

The worship of Diana in the Roman colonies of northern Italy was not a mere political strategy for achieving the spread of Roman cultural dominance in the early second century B.C.E., but a means of conveying complex messages about the relationship between the Roman settlers and the previous Etruscan, Gallic, or Ligurian populations. This interplay between the colonists and the local inhabitants is especially apparent through examination of the cults in Bononia (189 B.C.E.) and Luna (177 B.C.E.), two colonies that bore critical import for the Roman political and military domination of Cisalpine Gaul. Through a fresh analysis of the epigraphic, archaeological, and literary evidence for the cult of Diana in northern Italy, this paper confirms the ability of this type of cult not only to reinforce loyalty to Rome and ties of patronage, but also to validate respect for local traditions and to stimulate the integration of colonists and locals into a single community. Such religious flexibility has been documented in the Roman colonies in southern Etruria, Latium, and Campania, areas widely recognized to share a common religious heritage with Rome. It is far more significant, however, that a similar polyvalence of religious meaning was employed between the Romans and some of their bitterest enemies, the Gauls and Ligurians.

A close examination of the cults to *Potnia Theron*/Diana in the Roman colonies of Bononia and Luna illustrates the variety of meaning this type of cult symbolized for middle Republican colonists. Colonization of Bononia advertised Roman imperialistic intentions in Cisalpine Gaul by establishing physical dominance over the Etruscans and Gauls, the previous inhabitants of this area (Livy XXXVII.57.7-8). Through the continuance of the regional *Potnia Theron*/Diana cult, the colonists conveyed a very different message: one of respect and cooperation. The worship of Diana in Luna also bore this integrative function with the local Ligurians, but added a further dimension through reiterating the colonists' allegiance to their patron, M. Aemilius Lepidus, one of the three commissioners who founded the colony. Lepidus had dedicated a temple to Diana in Rome during his censorship in 179 B.C.E. (Livy XL.52.1); several years later, the magistrates of Luna echoed his religious affiliation through dedications to Diana in Luna (e.g. CIL I² 3368). Such focus on the cult of Diana not only embodied personal and conceptual patron-client relations, it simultaneously allowed the new inhabitants to participate in the local worship of the *Potnia Theron* type goddess, stitching the community of Luna into a more coherent whole. Thus, the manifold functions for the cult of Diana as *Potnia Theron* in Cisalpine Gaul illustrate not that colonies were vehicles for deliberate religious 'Romanization,' but rather that religion offered an interface for the various participants in Roman colonization.