

**LOZANO, F., *La religión del poder. El culto imperial en Atenas en época de Augusto y los emperadores Julio-Claudios*, (British Archaeological Reports, International Series 1087), Oxford, 2002 (ISBN 1 84171 319 8).**

**English Abstract\***

The monograph has been divided into four chapters with a further section of tables and appendixes:

a) Introduction: The introductory chapter presents a discussion of the author's interpretation of the imperial cult. The potential of the epigraphic evidence is analysed.

b) Athens and Rome. Political and Economical Situation of Athens during the Principate of Augustus and the Julio-Claudians.

c) The Imperial Cult in Athens during the Principate of Augustus and the first Julio-Claudian Emperors.

d) Changes and Developments of the Athenian Imperial during the reigns of Claudius and Nero.

e) Tables and Appendixes. This section presents the evidences on which the discussion and conclusion defended in the text are based.

Finally, a brief summary of the aspects treated in the main four chapters is presented. The organization of the summary follows the order of the chapters. The inclusion of an English summary seeks to open such discussions to a broader audience. However, the summary only displays the main conclusions of the work. Detailed discussions of the evidence have been omitted and should be consulted in the original Spanish text.

**Introduction. The limits of the evidences.**

In the introductory chapter the historical evidences for the realisation of the work are presented. The limits of this testimony as historical sources are discussed.

The present study relies heavily on the analysis of the epigraphic evidence from Athens while epigraphic testimony from other cities of the Roman Empire are also incorporated. Likewise, further interpretation and analysis are developed drawing upon a wide range of sources: archaeological, literary and numismatic. Nevertheless, this work is mainly an epigraphical assessment of the imperial cult.

Such a historical study, relying mainly on the epigraphic evidence, has specific limitations and peculiarities. The introduction of the present work is devoted to a discussion of these limits and their repercussions.

Firstly, it is emphasised that only a small sample of the ancient epigraphic production has been preserved. Indeed, the discovery of the inscriptions is not only concomitant to the quantity of epigraphy produced in the past, but it is also heavily determined by other factors, both human and environmental. Therefore, it can be

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\* I wish to express my gratitude to Amanda Kelly (BSA) who read my first abstract and purged it of errors and barbarisms.

concluded that the total number of preserved inscriptions, despite their seeming profusion, is only a small portion of those created in antiquity. Furthermore, these inscriptions do not constitute a homogeneous sample of the total epigraphical production as their survival is radically dependant on often arbitrary factors.

Arising from this previous problem is the establishment of the *corpus* of a region to represent an organic and closed entity. Reconstruction of fragmentary inscriptions is only assessed regarding the *corpus*. Likewise, in those urban centres, where only a small portion of the entire inhabited area has been excavated it is often attempted to allocate all new discoveries to this area. Usually, more information is ignored than known with certainty. Therefore, caution must be applied in any reconstruction based on fragmentary information.

Closely related to the previous discrepancies is yet another which is also derived from the state of conservation of the epigraphic body. Unfortunately, in many occasions inscriptions have been found in small fragments yielding few identifiable letters. In such a case, as when the evidence does not exist, the best procedure is to catalogue the material evidence but avoid further debate without more solid foundation.

Another important characteristic of epigraphy that is highlighted is the nature of the information that it presents. The abundance of such widely interpretive study materials and their informative idiosyncrasy may suggest that epigraphy is informative about all aspects of ancient life. However, it is not. Inscriptions are often desiderative testimonies, very much like modern laws. The information they provide is neither wholly reliable nor indicative of an actual event.

In addition to this restriction, it has also been outlined that the epigraphical information is formular and conservative by nature. Nonetheless, in spite of the difficulties that entail the use of epigraphy as the main source of a historical study, it is notable that Athens presents one of the most abundant epigraphical *corpus* of antiquity. Great quantities of inscriptions belonging to the Principate have been preserved. They offer a thorough overview of civic institutions and life. They also facilitate a reliable chronological order.

Therefore, it must be said that the choice of Athens as a context to the present work is not arbitrary. This decision was motivated by both the rich tapestry of Athenian history and its wealth of preserved sources from imperial times. This wealth of testimony allows us to intensely investigate aspects of the imperial cult that cannot be approached in many other cities.

Lastly, it is also indicated that the abundance of the Athenian sources are not limited to epigraphy. They also embrace literary as well as archaeological testimonies.

### **Athens and Rome: Political and economical situation of Athens under Augustus and the Julio-Claudians.**

The present work contends that one of the fundamental bases for the conformation of the imperial cult in a specific city should be understood through an assessment of the city's relation with Rome. This analysis should include a reflection of the political, social and economic situation of the *polis*. This approach is not usually adopted when discussing the imperial cult in a provincial city, although in the case of Athens the recent work of Spawforth is an example of a contextualized

approach to the imperial cult<sup>1</sup>. The second chapter of this work attempts to present this analysis. The conclusions are based mainly on the epigraphic evidence, while literary texts are also taken in account.

Firstly attention is paid to Marcus Antonius as he played a major role in the history of Athens. In the first section of the chapter (section 2.1), the political actions of the triumvir in the *polis* are studied, followed by the analysis of the divine honours that were conferred on Marcus Antonius. I propose that the study of the homages conferred on Marcus Antonius will improve our knowledge of those received by Augustus and his successors. The chapter will focus on Antonius' assimilation with Dionysos and his marriage with Athena, as well as the inclusion of special honours to him during the *Panathenaic* Festival. To outline these questions it must be stated that most of the information concerning Marcus Antonius' political work has been contorted by Augustus' propaganda.

Secondly, the relationship of Augustus with Athens is addressed (section 2.2). An episode narrated by Cassius Dio (D. C. 54. 7. 2-3) is traditionally interpreted as showing the opposition of the Athenians against Augustus. A second piece of evidence, belonging to the end of the Principate of Augustus, seems to confirm the existence of stressful relations between Athens and Rome (Eus. *Hist.* CXCVII.4; Oros. VI.22.2; Paul. Petr. *Hist. Misc.* VII. 25 with other two authors cited by: GRAINDOR, 1927a, pp. 41-42. See also the interpretation of SEG 12, 157; IG II<sup>2</sup> 3233 in EHRENBERG, 1953, pp. 943). Both events are analysed regarding previous historiographical interpretations. In this way, I hope to outline the circumstances under which the emergence of the imperial cult in Athens took place.

After assessing the relationship between Augustus and Athens, an account of the economic and politic situation of Attica during the specific period under study is presented. One of the main conclusions of this work is that the tense relations between Augustus and Athens favoured an oligarchical arrangement of civic life in Attica and that the aristocrats, who arrived to power thanks to Augustus, knew how to control the voices subversive to Rome.

Another aspect highlighted in the final part of chapter 2 is the transformation of Athens into a provincial city, as observed by Shear<sup>2</sup>. The transformation to a provincial city coincided with a loss of economic power. However, this loss was not so great that the city no longer enjoyed a relatively healthy economy. The reorganization of Greece as a constituent of the Roman Empire, as well as the terrible consequences of the wars that took place at the end of the Republic, stimulated a new economic pattern. Both Patras and Corinth, and also the coastal cities of western Greece, experienced substantial growth. However, cities with traditionally commercially-based economies, like Athens, lost a great part of their significance in favour of the urban centres protected and strengthened by Rome. The territories assigned by Augustus to his favoured cities in Achaia, Nicopolis (a free city) and Patras (a Roman Colony), were immense. Thus, they were able to sustain their new

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<sup>1</sup> SPAWFORTH, A. J. S. (1997), "The Early Reception of the Imperial Cult in Athens: Problems and Ambiguities", in HOFF, M. C. and ROTROFF, S. I., *The Romanization of Athens*, (Oxbow Monograph, 94), pp. 183-201.

<sup>2</sup> SHEAR, T. L. Jr. (1981), "Athens: From City-State to Provincial town", *Hesperia* 50, pp. 356-377.

status as major centres of the province with strong influence over their wide hinterlands and neighbour towns. Corinth (a Roman Colony) stood notably higher.

Lastly, I stress that Athens remained in a secondary political and economic position in this specific period, although some remarks concerning her position must be made. Firstly, the significance of the crisis is usually magnified because Roman Athens is always compared with Classical Athens. Secondly, this work emphasises that the city remained one of the main populated urban centres in the whole of the Mediterranean area. However, Athens was not only significant for its dense population, but also excelled thanks to its highly-regarded educational tradition. Oligarchs' sons from all over the Roman Empire were formally educated in the city. To summarize, Athens was not what it had been in the past when it shone with maximum splendour, but it maintained a status higher than most of the cities of the Empire. Its greatness is evident in regarding to the attention that emperors continued to pay to Athens. Consequently, most of the monuments currently seen in the centre of the city belong to this period of economically prosperous subjugation.

### **The Imperial Cult in Athens during the Principate of Augustus and the first Julio-Claudian Emperors (Chapter 3).**

In the third chapter the emergence of worship for the Roman emperors is analysed. The study of the cult of the emperors that is framed historically in the second chapter evolves from the honours received by the Hellenistic kings. This is why, Augustus' adoration in Athens began soon after Actium, at the instant he rose to power, according to the previous Hellenistic tradition. Subsequently, other members of his family were praised with divine honours.

These rituals receive the generic denomination of "imperial cult" and are studied as such by investigators of the Roman world. I believe this is one of the reasons why the homage received by the emperors are usually studied as a new introduction. Nevertheless, at least during the reign of the first three emperors, these religious practices maintained basically the characteristic of the adoration to the Hellenistic kings. However, some interesting changes were starting to appear. A new reality was being shaped, heir of the Hellenistic tradition but born from the needs and culture of a Roman Mediterranean-wide Empire.

The present work underlines that the active participation of the local oligarchies was decisive in the development and consolidation of these rituals (see especially section 3.1.2). This is dependent on different factors, such as the remarkable influence that eminent individuals exercised on their fellow citizens. This influence is not as much imposed on the populace as the creation of a model of behaviour. This was affected mainly by means of the public benefactions, that define the limits of correct and desirable behaviour, while seducing the less favoured layers of society into imitating, or at least supporting, the acts of their superiors. Plutarch summarized the example that eminent persons gave to their neighbours by means of their liturgies with the following words:

Let the gifts be made without bargaining for anything; for so they surprise and overcome the recipients more completely. They should also be given on some occasion which offers a good and excellent pretext, one which is connected with the worship of a god and leads the people to piety; *for at the same time there springs up in*

*the minds of the masses a strong disposition to believe that the deity is great and majestic, when they see the men whom they themselves honour and regard as great so liberally and zealously vying with each other in honouring the divinity (Plu., Moralia 822B).*

Indeed, the passion and support for a god expressed by the most influential men in a city incited the rest of the inhabitants to follow their example. Undoubtedly, this procedure also occurred regarding the emperors.

All in all, the example was not only good for the acceptance of the cults, but the oligarchies also determined by means of sacred laws, what gods should be adored and the nature of their worship (see SEG 17, 34). Those who did not participate in, or at least collude with, the civic rituals were threatened with punishment (see, for example, SEG 11, 923): coercion and example were two faces of the same coin.

It was through the local ruling class, supported by the Roman power, that the imperial cult quickly became one of the head cornerstones of Athenian civic religion. This dynamic change is one of the developments that distinguishes the emperors' cult from the cult of the Hellenistic kings. The transformations were materialised in the creation of new priesthoods, festivals, and sanctuaries and also in the change of young Athenian aristocrats' education.

A specific section deals with the explanation of the changes in the education of young Athenian aristocrats. On the bases that educational systems are aimed to perpetuate the structure of the society that forged them, the study of the degree to which ephebes engaged in the imperial cult can be used as an indicator of the oligarchic enthusiasm with the cult. The study of ephebic participation was addressed by analysing the abundant preserved documentation dealing with ephebic festivals. This discussion shows the narrow link between the dominant oligarchy and the imperial family in Athens. The future rulers of the city learnt to honour the Roman *Princeps* from an early age.

The activity of the aristocracy gave rise to a heterogeneous corpus of characters worshipped and rituals practiced (studied in detail in section 3.1.3; also see Appendix 3.1). It is apparent that Athens created numerous priesthoods that included the emperor himself and most of his closest relatives -Augustus, Tiberius, Livia, Julia, Drusus Consul, Germanicus, Antonia *Minor*, possibly Julia Livilla, daughter of Germanicus. Furthermore, honours of uncertain character were lavished on other members of the *Domus Augusta* associated with traditional divinities -Gaius Caesar, son of Julia and Agrippa and Drusus Caesar, son of Tiberius associated with Ares, among others (see Table 1).

In section 3.1.1 the rituals developed by the priests of imperial cult are studied. The activity of these priests has usually been understood as distinctive from those carried out by the priests of traditional divinities. However, one of the conclusions reached in this chapter is that imperial priests dealt with ceremonies and divine worship in the same manner as priests of other divinities. This is not to say that they carried out exactly the same duties, but those specifically appointed to the cult over which they presided. Thus, it can be postulated that different tasks existed for priests of different divinities including that of the emperors. The diversity was mainly due to the kind of god and the mandatory rules that had been established within the sacred law of each cult. Nevertheless, these small divergences do not

suppose the existence, at least in the preserved sources, of an essential difference between traditional priests and imperial *hiereus*; the formers being the models for the new sacred officials.

The same heterogeneous and complex character of priesthoods appears in the rituals of worship of the emperors. Section 3.2 is devoted to the study of these rituals. The study is based on the analysis of Athenian inscriptions. They are contrasted with comparable and mainly epigraphical information coming from other cities. It has been concluded that the inhabitants of Attica introduced innovations to their religious festivals and civic rituals in order to integrate the new Roman power. The celebration of the emperor's birthday, which was modelled on the festival consecrated to Apollo, demonstrates such dynamics in designing new rituals for the rising authority. The decree that immortalised the decision of the Athenians to celebrate Augustus' birthday is very fragmentary and obscure. However, it can be deduced that Augustus was honoured in Athens with monthly celebrations. It can also be inferred that these monthly celebrations were enlarged in the month of *Boedromion* with an agonistic festival of Pythian character. Thus, Athens, guided by its oligarchs, took an active role in favour of Augustus and subsequently the whole community adored him like a god. The altars consecrated to him are undeniable testimonies to the sacrifices carried out during the festival of imperial cult (see Appendix 2. 1).

The dedication of new altars to the successive emperors, in combination with the inclusion of the name of the new rulers in precedent altars, indicates that the rituals continued to be conducted, possibly, with the same frequency. It is also probable that together with these celebrations Augustus was honoured in the *Panathenaic* Festival. However this proposal is not sustained in conclusive testimonies and it must remain as a non-verified hypothesis.

All the changes that were taking place in Athens, as well as the aforementioned implication of aristocracy and Roman authorities, were also manifested in the material appearance of the city. Section 3.4 and Appendix 1.1 are devoted to these changes. The study of the cult places has been ordered by geographical areas. The Acropolis is analysed first, then the lower city and lastly the extra-urban sanctuaries and the Athenian *chora* (see plates 2-7).

The most important change is the ubiquitous presence of the emperor and his family in the city. The *Domus Augusta* occupied the most significant places of the city centre, so that the eminence of the imperial power could be displayed to a maximum audience.

Section 3.4.3 deals with an aspect, usually ignored by investigators of the imperial cult, which is the appearance of the imperial cult in all the territories controlled by a political entity. This procedure arises from the belief that the imperial cult is a religious expression and that, therefore, it should be studied as a part of civic religion. Extra-urban sanctuaries are essential in understanding the religion of the Classical *polis* and, since they maintained their religious function throughout Roman times, they are still valuable in the specific period under study. It is possible to obtain valuable information through the analysis of the presence of imperial divinities in these peripheral sanctuaries. This hypothesis is confirmed in

the case of Athens by the recent studies of Mavrojannis and Clinton (see plate 8)<sup>3</sup>. The present work also focuses on other cult places that hosted imperial divinities, namely Rhamnus. In this way, a new date can be attributed to IG II<sup>2</sup> 3242+SEG 19, 202.

#### **Changes in the Imperial Cult under the principates of Claudius and Nero (chapter 4)**

The heterogeneous rituals analysed in the third chapter were supplanted by new worship applied to abstract concepts of dynastic meaning. Thus the imperial cult evolved in order to adapt the new perceptions and semantics of the established regime arisen in Rome with Augustus. It was no longer the isolated cult of a new Roman commander that had reached the power by means of conquest and whose future was uncertain. From the time of Claudius and Nero the imperial cult became a whole complex of rituals dedicated to the house of Augustus and the *Sebastoi* who governed, and claimed to keep on governing, throughout the years.

Section 4.1, explores how this perception of power took shape under two new abstractions: the *Domus Augusta* and the *Theoi Sebastoi*. These concepts were used broadly in the whole Roman East. It is also highlighted that both terms arise as ideological support of the new political order. From an ideological point of view, these new terms present substantial advantages from the previous honours, since they grant a vision of continuity able to assure the adhesion of citizens and the tranquillity of rulers. Moreover, they were more durable governmental weapons, since emperors could change and dynasties could disappear but the religious concepts in which the government of the *Princeps* was based would continue ideologically intact. Therefore, these concepts were of the highest use for the central power. However, they were also explanatory for the provincial populations who worshiped a stable and -presumably- unalterable political power, without damaging the honours that each emperor individually received.

This type of synthetic abstraction combines complex realities that are difficult to understand and are similar to other later examples, such as the unknown soldiers, the All Saints festivity, the Homeland or the Monarchy. These concepts lack a deep rational foundation, but they are useful in the political and religious fields. Obscurantism, poverty and disinformation among the people provided a good environment for the worships of these general and abstract concepts.

Following the presentation of these two abstractions, section 4.1 presents a definition of both terms. I argue that the usual definition of the cult of the *Sebastoi*, as including only those emperors and members of the imperial family divinised at Rome, is too strict for the Greek poleis. I propose that in Athens the cult of the *Sebastoi* included every member of the imperial family that had been honoured with the title of *Sebastos* and had received a cult during his/her lifetime. This group of *Sebastoi* did not correlate at all with the group of Roman *divi*. Thus, among the Athenian *Sebastoi* are counted Tiberius, Livia, Claudius, Nero, Antonia *Minor*, and

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<sup>3</sup> MAVROJANNIS, T. (1995), "Apollo Delio, Atene e Augusto", *Ostraka* 4, pp. 85-102, on Delos, and CLINTON, K. (1997), "Eleusis and the Romans: Late Republic to Marcus Aurelius" in HOFF, M. C. and ROTROFF, S. I., *The Romanization of Athens*, (Oxbow Monograph, 94), pp. 161-181, on Eleusis.

most likely Caligula, among others. However only Claudius and Livia were consecrated by the Senate as *divus*.

I wish to develop the idea that the Athenian cult of the *Sebastoi* was, as already mentioned, a cult to a general and abstract concept. Its real importance lay in its capacity to define and ascribe power to the position of the *Domus Augusta* in the Roman Empire. The individualization of single deities worshipped under this generic term is more problematic for the modern reader than for the ancient worshiper.

The analysis of these two new concepts has been accompanied by the study of imperial priesthoods (section 4.2; see also Appendix 3.2). In this second stage of the development of the imperial cult in Athens, the number of adored persons decreases, at the same time that priesthoods become definitively hierarchized. This hierarchization is characterised by the linkage of the title of *archiereus* to the priest of the *Domus Augusta* (see Appendix 3.3). This process was not an impersonal change, but was represented by an identifiable character: the influential and rich Athenian Tiberius Claudius Novius.

The career of this eminent Athenian citizen served, in turn, to highlight two factors outlined in chapter 3 but that are defined more sharply by Novius example. These factors concern the oligarch's starring role in the conformation and diffusion of the imperial cult and also the possibilities of imperial worship for social promotion.

It is explained that Novius became the most powerful Athenian during the reign of Claudius and Nero. His position is denoted by his civic posts: eight times hoplite general, high priest of the *Domus Augusta*, *epimelete* of the city and *agonothete*. Among them, the high priesthood of the *Domus Augusta* allowed him to share religious eminence with the two traditional clans, the Kerykes and Eumolpids, which monopolised the Eleusian priesthoods. It is also a position that survived uninterruptedly until the end of the Principate (see Appendix 3.3). The new *archiereus* overcame all previous Athenian creations and notably Antonia Minor's high priesthood, a novelty from Claudius' reign. The change was coherent with the new development in Roman imperial politics that tended to emphasise the importance of the imperial family. The validity of the development is demonstrated by its adoption by most of the Greek cities.

Thanks to the study of Novius' life it was also possible to show the vitality of the Athenian's political life and the internal conflicts which arose among Athenian oligarchs. Thus, the role of the imperial cult in the fight for power among provincial elites is emphasised. When the High Priesthood of Tiberius was vacant the dispute to obtain the title of *archiereus* arrived at an unusual solution; a less powerful oligarch was awarded the priesthood of Claudius, while Novius, rich and influential, devised and achieved the High Priesthood of Antonia Minor.

Following the discussion about the changes in imperial priests, the festivals consecrated to the emperors and their relatives are analysed (section 4.3; see also Appendix 4). Athenian festivals were subjected to important reorganization during the reigns of Claudius and Nero, changes in which Novius also took an active part. Subsequently, the new imperial festivals, *Agones* of the *Sebastoi* and *Panathenea Sebasta* are discussed followed by an exposition of a very interesting new celebration: the gladiatorial games.

The study of the *Agones* of the *Sebastoi* as presented in this work is based on the revision of all related epigraphical evidences. I wish to develop the idea that the *Agones* of the *Sebastoi* were the continuation of the celebrations approved to commemorate Augustus' birthday. I propose on the basis of some epigraphical testimonies -mainly imperial altars- that it is very probable that these celebrations were held after the death of Augustus and included the subsequent emperors. Thus, I argue that Athens continued to have monthly celebrations that were enlarged once a year with an agonistic context. It could be suggested that this *agon* was the one that Novius reorganized and enlarged and so became the first agonothete of these newly founded contexts (IG II<sup>2</sup>, 3270) consecrated to Claudius specifically and all the *Sebastoi* as a whole. These were established at the beginning of Novius' political career and through this *agonothesia* he started to build his primacy in the city. It has also been proposed that the new *agon* was isopithic as the one earlier consecrated to Augustus. Lastly, it has also been proposed that the *Agones* of the *Sebastoi* had a special celebration, the *Great Agones* of the *Sebastoi*, that were held with uncertain frequency (SEG 47, 226 has been revised).

In section 4.3 it has also been shown that the most important and representative celebrations of Athens, the *Panathenaic* Festival, were included in the group of rituals consecrated to the emperors. Thus they became the *Panathenaia Sebastia*. The texts that inform us about this change are scarce and not very explicit, thus impeding the establishment of ulterior conclusions regarding the significance of the innovations. Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that the changes cannot be deeply analysed, the link between oligarchy and the Roman imperial regime is fully-attested through this association.

Besides the festivities of Greek origin, another important aspect is underlined in this chapter: the appearance in Athens of Gladiatorial games (section 4.4). Unfortunately, no document exist that indicates the exact date at which these games began. Nevertheless, other available sources have been used to establish an approximate date. Thus, thanks to two texts (D. Chr. 31, 121-122 and Philostr. VA, 4. 22) and two inscriptions (IG II<sup>2</sup> 3156 and IG II<sup>2</sup> 3182 ) it is attested that the gladiatorial fights began in Athens during the reign of the Julio-Claudian Dynasty. Neither the first celebration nor the name of the eminent person who financed it can be identified, although the Thracian king Roimetalcas paid for festivals involving animals during the reign of Caligula similar to those that used to accompany gladiatorial games.

All in all, the most important fact is not exactly when the games began, but in what period they were actually incorporated into Athenian life and became regularly displayed. According to the aforementioned testimonies, and some other evidences, it is shown that these spectacles were instigated during the reign of Claudius and Nero. At least it seems clear that under their government the games attained great popularity.

Once again, the role of Tiberius Claudius Novius seems to be definitive in the diffusion of the gladiatorial games. It was he who dedicated the *scaena frons* of the Theatre of *Dionysos*, where the fights took place, to Nero. This fact, together with his active civic role and his well-attested wealth, suggest that he was the first Athenian citizen to provide this kind of spectacle, most likely when he instituted the new

*Agones* of the *Sebastoi*. However, this is only a working hypothesis that lacks definitive support in the preserved evidences.

The importance of the study regarding the instance in which gladiatorial fights began to be shown in Athens is concomitant with the relationship between these games and the imperial cult. Section 4.4 explains such relation. It was especially interesting to realise that the reason that gladiatorial games took place was related to the emperor's health with a cyclical frequency. In this sense, I believe that death in the arena was not merely a show, it was an entire ritual in which the death of a man was offered to sustain the life of another, namely, the emperor. It was, therefore, a type of substitute-sacrifice.

Furthermore, the potential for gladiatorial combats has also been studied as a tool for the preservation of the political and social regime. It was through the hierarchic organisation of the inhabitants of the *polis* and *chora* that the theatre, and the games, became tools to distinguish and explain social differences and status. In turn, the games constituted means for the consolidation of both imperial power, as distant but omnipresent, and local primacy.

Lastly, the changes that took place in both rituals and imperial priesthods during the reigns of the two last Julio-Claudians introduced new transformations in the architectural aspect of the city. These changes are presented in section 4.5 (see plate 2-7 and Appendix 1).

Among the most important changes which took place, those of the Acropolis should stand out since they affected the emblematic Parthenon and the relevant Theatre of *Dionysos*.

The Parthenon was crowned with an inscription in which Nero was honoured and Tiberius Claudius Novius was mentioned. In this section attention is paid to explain this unique and interesting inscription. Accepting Carroll's proposal<sup>4</sup>, it is exposed that the inscription marked Nero's coronation for his ephemeral victories in Armenia. At least this seems the only plausible explanation for the appearance of Nero's name in accusative. No other working hypothesis have been proposed, and the possibility of cult to Nero in the building has not been refuted<sup>5</sup>. Together with this change, the Theatre of Dionysos was enlarged with a new *scaena frons* also due to the evergesies of Novius.

In the lower city and in the *chora* changes were not so significant. In both areas continuity of cult places was widespread. The temple of Apollo Patroos and the Agoranomion in the lower city is studied. The former is a likely candidate to host a cult to the emperors as New Apollo. The case of the *Agoranomion* is less clear, in spite of Hoff's effort, since they are based on the reconstruction of a badly-preserved inscription<sup>6</sup>. Hoff's proposal to identify this building with a *Sebasteion* cannot be sustained for the moment due to the lack of further research in the area.

The same continuity of cult places that can be observed in the lower city is encountered in the *chora*. The study aims to highlight this continuity. The

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<sup>4</sup> CARROLL, K. K. (1982), *The Parthenon Inscription*, (GRBS Monographs, 9), Durham.

<sup>5</sup> SPAWFORTH, A. J. S. (1994), "Symbol of Unity? The Persian-Wars Tradition in the Roman Empire", in HORNBLOWER, S. (ed.), *Greek Historiography*, Oxford, pp. 233-247.

<sup>6</sup> HOFF, M. C. (1994), "The so-called Agoranomion in Julio-Claudian Athens", *AA* 109, pp. 93-117.

appearance of an altar consecrated to Claudius in Rhamnus demonstrates the endurance of this location as a centre of imperial worship. However, new cultic places were also evidenced, such as one building in Eleusis.

Therefore, in chapter 4 I reveal that the imperial cult underwent significant transformations during the reigns of Claudius and Nero in Athens. These changes were not an isolated Athenian development, but a trend that can be traced through the Empire as a whole. The transformation is aimed to consolidate imperial power by means of new abstractions and ritual formulae. It is the forging of a new ideological foundation for a growing power. In this way, the changes that were being introduced at this time act as a prelude to the later evolution carried out under Domitian and the Antonines, that was to end in the theocratic power of late antique emperors.

### **Main Conclusions.**

To conclude a brief summary of the main ideas concerning the imperial cult in this work is presented:

-The first of these deductions concerns the evolution of the imperial cult. Relying mainly on the Athenian evidences, and contrasting them with those of other *poleis*, it was observed how the imperial cult affected remarkable changes in its conformation through time. In this way, it has been shown that the form in which Athenians worshipped Augustus is basically similar to that which was used to honour the Hellenistic Kings and previous magistrates. The first emperor was a new general who rose to power and Athens did not hesitate to include him in its divine rituals. However, the homage bestowed on him, and his closest relatives, was a compound of heterogeneous celebrations that lacked the coherence and dynastic significance of later honours. There survived also typically Greek homage in areas where the Roman power still had not heavily infiltrated.

In my opinion, Augustus' imperial cult in Athens should be understood as a continuation of the Hellenistic rituals. However gradual changes were introduced in these rituals and these transformations become clearer during the reign of Claudius and Nero. The changes include such introductions as the gladiatorial games, the creation of a Mediterranean-wide hierarchy of imperial priesthoods and an emphasis on the *Sebastoi* as a representation of the continued and sacred power exercised from Rome by the *Domus Augusta*. The type of rule usually defined as the Principate -the subjugation of the Mediterranean Sea to a *Princeps* that imposed his own interest and those of roman ruling class- caused an important cultural change, an *imperialization*, that brought about significant transformations in the imperial cult<sup>7</sup>. In this way, the honours granted to the emperor were a reflection of the subtle mixture of Roman and Greek components that characterised the culture of the Principate.

I conclude that the appearance of a cult to the *Sebastoi* constitutes both the creation of a more developed tool to control society and also a better vehicle to sustain and explain the privileged position of the emperors.

-The second concluding point is that the cult of the emperor shared a common meaning with the rest of the sacred rituals. That is why I consider the imperial cult

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<sup>7</sup> On *imperialization*: WALKER, S. (1997), "Athens under Augustus", in HOFF, M. C. and ROTROFF, S. I., *The Romanization of Athens*, (Oxbow Monograph, 94), pp. 67-80.

as an important aspect of the broader religious sphere. Two critics arise from such a statement. On the one hand, it could be argued that emperors were not equal to traditional deities, while on the other hand it could also be argued that the imperial cult is only a political manifestation. However, these critics are not an obstacle to my thesis, because emperors were different to other gods. Their divinity did not imply that they were equal to the rest of the gods. All in all, emperors were deemed gods by the Greeks and, in due course, they received homage reserved specifically to divinities.

I have tried to explain that any investigations regarding imperial cult is conditioned by the relationship that the investigator places between both concepts. I believe politics to be the government of people, and religion to be one of the most important ideological constructs on which this government depends. Thus, the worship of the emperors shares characteristics of both concepts. The difficulty in separating these peculiarities increases when it is pointed out that both concepts are used to describe a society that did not include them in their intellectual background. Therefore, the imperial cult, in my approach, is understood as both at the same time as both religion and politics. By means of this procedure I have tried to expand the complexity of the discussion about the nature of these rituals rather than reducing it to simplistic formulae.

-The third concluding point refers to the social forces that encouraged and motivated the appearance of the imperial cult. I wish to develop the idea that the imperial cult was a vehicle for social promotion that was used within traditional procedures but that it sometimes overcame them. Basically it is an alternative in cases where the ancient means for promotion of a certain community were closed, and they had become tools for the maintenance of the established social order.

Likewise, the diversity of the social groups that integrated Greek cities under the Roman Empire has been demonstrated to highlight and apply these social differences in the study of imperial cult. In this way I want to show that these different groups accepted the cult and contributed to its diffusion with unequal enthusiasm. This opinion does not deny the explanatory quality of the imperial cult - as depicted by Price<sup>8</sup>- but it does not accept that the message transmitted by the imperial cult was equally supported by those who profited highly from the system and the rest of the population subjected to Rome. So, in my opinion, the complexity of the social relationships characteristic of the Greek *polis* give rise to a myriad of different positions regarding the imperial cult. Thus, I have tried to avoid a simple approach in addressing the rise and maintenance of cults of such special nature as those attributed to the rulers. The preserved testimonies talk of a harmony among classes. Learning about the opinion of the subversive and oppressed is extremely complicated. Regarding this difficulty I have exercised a degree of caution to avoid being seduced by the beguiling nature of the evidence.

Finally, another aspect that deserves further comment is the importance of extra-urban sanctuaries. Scholars attest that classical religion cannot be explained without studying liminal sanctuaries that populated the city *chora*. Likewise, in Imperial times it is necessary to pay attention to the countryside to be able to understand the religious conformation of the *polis*. The imperial cult constitutes a

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<sup>8</sup> PRICE, S. R. F. (1984), *Rituals and Power. The Roman imperial cult in Asia Minor*, Cambridge.

major part of the ritual manifestation of the city and, therefore, it also appeared in the *chora*. Furthermore, the enthusiastic acceptance of imperial cult by the urban oligarchy is not only confined to the civic centres that allowed for easy political propaganda, but it is also manifested by the inclusion of the emperor-god in many extra-urban sanctuaries.