

## Expressing identity in a bilingual city: some examples from Roman Corinth

A century after the destruction of Corinth by L. Mummius, a Roman colony was founded on its site, and Roman institutions were installed. The elite of the colony appear to have been at least partially bilingual in Latin and Greek, as shown by a detailed analysis of the inscriptions produced after the foundation of *Colonia Laus Iulia Corinthiensis* (Nastasi forthcoming). Latin is predominant in the inscriptions belonging to the public domain, but Greek is well-attested in the private domain (Millis 2010, p. 31). In Roman Corinth, where Latin, Greek and their respective epigraphic conventions were well-known, different means were used to reflect the identity of individuals mentioned in the inscriptions. This paper presents two case studies where language choice and case usage seem to reflect the honorand's identity.

- (1) In the second century AD, the famous benefactor Herodes Atticus, a wealthy Greek who attained the office of consul in Rome, is honoured in Corinth in both Latin and Greek. When he is honoured as a philosopher and orator (*Corinth* 8.1.85), Greek is the preferred language, and his Greekness is reflected also in the dedication in verses to his wife Regilla (*Corinth* 8.3 128). On the other hand, when Herodes' offices in the imperial administration are mentioned, Latin is used to honour him (*AE* 2000, 1345), and other features highlight his (partial) Romanness. His Greek identity is nevertheless still expressed in the Latin inscription through the adoption of the Graecising "accusative of the honorand" rather than the "dative of the honorand" expected in dedications in Latin. This type of syntactic interference, in this case of Greek on Latin, is thoroughly studied by Adams (Adams 2003, pp. 260, 586, 650, 658–661).
- (2) In the private domain, the only bilingual inscription from Corinth (*Corinth* 8.3 276, second half of the 3rd cent. AD?) shows the double affiliation of the deceased to both Roman and Greek society. Although the text is fragmentary, the identity of the deceased as a freedman of a Roman is clearly stated. A double identity is again reflected through language choice: Latin is used in a form of accommodation to (convergence with) the Roman society the deceased was part of, while Greek is used to reflect his probable Greek origins.

These two telling examples show how, in a bilingual city like Corinth, writers could resort to two languages and their respective epigraphic and linguistic usages. They adapted their choices to the communicative goal of the texts: important officials of Greek origin and former slaves of Roman families could be honoured and commemorated in both Latin and Greek, and the choice of one language over the other, in the case of Herodes Atticus, or the use of both languages, in the case of the funerary text for a freedman, seems to depend on the type of identity they wished to portray.

## Selected Bibliography

Adams J.N.

2003, *Bilingualism and the Latin Language*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Kent J.H.

1966, *The Inscriptions 1926-1950 (Corinth 8.3)*, Princeton, American School of Classical Studies at Athens.

Meritt B.D.

1931, *The Greek Inscriptions 1896-1927 (Corinth 8.1)*, Cambridge (Mass.), American School of Classical Studies at Athens.

Millis B.W.

2010, "The social and ethnic origins of the colonists in early Roman Corinth", in S.J. Friesen, D.N. Schowalter, J.C. Walters (eds), *Corinth in Context: comparative studies on religion and society*, Leiden-Boston, Brill, pp. 13-35.

Nastasi L.

forthcoming, *Greek and Latin in Roman Corinth: Language Use and Language Contact*, PhD Thesis, The University of Manchester.

Rizakis A.D., Zoumbaki S. (and Kantiréa M.)

2001, *Roman Peloponnese. I, Roman personal names in their social context (Achaia, Arcadia, Argolis, Corinthia and Eleia)*, Athens-Paris, Kentron Hellīnikīs kai Rōmaikīs Archaioitōtos, Ethnikon Idryma Ereunōn=Research centre for Greek and Roman antiquity, national hellenic research foundation-diff. De Boccard.