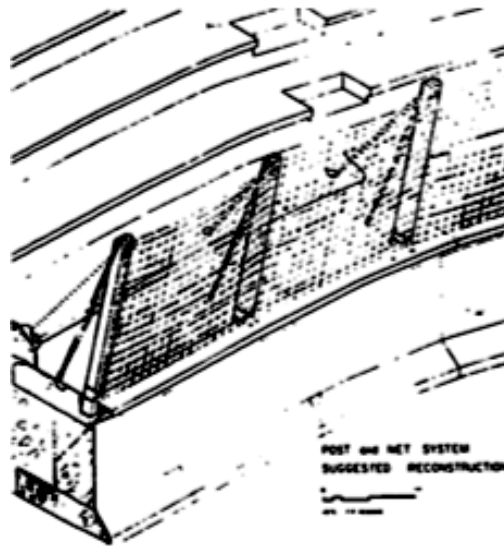


Figure 19



Figure 20



**Figure 21**

Figure 22 depicts an Erote figure as a bestiarius in combat with a charging bear. Eros, a particularly powerful god, played a significant role in Ephesos (See Appendix II). His depiction as participating in the *venationes* symbolically confirms the religious context of the events, and the inclusion of the bear, confirms their use in the orchestra-arena. Wooden posts with heavy netting might have been adequate for panthers, but bears, bulls, and certainly elephants, could have easily torn through them. To address this problem, Ephesian authorities would have had to employ barriers capable of repelling such large beasts without obstructing the spectators' view. This was achieved through a combination of establishing a system of posts and nets on the podium, or by erecting a temporary fence behind the *proedria* throne (Carter 273).<sup>82</sup> Still, the diameter of the orchestra of the Great Theater, thirty meters at its greatest length, was not large enough to accommodate spectacles involving bulls or horses, let alone elephants. We can conclude that *venationes* of the Great Theater probably involved only a few animals at any one time, the *ad bestia* as successions of individual executions, and the *munera* as shows of individual combat.

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<sup>82</sup> *Proedria*: the grassy area that separated the orchestra from the audience, or the front rows of the audience.



**Figure 22**

The events held within its walls were both competitive and syncretistic because the relationship between Ephesos and Rome evolved over time. Eventually, however, the spectacle of gladiatorial combat and wild animal shows imposed a Roman perspective on the Ephesians, and whether consciously or not, was a most effective tool of establishing a homogenous or hybrid culture and stability upon them. The spectacle not only came to dominate the types of shows Hellenistic theaters hosted, but demanded that they changed their physical appearance to accommodate those shows. What effect this had on the local populations cannot be deduced entirely, but what is certain is that the locals embraced and approved of the changes.

The location of the Great Theater and the structures around it (see Fig. 2) can be used as a measure of its importance. To the west, the theater overlooked the Roman harbor.<sup>83</sup> Ephesos had the most important harbor in the eastern Aegean, and served to link communications between Greece and Rome in the west, and its territories in Asia in the east (Ramsay 167-77). With its construction, the area in which the theater was positioned substantially gained importance due to the increase in commercial activity. It is probable that the theater's construction was intertwined with the development of the harbor—since only after the harbor came into existence could the location of the theater function as the

<sup>83</sup> Due to heavy silting activity, Ephesos is now several miles distant from the coast. Its seaport, constructed with the intention of being a great center of trade, was located in a landlocked gulf and an inner harbor. Deposits from the river that fed it accumulated over time and increased the difficulty in navigating it. This had been the case during the imperial period as well. Remnants of a canal, desperately constructed to keep Ephesos's harbor viable, are visible today. An inscription from 129 CE, honoring the Emperor Hadrian for his benefactions to the city, states that he "made the harbours navigable, and diverted the river Cayster which was damaging the harbours" (Millar 447; *Syll.* 839). In addition, the proconsul of 161-2 wrote in a letter of the emperors concern about the maintenance of the harbor.

city center. Factoring in the sacred processional way, it becomes clear that the theater was located on an illustrious piece of real estate.

The constructions of the harbor baths and gymnasium were emblematic of the desire of city planners to create a future in which Ephesos would retain its Hellenistic elements while emphasizing loyalty to their Roman masters (Price 161). The gymnasium, a typical feature of every Greek city, was one of the largest structures at Ephesos and must have dominated the immediate landscape. The Romans valued bathing more than exercise, while the reverse was true for the Greeks. By placing both structures in close proximity the message was clear: Ephesos was to remain a Greek city in a world ruled by Rome.

By the start of the second century C.E, the effects of Romanization began to worry many Ephesians concerned about preserving traditional “Greek” elements in their city, in what Greg Maclean Rogers refers to as “a kind of social identity crisis among Greek Ephesians” (Maclean Rogers 142). In response to this concern, Ephesian donors strove to reaffirm their city’s Greek identity. A 568-line inscription in honor of C. Vibius Salutaris, a wealthy Roman *equus* and Ephesian citizen, was established in 104 CE (Jones 116). His foundation financed civic lotteries and distributions, along with biweekly sacred processions that began and ended at the Temple of Artemis (Watkins 369). Rogers argues that Salutaris’s decision to provide for a foundation was intended to teach Ephesians, particularly the younger generations, about their city’s rituals and monuments, especially the ones that originated locally (Spawforth 383-4). Because the procession entered the city through the Magnesian gate (see Fig. 2), participants were first exposed to the “Roman” constructed upper Agora. They would then proceed towards the lower parts of the city, which contained architectural structures from the city’s Hellenistic and Ionian past. In a sense, the procession functioned as a history lesson to the city’s ephebes, boys between the ages of 18–20 and undergoing military and gymnastic training, who met the procession at the Magnesian gate and bore a collection of statues (also provided by the foundation) representing Artemis,<sup>84</sup> the emperor and his wife, and legendary founders of the city (Van Bremen 246). These statues were ritualistically placed on bases in the Great Theater, a space that was thoroughly associated with Roman spectacles by the time of the foundation. (Guettel Cole 589). The statues occupied spaces facing the audience and were also dispersed throughout seating

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<sup>84</sup> The most famous of such extant statues of Artemis is the “Lady of Ephesos.” It was discovered at the goddess’s temple, and was clearly carefully buried in late Antiquity, possibly to avoid its destruction by Christians. Morris (2003) takes a shot at providing an interpretation for the rows of bulbs that adorn the famous cult statue’s mid section – a heartily debated subject by scholars. She points to modern interpretations of the figure as indicative of foreign cultural influences on Greek religious practice (7). However, she challenges modern notions on how Greeks understood and viewed the statue’s “exotic” and “foreign” qualities. To Morris, the available evidence simply does not justify the belief that Ephesians viewed the statue in such a way. Rather, it is our “Orientalizing” of the statue, a fairly modern phenomenon, which imposes such a perspective on what Ephesians might have considered indigenous to their culture (9). Her proposition to “answer the riddle to Artemis’ appendages,” a “goat-skin bag resembling a cornucopia,” is, however, not as convincing (8). She introduces her theory by dismissing the previous interpretations of the appendages as breasts and the more recent, “scrota of sacrificed bulls” theory (8). Gerard Seitele, the classicist who developed the latter theory, however, should not be cast aside so easily. He provides ample evidence (at least as much the other theories) to justify his position, and his creative, albeit unorthodox, method (recreating the ornament by actually stringing together bull testicles) of developing his version should be welcomed by academia. Also, Morris’s theoretical conclusions on how Greeks might have perceived their cultic idols fits well with Seitele’s sacrificial bull testicle adornment theory. Nevertheless, the importance of Artemis and her attributes as a huntress must be taken into account in any future study of spectacles in Ephesos, particularly when in relation to the venationes.



areas. Therefore, images of Artemis and the imperial family symbolically joined the residents of the city in watching the spectacles. The limitations imposed by time and distance prevented the Roman emperor from being able to be physically present in any effective administrative manner throughout the empire. The presence of imperial images in Ephesos helped to bring the emperor into the community. By designating the Great Theater as the climax of the procession, before its return to the Artemision, a firm connection was established between Ephesos's Ionian past and its Greco-Roman present. If we are to accept Rogers's perspective of the processions as a history lesson to the city's youth, we cannot ignore the significance that the Great Theater played in that lesson. It is true that the descent from the Upper Agora into the lower regions of the city took participants into areas with a strong pre-Roman architectural presence, but most of the monumental structures, however, had benefited in one way or another from Rome. The Great Theater by this time, as we have seen above, was thoroughly a product of Roman and wealthy elites' subsidies.

Curiously, Salutaris's commemoration was recorded in very small text on high wall of the Great Theater, and another copy existed (now lost) on the Artemision. The text was placed quite high and could not be read without the use of a ladder. What use did it have then? Was it simply for the benefit of the few literate members of the community? Though the inscription might not have easily been read, it could still, however, be seen. By virtue of its visual presence, Ephesians would be reminded of Salutaris, his foundation, and his mission. Though literacy was reserved for the educated few, information could be transmitted by other visual means for the majority of residents. Just because people could not read an inscription, does not necessarily mean that they did not understand what information that inscription sought to transmit.

By placing the inscription in the theater, Salutaris hoped that every passerby would be reminded of his attempts to preserve "Greek" identity, as well as his contribution to the harmony and prosperity of the city. The processions passed through "Greek" monuments of "Greek" historical significance, reminding Ephesians of their "Greek" heritage. Images of the emperor, however, were also an important part of the foundation, and the procession rallied to the Great Theater before beginning its return to the Artemision.

In the Roman world, theaters were much more important than they are in our own. They held a diverse range of functions, including, but not limited to religious and political events, as well as spectacles. From incidental sources of evidence, such as Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*, we know that theaters were also used as venues for public trials and meetings (Boatwright 184). The size and shape of Roman theaters made them ideal for impromptu trials. A particularly renowned example is the trial of Aristarchus and Gaius, Paul's traveling companions who were accused of blaspheming Diana of Ephesos (Boatwright 192).

The belief that Greek theatrical spectacles were primarily an *auditory* experience, as opposed to a *visual* experience, has contributed to the theory that Greeks rejected Roman spectacles. The relationship between the visual qualities of Greek theater, versus its hearing qualities, has been a point of debate among philosophers and theoreticians since antiquity (Walton 7). Even modern scholars such as Lillian Lawler, Oliver Taplin, and David Seale, have emphasized the auditory aspects of Greek drama in their work (*ibid.* 2). Michael Walton, however, argues that Greek drama was first and foremost a *seeing* spectacle, and that "the fifth century BC saw the flourishing in Athens of a civilization which was built around the visual arts" (*ibid.* 3). Though theaters were designed to amplify sound, those members sitting on the fringes would have had difficulty hearing the shows. Even the very name *theatron*, means seeing place, as opposed to auditorium, which is a hearing place, and the *choros*, was a chorus of dancers who performed in the orchestra, and not for musicians (*ibid.*

2). Therefore, gestures and dance were the primary mode of communication for the majority of audience members, especially in large theaters such as the Theater of Dionysius in Athens, and the (even larger) Great Theater in Ephesos. This conclusion would agree with Aristotle's belief that drama originated from the dithyramb, a dance for a chorus of fifty participants. Acknowledging the Greek theatrical experience for its seeing qualities complements the other Greek spectacles, such as athletic sports (in which the visual experience is principle), quite well.

As the capital of the Roman province of Asia, Ephesos received Rome's financial support for traditional festivals, in addition to the *munera* and *venationes*. As *seeing* spectacles, it would be difficult for the traditional types to compete with the extravagance of the Roman ones. Romans exploited this mode of communication in the Hellenistic world through their spectacle, which took the level of *seeing* effects to previously unimaginable levels. The architectural improvements in Ephesos allowed for even larger crowds, and thus further necessitated an emphasis on seeing qualities.

The distribution of theaters in Hellenistic and Roman societies had varying purposes. For the Greeks, theaters functioned as religious institutions where festivals could be held and democratic assemblies could be gathered. Even in musical competitions, Greek citizens were seated in a kind of egalitarian fashion and played active roles during performances. In contrast, Roman elites were reluctant to allow the common people a place of assembly. Pompey Magnus erected the first permanent theater in Rome in the first century BCE, but ensured that Roman citizens were seated in a strictly hierarchical fashion.<sup>85</sup> Suetonius describes how Augustus further enforced a rigid social hierarchy:

Whenever any kind of public spectacles were given anywhere, the first row of seats was to be reserved for senators; and Augustus banned the ambassadors of free and allied peoples from sitting in the orchestra in games at Rome, since he had discovered that sometimes even freedmen came on embassies. He separated the soldiers from the civilians. To married men of the common people he assigned their own rows, while youths had a special section next to that of their tutors, and he decreed that no one dressed in dark clothing should sit in the central rows. Nor did he allow women to watch gladiatorial fights except from the highest seats (though it had been the custom for men and women to watch such shows together). To the Vestal Virgins alone he gave a separate place in the theatre, opposite the praetor's tribunal. (*Aug.* 44)

By bringing order to the theater, Augustus hoped to influence society at large. For Suetonius, Augustus's measures represent the policies of a good emperor. The spectacle functioned as a tool for organizing society, and when placed in the hands of a responsible emperor, could be used to establish proper order. Bad emperors, on the other hand, misused this function of the spectacle, and their actions contributed to disharmony. For example, Caligula notoriously violated the sacred social fabric developed by Augustus by, according to Dio Cassius, at first acting "like one of the crowd" at the games, and then "as time went on, he came to imitate, and to contend in many events, driving chariots, [and even] fighting as a gladiator" (*Ann.* 59.5).

When noting the distribution of Roman theaters throughout their empire, it is tempting to view them as state-sponsored institutions of acculturation – that is, an attempt by the Roman bureaucracy to "Romanize" subjected peoples. (Futrell). Yet this proposition is questionable because it assumes that the Roman state was highly centralized and that Romans wanted to Romanize "barbarian" peoples. The Roman Empire was in fact highly

<sup>85</sup> Velleius Paterculus *Roman History* 2.48; Tac. *Ann.* 14.20; Dio. 34.38.

decentralized and rested on a primarily subsistence economy.<sup>86</sup> In *The Emperor and The Roman World*, Millar has demonstrated that the Roman Empire was primarily a reactive entity, and that “the emperor’s role in relation to his subjects was essentially that of listening to requests, and of hearing disputes” (6). Nevertheless, the emperor “also assumed from the beginning a direct relationship to cities, institutions and individuals in which his pronouncements and decisions were treated as being of automatic legal validity” (*ibid.* 617). Ephesos played a vital role for an emperor’s ability to operate his theoretical powers in the East, in a world where the limitations of time and space, and the lack of sophisticated methods of disseminating information quickly, greatly hampered the practical use of that power. Spectacles were one of the few venues in which an emperor could convert his theoretical powers into effective use. This was especially true when the emperor was present in the physical space of the amphitheater, though it was important that he remained in the space allotted for viewers, and not in that for performers.

Rome’s conquest of Greece caused eastern cities, particularly Ephesos, to become a refuge for Hellenism and Greek traditions (Arnold 17). As a consequence, the character of the festivals and games changed. Where athletes had competed for the glory of their city, now many sought personal glory and fame. Many came from Alexandria where they were trained professionally and toured gathering awards. In fact, the transformation of athletic competitions was symptomatic of a much greater change at the time. With the conquest of Greece by the Romans, the very idea of an existence of a unified “Greece” came into being (Elsner 142). Describing a trait inherent in the formation of many ethnic and national identities, Elsner writes: “Greece can only be one whole when it is subservient to an external state, a Macedon or a Rome. Greece is ‘Greece’ (one country and not many *poleis*) only because it is a province in an empire whose various cities are united through having *lost* their freedom” (*ibid.*). As time passed, a reduction of Greek freedom allowed for an increase in Roman cultural influence through a restriction in Hellenistic decision-making capabilities. Games and festivals were commonly dedicated to Roman emperors, names of festivals and athletes were Romanized, and most emblematic was the introduction of gladiatorial combat in the first century BCE and spectacles involving wild beasts (Arnold 22).

The discovery of a gladiator cemetery in Ephesos has yielded a great deal of evidence for the popularity of Roman spectacles in the city. From 1991-1995, a team under the leadership of Dieter Knibbe of the Österreichisches Archäologisches Institut<sup>87</sup> excavated a cemetery between the temple of Artemis and the city of Ephesos. Because the site included human remains and several monuments dedicated to gladiators, researchers have been able

<sup>86</sup> For a macrocosmic analysis of the Roman economy (200 BCE-CE 400), see Hopkins.

<sup>87</sup> The Austrian Archaeological Institute works in collaboration with the Museum of Ephesos in Selçuk (Efes Müzesi Selçuk) on excavations, research, and display of materials found on the site. Modern excavations of the site began in 1874 when J.T. Wood (of the British Museum) was brought to the region to construct a railway line from Izmir to Denizli. The British Museum used this opportunity to locate the Temple of Artemis, a legendary Wonder of the Ancient World. Up to that point, the location of the temple was not even approximately known. Wood, like his contemporary Heinrich Schliemann with Troy, compiled all the known references to the temple in ancient literature in order to find it. Interestingly, it was an inscription from the Great Theater of Ephesos that contained a topographical description of the location of the Artemision which led Wood to locating the temple. Austrian involvement with the excavations began in 1895 when Otto Benndorf, Professor of Classical Archaeology of the Vienna University, obtained a license to dig from Ottoman authorities. Following this, he served as the first director of the Austrian Archaeological Institute (founded in 1898), and from that point to the present day, the institution has worked in collaboration with the local museum and Turkish authorities on the “topographic, historical, and architectural research in the city” (Knibbe 36-37).

to deduce valuable information about the nature of the *munera*. Analysis of the bones in particular has revealed aspects of the daily lives of gladiators, how they fought, and by what circumstances they met their end.<sup>88</sup> In 2001 analysis of the remains has shown that

gladiators from Ephesos often died young. The majority only reached early (19-25 years) or later adulthood (25-35 years). There were a few individuals who had reached full maturity (41-25 years). Dental status of these individuals was very good: no macroscopic dental cavities could be found. Long bones feature extreme thickness of the hard bone matter: mineralization and strength are very high. (Grosschmidt & Badian Kanz 22)

The cemetery is located on northern slope of Panayirdağ (see Fig. 2), about 300 meters east of the stadium at Ephesos in a wedge about 6.5 meters wide and covered by thick limestone. One of the monuments, the tomb of the gladiator Palumbus (Fig. 23) is in excellent condition. It contains a relief, sunken into a rectangular niche, depicting a fully bearded gladiator standing in a frontal position. His left hand rests on a helmet, which in turn sits on a shield. His right hand is clenched in a fist, and behind it stands a victory palm leaf, symbolically represented that he has at least won one fight. The left leg of Palumbus is turned sharply towards the left. His only clothing is a broad leather strap covering his pelvic region, and protective gear, or bandaging, on his left leg. A dog is shown leaping at his right side. On the frame of the relief, an inscription in Greek reads, “Hymnis donated the tomb for Palumbus, her own husband, as a memorial” (Pietsch 16”).

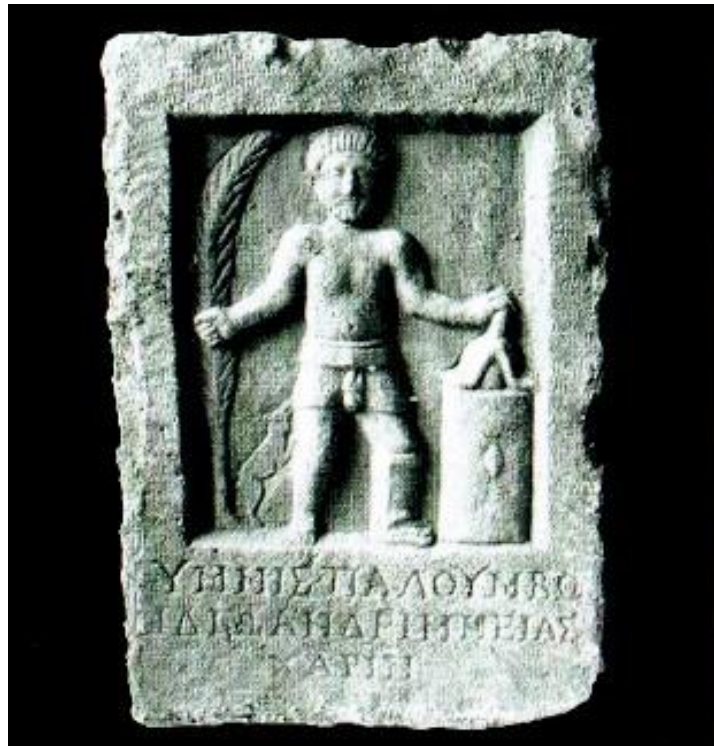


Figure 23

<sup>88</sup> For highly informative findings on gladiators deduced from scientific analysis of their remains see Grosschmidt & Babian Kanz.

The equipment depicted on the relief – leg gear, rectangular shield, and a type of helmet – all indicate that Palumbus was a *murmillo* (see gladiator chart, Fig. 5). “Palumbus” was a stage name derived from the word for “pigeon” – a name shared by other gladiators throughout the empire. Suetonius describes an occasion during a game when the spectators “called out for [‘pigeon]’.”<sup>89</sup> Making a pun on the gladiator’s name, the emperor Claudius responded that “he would hand him over ‘if [only] he could be caught’” (*ibid.*). The inscription might also suggest that Palumbus was not a slave. It is important to remember that not all gladiators were slaves, a particularly true fact for the Greek-speaking East. Though Palumbus was a gladiator, he had a wife and was able to secure his burial in a prominent and certainly expensive location. We cannot, however, be certain of the social status of Hymnis and Palumbus from merely the short inscription. It is probable that the *munerarius*<sup>90</sup> was responsible for ensuring that his gladiators had adequate burial (Pietsch 16). Nevertheless, the cemetery is located along the processional way and saw high traffic, especially in the late second century CE. As people passed by frequently, they could glance over to the graves, and be reminded of their hero, “Pigeon.”

Rome’s heavy investment in Ephesos testifies that Ephesians became, in many respects, accustomed to Roman rule. The syncretistic nature of the city developed with the symbiotic relationship between Romans and Ephesians. The types of structures, their designs, and the events held within them, reveal two facts: that Greeks of Ephesos accepted Roman authority and that Roman authorities considered Ephesos a valuable possession. The consequences of absorbing the Greek-speaking East also affected Rome. Greek-styled spectacles were produced throughout the empire, and not merely in traditional spaces. The first *certamina athletarum* (competitions of athletes) were held in Rome in 186 BCE (Livy 39.22.1). Augustus introduced Thessalian bull fighting to Rome, and was a fan of Greek boxing, which he included as part of many traditional Roman shows (Suet. *Aug.* 44; Jennison 10). Festivals that included these events were held periodically, and in 86 CE, Domitian founded a four-yearly Greek style festival in honor of the Capitoline triad (Suet. *Domit.* 4). The first permanent stadium in Rome was constructed during his reign. Before, athletic contexts, were held in the *circus*. Domitian’s programs promoted further syncretism between Roman and Greek spectacles throughout the Greek-speaking East.

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<sup>89</sup> Suet. *Claudius* 21: Cathrine Edwards translates the name as “Dove,” however, Greek does not distinguish between the domesticated “dove,” and “pigeon,” both are περιστεά. However, the wild dove did have a different name. For the etymological distinction, see, Jennison 11-12.

<sup>90</sup> *Munerarius*: gladiator manager; a function also associated with the asiarch on inscriptions from the city (see p. 11).

## Chapter Four: Conclusion

Many scholars and enthusiasts of Roman history have tried to find parallels between that ancient society and our own. Approaching a study of this ancient culture in such a manner can be problematic, yet out of the many elements that Roman society was composed of, the spectacles, according to Lendon, “may in fact be one of the closer forms of contact between the Romans and us” (404). Scholars have traditionally dismissed the study of Roman spectacles as mere sadistic entertainment, however, we now understand that they were integral aspects of how Romans defined and expressed their identity. That identity was neither homogenous in Rome, nor in the East where Greek audiences under Roman rule saw the same shows. The importation of spectacles to Ephesos by Lucullus was not met with resistance, but rather eagerly welcomed. This should not come as a surprise, for Greeks developed their own spectacles prior to Roman rule, and the narrative embodied in the arena was one shared by Greeks.

Have we then identified the function of the Roman Spectacle in Ephesos? By tracing the origins of the spectacles, their development, and how they were implemented in Ephesos, this paper has identified not one, but several functions. Firstly, the spectacles contributed to the spread and endurance of Roman imperialism. Though the shows were not systematic institutions, consciously implemented by Roman elites to Romanize conquered peoples and spread Rome’s hegemony, they were undoubtedly extensions of Roman culture, and imposed Roman cultural ideas on cities like Ephesos. Secondly, the shows provided visual demonstrations of *virtus* to the residents of the city. For Latin and Greek-speaking residents, the ritualistic and systematic destruction of wildlife in the Great Theater’s orchestra-arena helped remove an element of danger from the world that existed outside the city. In addition, these presentations reminded Ephesians of the value of their civilization by bringing that “untamed world” into the arenas for all to see. The *ad bestias* followed similar symbolic lines; criminals were viewed as having violated their contract with civilized society, and were not only punished for their transgressions, but also presented before the community in the arena. The arena symbolically represented the wilderness, a space where the separation between what was “civilized” and “wild” was vividly defined. Gladiators were social outcasts, but their performances in the *munus* also had a positive educational value for the spectators by their demonstration of military *virtus*. Because of this, many were awarded their freedom (regaining of membership into society) if they performed favorably. Finally, we should not underestimate the entertainment value of the shows. The spectacles were quite a sight to behold, involving intricate choreographed performances and incorporating stunning technological innovations to impress and dazzle the audience. Roman spectacles out competed traditional Greek and Hellenistic shows because they offered greater levels of sensationalist appeal. As Walton has demonstrated, scholars have underestimated Greek Theater’s visual qualities. Because few received formal academic training in the ancient world, and because Rome included many more members of society into their spectacle viewing spaces, visually thrilling productions would have appealed to a broader audience, and traditional theatrical productions would have found it hard to compete.

On a final note, succeeding cultures and empires in Western Civilization, up to this day, have carried the mantle of “civilization.” We continue to divide the world between the *civilized* and the *primitive*. As a *civilized* society, we attempt to *increase* our mastery over the world by *conquering* geographic regions, *controlling* the weather, and even *colonizing* the universe. This language, derived in part from Greco-Roman civilization, is how we continue to view

our role in the world, and it defines our interaction with it. Like the Romans, our spectacles (movies, sports, televised news) encapsulate this view in the form of entertainment. It was, and continues to be, our narrative.

4.2: Appendix I

Here are selected passages from Cicero's correspondence with Caelius. The following demonstrate the urgency with which magistrates required animals for the spectacles they hosted, the infrastructure which supplied those animals, and the increasing scarcity of animals caused by their destruction in the spectacles. They are also not without an element of humor.

About the panthers, if you could acquire some from Cibyra and arrange for them to be sent to me. (*Letters* 8.4)

Curio treats me well, and has put a burden on me by his generosity, for if he had not given me those panthers that he'd had shipped from Africa for his own *ludi*, I could not have done without a *venatio*. But now, since I'm going to have to give one, could you please arrange for me to have some kind of beast from where you are? I know I'm always asking this of you. (8.8)

In just about every letter I've written to you about the panthers. Paticus has sent Curio 10 panthers; you'll be put to shame if you don't send a great many more. Curio has given me those 10 and 10 more from Africa, so don't think that the only gifts he knows how to give are farms. If you remember to get some hunters from Cibyra and also send a letter to Pamphylia (where, they say, more can be found), you will do what you want. I'm quite worried about this now because I think I'm going to have to provide the whole *ludus* with no help from my colleague. Please, please, make yourself do this. You're always willing to take care of things, as I for the most part am not. In this business you don't have to do anything except talk, that is give the orders and directions. And as soon as the panthers are caught, you have people to feed them and ship them, the people I sent to deal with Sittiu's bond. I think if you give me any hope in your next letter, I'll send more men to you. (8.9)

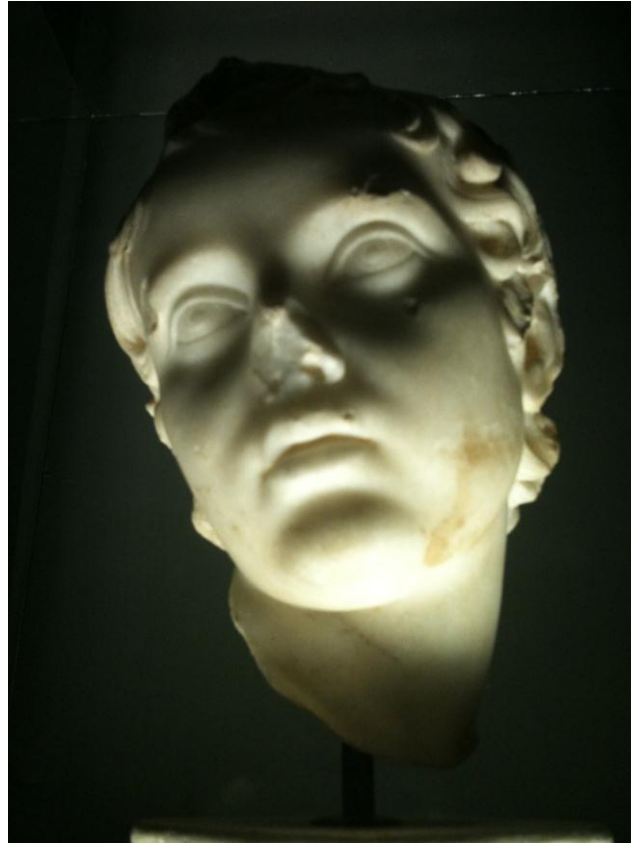
P.S.: You'll be put to shame if I don't have Greek panthers. (8.6)

As for the panthers, those who are in the business of hunting them are diligently complying with my instructions. But there is an amazing shortage, and those panthers that we do have are complaining that there are no traps laid in my province except for them. Therefore the panthers state that they have decided to depart from our province and take up residence in Caria. Nonetheless, it will be sedulously attended to, by Paticus in particular. Whatever panthers there are will be for you, but I certainly do not know how many there will be. (2.11)



## 4.3: Appendix II

## Ephesos and Eros



**Figure 24**

The portrait head of Eros (Fig. 24), 27 cm in height, was found in the State Agora near the Basilica Stoa (Aurenhammer 262). Constructed in the second century C.E., it is made of fine-grained marble from Prokonessos. The head was originally connected to a full body and is a copy of Lysippos's famous fourth-century BCE statue of Eros stringing the bow.<sup>91</sup> Only a Roman version of the complete statue remains, and in fact, until recently, no original work from Lysippos existed. This version of Eros is slightly older and larger than most depictions of him found here. Its idealized features, smooth blemish free face and wavy hair, are typical of Hellenistic art. Had the statue remained intact it would have included an "S" shaped body – a strong representation of Lysippos's work. Many depictions of Eros have been found in Ephesos on a variety of objects, and like this one, most are from the Roman period. The head is currently on exhibit at the Ephesos Museum of Selçuk.

Eros is an ancient god, but is not considered one of the original Olympians. He is, however, paired with Aphrodite, acting as son, assistant, and friend. According to Hesiod's *Theogony*, Eros was one of the earliest and most illustrious of the gods: "Of broad-pathed earth, and Love most beautiful/ Of all the deathless gods. He makes men weak, He overpowers the clever mind, and tames/ The spirit in the breasts of men and gods "

<sup>91</sup> Ephesos Museum, Selçuk.

(*Theogeny* 120-23). Eros, here, is painted as a powerful god, being able to extend his influence not only among men, also among gods as well. He is not simply a “minor deity,” but, as we shall see, a capable god in his own right.

Contrary to past theories, the development of Eros is not indicative of a Roman characteristic in which they arbitrarily produced more and more gods. Rather, in order to capture the diverse range of human experiences, Romans split various attributes associated with gods into minor gods or “divine colleagues” (Price 157). In *Roman Religion*, Scheid explains this phenomenon: “Making divine the deity’s ‘power of action’ (*numen*) represented the abstract side to this process. The world of the gods was thus indefinitely extendable yet could, at the same time, be reduced to just a few units, depending upon whatever was needed” (*ibid.*). Thus, it was a need-based system that determined the creation or destruction of gods. If a particular experience was deemed important enough, a deity would be created to personify it, thus allowing people to directly participate in the process of what otherwise might be completely out of their hands. With deities to pray to, everything could be attributed an explanation, and a right or wrong way of going about doing something could be established. Eros functioned in this capacity, complementing Aphrodite in the truly powerful human experience of love and desire, while being perfectly able to stand on his own ground as a god, and capable of acting and being worshiped independently. Imagery of Eros also served to legitimize Roman cultural practices in the Greek-speaking East, such as the spectacles.

The second century C.E. has been traditionally considered to be the Golden Age of the Roman Empire. Legendary emperors such as Trajan, Hadrian, and Marcus Aurelius distinguished the period. The end of Domitian’s “tyrannical” reign signified a new age of freedom and prosperity for some residents of the empire. Nineteenth-century writer and Roman historian Edward Gibbon famously wrote that “if a man were called to fix the period in the history of the world, during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would, without hesitation, name that which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus” (Gibbon 53). And, it was during that time that the far majority of Eros’s depictions at Ephesos had been constructed (also see Fig. 22). Thus, a correlation between prosperity and the proliferation of Eros was established. Statues of Eros served as visual displays of freedom and prosperity for the empire – a reminder to Greeks and Romans that times were good. Through the incorporation of Eros’s image into structures that held Roman spectacles, a link between the spectacles, Eros, and prosperity was recognized.

Regardless of the fact that Roman marriages were for the most part arranged,<sup>92</sup> love and sexual desire were central thematic aspects to general notions of fertility, reproduction, and more specifically, the human recreation of erotic pleasure. Eros’s role as deity of both love and sexual desire situated his presence in a diversity of situations – inspiring both the proliferation of the human species or, for example, enticing men to engage in sexual acts with each other. Sexual relations between two men of similar age, class, or status were considered taboo in Roman society, yet there exists evidence to suggest that it occurred. For example, a silver cup, dubbed the Warren Cup (Fig. 26) after art lover and collector Edward Perry Warren, dates to the early first century CE, and depicts on one side two males, one significantly younger than the other, engaging in sexual acts, but on the other side, the age

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<sup>92</sup> Marital unions derived from love were not alien notions to the ancients, as is sometimes believed. In fact, during the late Republic “falling in love” had become trendy among Roman youth.

separating the men is not as pronounced.<sup>93</sup> Since it would have been an item of daily use, we can assume that the act depicted on the relief did not cause any great offense and might have even been considered normal. Perhaps Eros's presence in the State Agora, a significantly male dominated space, could have inspired acts such as those depicted on the Warren Cup to occur.



Figure 25

In conclusion, the portrait head of Eros at the Ephesos Museum in Selcuk is positioned over a light, which casts alluring shadows just beneath the eyes and caps his mohawk-like head in darkness. Yet, upon closer inspection, I became deeply moved by this Eros' facial expression. His eyes, clearly fixed on a target and head twisting slightly towards the right, are captured moments before hitting his target. According to *Ephesos Museum*, a catalog containing brief summaries on the institutions works, Eros' "face bears an innocent and childlike expression".<sup>94</sup> Yet, there is something extraordinarily melancholy about his gaze; a cold emptiness lies behind those passively fixed eyes. He is dissociated from his target and follows his task with an air of authoritarian passiveness – which compels the observer is compelled to feel an incredible potential for extreme power radiating from Eros. His calm ambivalence and unquestionable confidence testify to a god of extraordinary capability and not merely "innocent" or "child-like" qualities. Even painted, his divorced countenance would have certainly remained, and the message communicated with observers passing through the State Agora would have been one of his omnipotence. Furthermore, by adorning his image on the walls of the Great Theater, represented in the role of a *bestiarinus*, a message symbolically validating the shows by divine sanction was transmitted.

<sup>93</sup> The British Museum

<[http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight\\_objects/gr/t/the\\_warren\\_cup.aspx?>](http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/gr/t/the_warren_cup.aspx?)

<sup>94</sup> Ephesos Museum Catalogue, 14.

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