F. Camia

Lykos, son of Hermolaos, hierus heptaeterikos of the Sebastoi
Emperor worship and traditional cults at Thessalian Hypata
(SEG 54, 556)


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EMPEROR WORSHIP AND TRADITIONAL CULTS AT THESSALIAN HYPATA
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1. Emperor worship in Thessaly: a synthetic overview

Although not as richly documented as in other areas of the Greek peninsula, in Thessaly the cult of the Roman emperors is well attested from the very beginning of the imperial period. Several Thessalian cities set up dedications to Augustus during his lifetime on altars, stele and statues; on these dedications (in the dative or genitive case), the founder of the Principate is called θεός and σωτήρ. Following his reform of the Delphic Amphictyony, Augustus was responsible for the ‘rattachage’ to proper Thessaly of its perieic ἔθνη. In order to give the Nicopolitans a predominant position within the Amphictyonic council, Augustus cancelled the votes of the Magnets, Malians, Ainians, Achaean of Phthiotis, and Perrhaebians–Dolopians, which by then would have been ‘counted’ as Thessalians, and therefore be represented by the latter. The existence of a close relationship between the founder of the Principate and the Thessalians is demonstrated by the title Σέβαστε(ι)ος which Augustus granted singularly to some πόλεις and collectively to the Thessalian κοινόν as a whole; this epithet is attested on inscriptions and coins. It is also worth mentioning here some coins belonging to an Augustan issue of the (Larisa); (and nn. 45–48); Kantiréa 2007, 51–52; Bouchon 2008, 190. 

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1 IG IX 2, 93 (Echinos); IG IX 2, 424–425 (Pherai); IG IX 2, 604; AD 1984 [1989], 155, n 60; AD 1997 [2003], 523, n 13 (Larisa); IG IX 2, 1288 (Pythonion); SEG 43, 241 and AD 1997 [2003], n 60 (Atrax); SEG 51, 730 (Phalanna). Cf. Burrer 1993, 18 (and nn. 45–48); Kantiréa 2007, 51–52; Bouchon 2008, 190.

2 Paus. 10, 8, 3; cf. Lefèvre 1998, 127; see also Burrer 1993, 4. Augustus’ initiative should not be interpreted as an act of hostility towards the Thessalian κοινόν but, on the contrary, as the official sanction of the integration of the perieic ἔθνη into the territory of the Thessalian confederacy (cf. Sánchez 2001, 426–428); contra R. Bouchon considers Augustus’ decision to be a hint of an initial hostile disposition of the emperor towards the Thessalians: Augustus’ attitude would have changed after he assumed – in A.D. 10/11, and not in 27 B.C. as usually thought – the role of στρατηγός of the Thessalian κοινόν. This situation, however, remains uncertain (Larsen 1968, 283, 293–294, states that Augustus recognised the Thessalians’ freedom. Under Nero the Thessalian κοινόν most probably recovered all or some of its previous votes in the Amphictyonic council; cf. Lefèvre 1998, 128 (and n. 626); Sánchez 2001, 428–432. On the history and institutions of the κοινόν of the Thessalians cf. Larsen 1968, 12–26, 281–294; for the imperial period cf. Burrer 1993, 1–20.

3 Hypata, Lamia, Melitaia – that is the capital cities of the Ainians, Malians and Achaean of Phthiotis respectively – and Larisa, the capital city of ‘Great Thessaly’.

4 Cf. Robert 1980, 217–219, n. 76. This title can be accompanied by an ethnic (Θεσσαλοί or that of a single city) or be directly associated with the name of an individual; see Helly 1975, 125–127; Burrer 1993, 6 (and n. 31); Zachou-Kontoyanni 2003–2004, 267; according to Bouchon 2008, 190, the Thessalians would enjoy this privilege starting from A.D. 10/11, when Augustus would have been στρατηγός of their κοινόν.

5 RPC I, 1427; see also Kantiréa 2007, 75 (and n. 3). Cf. the later (reign of Tiberius) issues with the legend PIETAS referring to Livia, copies of an official type of the mint of Rome which spread in several provincial cities of the Empire (Kremydi-Sicilianou 1996, 158–159).

6 IG IX 2, 333 (assigned by O. Kern to Mylai, but coming from Larisa); cf. Kantiréa 2007, 75 and 233, n 76; Bouchon 2008, 189 (and 193, n 6).
Specific cultic manifestations for later emperors are virtually non-existent, except for a few dedications, most of which pertain to statue bases. In any case, emperor worship is well attested epigraphically for the following period in several cities of Thessaly by the presence of imperial festivals and priests.

Imperial festivals are attested, as far as I know, in the following πόλεις: Larisa (Pelasgiotis), Hypata (Aimis), Echinos (Malis), and maybe also Demetrias (Magnesia). At Larisa Kaisareia are attested by a fragmentary inscription, probably an agonistic dedication. Moreover, it is worth mentioning a fragmentary funerary epigram (SEG 2, 645) for a Larisan horseman; below the epigram, in the lower part of the stele (ll. 6–8), the names of two festivals can be read, respectively left (Ἀδριάνια) and right (Ὀλύνπια) of two crowns (engraved in the middle). Although the situation remains uncertain, here the reference is more likely to the famous Athenian Hadrianeia and to the even more celebrated Olympia of Pisa (Elis) respectively.

At Hypata and Echinos, and maybe at Demetrias as well, the existence of an imperial feast can be argued by the reference in inscriptions to ἀγωνοθέτης of the Σεβαστοί, which must mean that an agonistic festival for the emperors (Sebasta) was celebrated.

In addition to the already mentioned priesthood of Livia identified with Hera, priesthoods of the imperial cult are also attested at Hypata, Echinos and Demetrias. It seems that at Hypata and Echinos the office of priest was closely associated with that of ἀγωνοθέτης of the imperial games, judging by the expression ἄρχωρεὺς (or ἱερεύς) and ἀγωνοθέτης of the Σεβαστοί which occurs in inscriptions of these two πόλεις. A group of munificence texts of the 2nd century A.D. informs us that at Echinos the “ἱερεύς and ἀγωνοθέτης of the Σεβαστοί” used to receive by the treasurer of the city the munificence tax due by the ex-slaves. At Hypata, in the first half of the 2nd century A.D. T. Flavius Eubiotus was honoured for having served as ἄρχωρεὺς and ἀγωνοθέτης of the Θεοὶ Σεβαστοί “ἐπὶ τοῖς δύο στεφάνοις”. The latter expression appears also in an honorary inscription from Delphi for another imperial high-priest of Hypata, L. Cassius Petraeus – who was ἄρχωρεὺς most likely in the age of Trajan – and indicates that the two individuals had promised to provide the prizes (crowns) for the victors in the Sebasta. Thus, at Hypata there probably existed a close relationship between the office of high-priest of the emperors and the celebration of the imperial festival, and it seems that among the duties of the imperial priests there was also that of providing the prizes for the victors in the imperial ἐγώνες. It must not have been difficult for Petraeus and Eubiotus to cope with this task, as they were two of the most distinguished members of the Thessalian imperial aristocracy. They both held the most important offices in the Amphictyonic κοινόν, i.e. those of ἐπιμελητής of the Amphictyonic council and ἀγωνοθέτης of the Pythian games, and were acquaintances of the historian Plutarch. Petraeus dedicated at Delphi at his own expense a statue of the

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7 Tiberius: SEG 23, 449 (Demetrias); SEG 37, 484 (Larisa). Claudius: IG IX 2, 81 (Lamia); IG IX 2, 605 and 606a (Larisa).

8 IG IX 2, 614b (Larisa; 1st century A.D.). Only the last five lines of the inscription are preserved; after the mention of a festival called [Θεο]σαλαντος Ποσειδόνια (ll. 1–2), the reference is made to ἄλλα Κασπάρα (l. 4), which must evidently mean that in the lost part of the text some Κασπάρα held at Larisa were referred to. Cf. Axenidis 1947, 36–37; who considered it to be most likely that the Καίσαρεια of Larisa was organized by the Thessalian κοινόν – see infra, n. 53; Gallis 1988, 226.

9 Cf. Axenidis 1947, 37, who does not, however, completely rule out the possibility that the ἐγώνες referred to below the epigram were celebrated at Larisa.

10 For the epigraphic references see infra, nn. 11 (Echinos), 12–13 (Hypata), and 18 (Demetrias).
12 IG IX 2, 44, ll. 5–6.
13 Syll 825C, ll. 2–3: τῶν ἄρχωρευτῶν ἐπὶ τοῖς δύο στεφάνοις.
14 This is the meaning of such expressions, e.g. that which occurs in the two honorary inscriptions for Eubiotus and Petraeus; cf. Robert 1940, 193 (and n. 5).
Emperor Trajan, while Eubiotus – member of one of the most prestigious families of Roman Thessaly – was the first known Helladarch of the Amphictyons, and in the role of ἐπιμελητής presided over the restoration of the sanctuary of Asklepios at Delphi. The same relationship between imperial priesthood and presidency of the imperial festival may have existed at Demetrias as well, although in this case this statement rests on a very fragmentary inscription in which Ch. Habicht has proposed to read ἴσχον θέτητις καὶ ἄρχιερευ[ν] ὑπὸ τῶν Σεβαστῶν.

Finally, a priest of the imperial cult is attested also in the Thessalian κοινόν. A certain Androneikos of Metropolis, “ἄρχιερευ[ς] of the κοινόν of the Thessalians and ἴσχον θέτητις of the Pythia”, was honoured at Delphi with a statue by the Amphictyons. Unfortunately we do not have any further information on Emperor Trajan, while Eubiotus – member of one of the most prestigious families of Roman Thessaly – was the only certain piece of evidence at our disposal about the cult of the emperors in the context of the Thessalian κοινόν. Something more on the theme, however, may perhaps be added – albeit at a speculative level – based on an inscription analyzed below.

2. Lykos, son of Hermolaos: a new Thessalian priest of the imperial cult

A recent epigraphic publication has added a new element to our knowledge of Roman imperial cult in Thessaly, revealing a previously unknown imperial priest. His name is Lykos, son of Hermolaos, and he was honoured, following a decree of the Amphictyonic council (Ἄμφικτυόνων δόγματι), by the delegates (σύνεδροι) of the Thessalian κοινόν and by his own πόλις Hypata, where the honorary inscription was found. The costs for the dedication and erection of the statue of Lykos were covered by his son out of his own pocket. The inscription has been dated to the early 2nd century A.D. by the editor princeps M. Zachou-Kontoyanni, who identifies the Hermolaos appearing in a manumission text from Hypata, tra-

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15 Syll. 825B; on Petraeus see Puech 1992, 4867–4868.
16 On which see Larsen 1953; Sekunda 1997, 226 (strongly objected by B. Helly, BE 1998, n° 218).
17 Demetrias V (1987), 275–276, n° 9 (SEG 37, 463) (late Roman), ll. 1–3.
18 Bouquet 1961, 90–92 (SEG 19, 402); CID IV 163.
19 But see infra, n. 29.
20 Lefèvre (CID IV 163); 2nd century A.D. Kantiréa 2007, 155 (with n. 2) and 233, n° 77, dates the inscription, and the activity of Androneikos, to the 1st century A.D., who had favoured the Thessalians, probably increasing the number of their votes in the Amphictyonic council (see supra, n. 2).
21 Zachou-Kontoyanni 2003–2004 (AnnÉp 2004, 1316; SEG 54, 556; see also BE 2005, 263); Ἀμφικτυόνων δόγματι | Σέβαστηνς Θεσσαλίαν | ιὸν σύνεδρον καὶ ταχίς Ὑπάτης | Διὸς Ἐμμανουήλ Σέβαστην | ιερὰ ἐπαυτερικὰν δῆς | Σέβαστων καὶ ἰδίως Καραυεί[τ] | γενόμενον καὶ ταχίς τῶν | Σέβαστων καὶ Άμφικτυόνων διὰ | καμάρας καὶ ἱδίως Τουρί[ν] | ἀριστερὰς καὶ καλλιεργεῖσθαι | [τὸ δῇ] δημαρχείαν συνυπηρετῆσαι | καὶ προβεβίβασαι, τῆς πολὺ πάντας ἁριντῆσαι | καὶ [τὴν ἀγορὰν] ἐνεκεν Δῆσι [Χριστοῦ] | Καραυεί[τ] | Ἀριστερᾶς καὶ [το] τῶν ἱδίων Ἀπαλλαθών] | [το] [το] αὐτοῦ. The text is inscribed on a marble statue base, only partially preserved (dimensions: H.: 0.78 m – W.: 0.55 m – D.: 0.55 m. H. Lett.: 0.025–0.02 m), seen by the first editor in a private house in modern Hypata.
22 SEG 54, 556, ll. 1–5. The individual is otherwise unknown, but the name Lykos is attested for two Thessalian federal στρατηγοί (cf. IG IX 2, 1295, III, ll. 20–21; 546, III, 3–4). For the formula ἴσχον θέτητις see e.g. the honorary inscription from Delphi for the sophist from Hypata T. Flavius Alexander, who was also σύνεδρος of the Thessalian κοινόν (CID IV 158; 2nd century A.D.).
23 SEG 54, 556, ll. 16–18.
ditionally dated to the Flavian age\textsuperscript{25}, with the father of Lykos\textsuperscript{26}. However, it is far from certain that the two individuals named Hermolaos are one and the same person, and even if we admit this, a different chronology – for example in the last part of the 1st century A.D. – is possible as well. With regard to this, a hint for an earlier chronology might be represented by the title ἱερεύς borne by Lykos. By the 2nd century A.D. the title most commonly used to indicate a priest of the imperial cult had become ἀρχιερεύς, which is the title borne also by the other two known imperial priests from Hypata, the already mentioned T. Flavius Eubiotus and L. Cassius Petraeus\textsuperscript{27}. One could suppose that at Hypata, as in other cities of the Roman East, the title ἱερεύς was replaced sometime during the 1st century A.D. by the title ἀρχιερεύς\textsuperscript{28}. If this was the case, a date by the end of the 1st century A.D. might be tentatively suggested for the honorary inscription for Lykos\textsuperscript{29}. In any case, the reference at the beginning of the text to an official decision of the Amphictyonic council points to the decades after Nero’s reform\textsuperscript{30}, following which the Thessalians recovered a prominent role within the Amphictyonic council, as shown by the fact that in the period from Domitian to Hadrian all of the known ἐπιμεληταί of the Council were Thessalians (or Delphians), while in the same period only Thessalian ἄγωνοθέται (from Hypata) of the Pythian games are known\textsuperscript{31}, among whom the Hypataioi Petraeus and Eubiotus.

The inscription from Hypata informs us that Lykos was honoured for his virtue and honesty, having served in politics in the best possible way, both in the Thessalian league, as στρατηγός, and in the πόλις of Hypata, a fact which explains the presence as dedicators of both the σύνεδροι of the κοινόν and Lykos’

\textsuperscript{25} IG IX 2, 19 (11); for a much earlier chronology (second half of the 1st century B.C.) of this manumission text see Sekunda 1997, 209–210, n° 2 (cf. LGPN III. B, s.v. Ἑρμόλαος (3)). Apart from this one and that in the inscription for Lykos, the only other occurrence of the name Hermolaos from Thessaly is not from Hypata; cf. LGPN III. B, s.v. Ἑρμόλαος (4).

\textsuperscript{26} Zachou-Kontoyanni 2003–2004, 275.

\textsuperscript{27} There are of course exceptions to this ‘rule’, as for example, for Thessaly, the above mentioned manumission texts from Echinos (SEG 36, 543–546), where ἱερεύς and ἄγωνοθέται of the Σεβαστοί appear.

\textsuperscript{28} Cf. SEG 54, 556 (apparatus). This change occurred in Athens most likely during the reign of Claudius, the well known Ti. Claudius Novius of Oion being the first ἀρχιερεύς of the Σεβαστοί; cf. Spawforth 1997, 188–191; Byrne 2003, Claudii, n° 213; Kantiréa 2007, 175–178.

\textsuperscript{29} The fact that Lykos does not have Roman citizenship could in theory be a further indication of a relatively early chronology for our inscription. However, generally speaking, in Thessaly the Roman citizenship seems to have had quite a limited diffusion even amongst prominent individuals such as Lykos. With regard to this, it is worth noting that few of the known στρατηγοί of the Thessalian κοινόν of imperial age did possess the civitas (cf. the list given in IG IX 2, p. XXV). As for the priests of the imperial cult, it is sufficient to mention the group of manumission texts from the πόλις of Echinos, dated to the second quarter of the 2nd century A.D., where six different “ἱερεύς and ἄγωνοθέται of the Σεβαστοί” are referred to, none of them a Roman citizen (SEG 36, 543–546; see supra, n. 11). On the diffusion of Roman citizenship in imperial Thessaly cf. the remarks by Larsen 1953, 92 (“In Thessaly ... the number of Roman citizens seems to have been small even in the second century after Christ. The inscriptions, in fact, give the impression that Thessaly was somewhat of a land apart.”) and 93 (“A very few of the prominent Thessalians were honored with Roman citizenship.”).

\textsuperscript{30} Lefèvre 1998, 128 (and n. 626); Sánchez 2001, 428–432; v. supra, n. 2.

\textsuperscript{31} Sánchez 2001, 440.
motherland. In addition to his political activity, Lykos assumed the priesthoods of the emperors and of three local cults, previously unattested at Hypata: Zeus Καραίους, Zeus Σωτήρ and Athena. This is the basic information that one can draw from the honorary inscription for Lykos. However, the present text can be further exploited in order to highlight aspects of the imperial priesthood and more generally of the organization of the cult of Roman emperors at Hypata – and maybe in Thessaly at large as well.

As I have already noted, the inscription reveals the existence of another priest of the imperial cult from Hypata, in addition to the above mentioned Petraeus and Eubiotus. This is in line with the pre-eminence of the imperial age the supreme magistrates of Hypata were most likely the ἑπταετηρικοὶ (or one of the seats) of the imperial cult administered by the Thessalian cities (or one of the seats) of the imperial cult administered by the Thessalian cities, in second century Thessaly, as clearly expressed by Apuleius, according to whom Hypata cunctae Thessalae antepollet. Was Hypata the official seat (or one of the seats) of the imperial cult administered by the Thessalian cities? I shall come back to this point further on. Let us now have a closer look at the priestly offices held by Lykos.

3) ἱερεὺς ἑπταετηρικὸς of the Σεβαστοί

The text of the honorary inscription for Lykos states that “he has been ἱερεὺς ἑπταετηρικὸς of the Σεβαστοί and Zeus Καραίους twice, and ἱερεὺς of the Σεβαστοί and Zeus Σωτήρ and Athena twice”35. The epithet ἑπταετηρικὸς is worthy of further consideration, as it apparently occurs in the inscription from Hypata for the first time. However, other analogous epithets, such as τριετηρικὸς ὁ πενταετηρικός, occur in several inscriptions and in the literary sources in most cases in connection with games, indicating that the latter were celebrated every two and four years respectively37. How to interpret the same epithets when

32 SEG 54, 556, ll. 10–15. The participle στρατηγήσαντο (l. 10) should be referred to the charge of στρατηγὸς of the Thessalian κοινὸν (as also stated by the first editor), as at Hypata local magistrates called στρατηγοὶ are so far not known – in the imperial age the supreme magistrates of Hypata were most likely the στρατηγοὶ (IG IX 2, 34, 1st century. A.D.), who replaced the ἱερεὺς probably after the incorporation of the city and the region of Ainos into the Thessalian league in the age of Augustus; cf. F. Stählin, RE IX 1 (1914), s.v. Η ‘Ὑπάττα, col. 240. As for the expression πολειτευσάμενος ἄριστα (l. 10–11), one might be tempted to see in it a reference to the honors of the ἀριστοπολείτες, formally bestowed by a τῶν on those benefactors who had been excellent citizens, although it should be noted that the institution of the ἀριστοπολείτες is so far attested only at Sparta and Messene (see in particular ΙvO 445, 446, 449, where the formula πολειτευσάμενος ἄριστα might be used with reference to citizens of Messene; cf. Luraghi 2008, 301–302, and n. 36; in general on the ἀριστοπολείτες see Robert 1934, 268, n. 4; Robert 1960, 573–576; Schwerttenger 1981, 254; Marchetti–Kolokotsas 1995, 197, n. 50; cf. also I.Berioia 106, an honorary inscription for T. Flavius Cassander, ἄρχοντας and ἑγών τῆς τιτάντης ἂριστοπολείτας, in P. Thess. 1, 6–8 (with commentary).

33 SEG 54, 556, ll. 5–9. Phoibus’ Lexicon (s.v. Καραίους) reports that the cult of Zeus Καραίους was present in Thessaly and in Boeotia (Theodoridis 1998, 189); for the inscription for Lykos is the first epigraphic reference of this cult for Thessaly. In Boeotia it is attested at Akraiphia, Anthedon, Haliartos, Koronea, Orchomenos, Thebes and Thespies (Schachtet 1994, 93–94, 97, 104–106, 122, 149, 151); it is also attested epigraphically in Acarnania (at Astakos: IG IX’ 1, 343, 1. 1); cf. Roesch 1982, 104–117. For epigraphic references of Zeus Σωτήρ and Athena in Thessaly see e.g. I.ThessEnipeus 159–60 (Pharsalus; second half of the 2nd century B.C.); SEG 34, 558 (Larisa; ca. 150–130 B.C.); SEG 37, 461 (Demetrias; late Hellenistic–Roman imperial period); Gonnoi II, p. 265, s.v. Αθηναία.


35 SEG 54, 556, ll. 5–9.

36 A search in the PHI online epigraphic database as well as in the ThLG has given no occurrences for ἑπταετηρικὸς. The feminine substantive ἑπταετηρικὴ is attested in an uncertain locus of Aristotle’s Athenaiōn Politēa (54, 7), indicating a festival taking place at Delos every six years (cf. Rhodes 1981, 606–607, and see infra, n. 46), and in Eusebius’ Historia Ecclesiastica (7, 23, 4) indicating a period of seven years. For the corresponding terms τριετηρική and πενταετηρική see the following note. The adjective ἑπταετηρικὸς is attested in Nonnus’ epic poem Dionysiaca a few times with reference to a seven years long conflict (Nonnus Dion. 25, 5, 39, 275, 40, 254) and once meaning “seven-year-old” (37, 704–705, referred to a mule); with the latter meaning it is also found in Phoibus’ Bibliotheca (Henry 1959, I, p. 187, II, 30–31 [= Bekker 63b, 30–31]), referred to Valentinianus III.

37 See e.g. IG V 1, 658, ll. 4–6 and 662, ll. 5–6 (Sparta); IG IX 1, 282, ll. 5 (Oupos, Eastern Lokris); IC I xviii, 55, ll. 6–8 (Lyttos); SEG 14, 730, ll. 6–7 (Iassos); I.Milet I 9, 371, ll. 9–10 (Miletus); I.Napoli I 50 (Neapolis); see also Zachou-Kontoyanni
used in association with a priestly title? The most likely answer is to connect them, even in these cases, to a festival (for the god served by the priest in question) which took place at regular intervals. This assertion finds a confirmation in a group of inscriptions from the city of Side in Pamphylia, which attest the existence of ἱερεῖς and ἄρχιερεῖς πενταετηρικοί. Particularly interesting is the case of the ἄρχιερεῖς of the imperial cult, as at Side (μεγάλου) πενταετηρικοί ἰεροί are attested which are to be interpreted in all probability as imperial contests: the ἄρχιερεῖς πενταετηρικοί of the emperors attested at Side must be those imperial high-priests who served in connection with the celebration of the imperial pentaeteric contests. One should then ask whether the priests who bear the title πενταετηρικός remained in office for the entire period from one celebration of the festival to the following one (i.e. for an entire πενταετηρίς). That this was likely the case – at least at Side – can be argued on the basis of some examples such as that of a couple who served the imperial priesthood “for a four-year term”, or that of a priest of Apollon who served for 24 years, apparently holding six four-year terms (πενταετηρίδες) in a row. At the same time, it is to be noted that at Side those same priests who are called πενταετηρικοί appear in some cases without any particular epithet. The imperial high-priests, for example, are attested in more cases just as ἄρχιερεῖς of the Σεβαστοί (or some specific emperor) without any further temporal specification. In these cases an abbreviated form of the same priestly title was maybe used: as a consequence, all of the imperial ἄρχιερεῖς at Side would remain in office for four years. One could also suppose, however, that at Side there were two categories of imperial ἄρχιερεῖς; those who served for one year (they too, maybe, in connection with an annual imperial contest, distinct from the pentaeteric one), and those who served in connection with the imperial pentaeteric festival and remained in office for the entire period from one celebration of this festival to the following one, assuming the epithet πενταετηρικός. Something similar could be supposed also for the other priests of Side who sometimes bear the title πενταετηρικός.

Generally speaking, one could also suggest, as an alternative interpretation, that an epithet such as πενταετηρικός (or similar ones), when used in association with a priest, did not always refer to the duration of his priestly tenure, but could indicate in some cases that that priest had served in the very year in which a pentaeteric festival was celebrated. That such an interpretation is linguistically possible is proved by the observation that the epithet πενταετηρικός occurs, in association with terms like στρατηγός and ἄρχων, in some inscriptions from communities of Roman status (i.e. coloniae and municipia) to render the office of duovir quinquennalis, the annual supreme magistrate who every five years was responsible for the census of the population – or in any case it refers to magistrates with analogous duties.

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2003–2004, 273, n. 45. Cf. the terms τριετηρίς and πενταετηρίς, indicating a period of two (three inclusively) and four (five inclusively) years, or a festival taking place every two (three inclusively) and four (five inclusively) years respectively; see LSJ, s.v.


39 I.Side 75 (II. 3–4) and 77 (I. 4).

40 I.Side 103, II. 3–5: κατὰ πραγματεύσεις τῶν ἱερευνασάμου τοῖς Σεβαστοῖς. It may be worth mentioning the case of the priests of Hadrian Πανελλήνιος: in the context of the Panellenion founded by Hadrian, the charges of ἱερεύνης of Hadrian Πανελλήνιος and/or ἱεροθήκης of the Panellenion were often held by the ἄρχων of the Panellenion, whose tenure lasted four years, from one celebration of the pentaeteric Panellenion to the following one; see Oliver 1970; Spawforth–Walker 1985; Wörnle 1992 (esp. 342–345). Cf. also IG VII 3097 (Lebadea), II. 4–5: ἵερετέσσαρας πενταετηρίδα έκ τῶν ἱερών.


42 I.Side 44, 71, 75, 81 (?), 116 (high-priests of the imperial cult). Cf. also 75, II. 5–6 (priest of Apollon); 74, l. 1 (priest of Isis and Sarapis?); I. 6 (priest of Athena).

43 It is worth mentioning the case of the priesthood of Athena: while a woman served together with her husband the cult of Athena for a πενταετηρίς (I.Side TEp 1, II. 6–7 – see supra, n. 38), a priestess of Athena is referred to as “for life” (διὰ βίου) (I.Side 74, I. 6).

44 Corinth: Corinth 8.1, n° 76 (I. 4); nn° 80–81 (I. 1–2); Corinth 8.3, n° 138 (II. 3–4) (reign of Hadrian): στρατηγός πενταετηρικός; all these inscriptions refer to the same individual, the well known Epidaurian notable Cn. Cornelius Pulcher (Devijver, Prosopographia, I, C 245; Rizakis–Zoumbaki–Kantiréa 2001, ARG 117, COR 228), who in the Roman colony
Let us now turn to the inscription for Lykos and to the latter’s priestly title ἱερεὺς πενταετηρικὸς. Based on the presence of this particular epithet, it can be argued that a sexennial festival for the emperors and – as will appear clear from what follows – Zeus Καραιός was celebrated at Hypata45. It is worth noting the peculiarity of this chronological interval. I know only one other sexennial festival: it was celebrated at Delphi47 – as ἱερεὺς ἐνεχθέτης in engaging in providing the prizes (crown) for the victors in the Sebastoi48. The fact that the offices of ἱερεὺς and ἐνεχθέτης are not specified by any temporal epithet (such as ἐπταετηρικὸς or similar ones) in the inscriptions for Eubiotus and Petraeus should lead to the conclusion that they remained in office for one year only and that the imperial festival of the Sebastoi, which they presided over, was celebrated every year. It seems, therefore, that the six-yearly imperial festival over which Lykos presided was a special celebration distinct from the annual Sebastoi. One could also say that at Hypata the annual festival in honour of the emperors was celebrated every six years in a more solemn way49. Those priests who served with the heptastic imperial festival will have assumed the title ἐπταετηρικὸς. As for the duration of their priesthood, they may have remained in office for the entire period between two celebrations of the festival – as seems to have been the case for the πενταετηρικοὶ ἱερεῖς of the imperial cult at Side – or only in the year in which the festival was celebrated. In the first case, Lykos will have held his priesthood for 12 years in total, as he served twice as ἐπταετηρικὸς ἱερεύς50.

4) Imperial cult and traditional cults at Hypata

Independent of the duration of Lykos’ tenure as priest of the Ἁγία Σεβαστία, the reference in the honorary inscription to traditional cults allows us to make some further considerations about the nature of the festival for the emperors which took place every six years at Hypata. The fact that Lykos was “ἐπταετηρικὸς ἱερεύς of the Ἁγία Σεβαστία and Zeus Καραιός” (twice), and “ἱερεὺς of the Ἁγία Σεβαστία and Zeus Σωτήρ and Athena” of Corinth ran through the whole cursus honorum up to the presidency of the Isthmian games; see also IG IV 795, ll. 3–4: διάδραμον ἐντιστράτηγον (= Lat. praefectus iure dicundo, i.e. a substitute for the duovir quinquennalis; cf. Rizakis–Camia 2008, 234–235, and n. 8); Patrai: Rizakis 1998, n° 37 (Patrai – 4th century A.D.), l. 4: ἱππον τεκταυτήριον; see ibidem, p. 122. Rhegium: I.Reggio Calabria 8 (ll. 1–2) e 12 (1st century A.D.): ἱππον πενταετηρικὸς; cf. Costabile 1984, 128–140 (esp. 130 ff. and 134, n. 79); I.Napoli, p. 51. L’Amore (I.Reggio Calabria, p. 35) thinks that this magistrate at Rhegium performed some special duties maybe connected with the organization of ἱππον (cf. I.Napoli 1 33 (after the institution of the municipium (89 B.C.)), l. 3: ἱππον τοῦ διὰ πέντε ἔτων τιμητικῶν (see also I.Napoli 1 30, ll. 5–6): although there has been much debate on the matter, in the expression a duovir – or quattuorvir, a function which is attested once at Neapolis, in the same inscription – quinquennalis censoria potestate is most likely to be seen (cf. Mason 1974, s.v. τιμητικός); see the remarks by E. Miranda (I.Napoli 1, pp. 50–51). See also G. E. Bean, Turk Ark. Dergisi 19.2 (1970), 99–102, nnº 2, 3 and 7 (Cremna; late Roman): δυανδρία πενταετηρική, and Mason 1974, s.v. πενταετηρικός, and p. 113.


46 Arist. Ath. 54, 7. For the possibility that this passage refers not to two distinct festivals, one quadrennial and the other sexennial, but to the one and the same (quadrennial) Delian festival, which would have been made sexennial after 330 B.C., see Rhodes 1981, 607.

47 Syll. 825C. But it may be that this is an abbreviated form of the titulature attested for Eubiotus (cf. Burrr 1993, 19–20).


49 Cf. the well known case of the Athenian Panathenaic festival: the (pentaeteric) Great Panathenaia were celebrated in the third year of each Olympiad, while the (annual) Lesser Panathenaia were celebrated in the other years. At Ephesos also are attested both annual and pentaeteric Ephesia; cf. Arnold 1972, 18, n. 7.

50 Cf. the case of the priest of Apollo Dionysios (see supra, n. 41). Contra, Zachou-Kontoyanni 2003–2004, 273–274, argues for the existence of only one (regular) celebration of the known Sebastoi, which would have existed every seven years.
(also twice), must mean in my opinion that the emperors were associated with the cult of three traditional gods (Zeus Καραϊσκός, Zeus Ξωτήρ and Athena), according to a practice which is attested throughout the Greek world by literary, epigraphic, archaeological and numismatic evidence51. One could object that in the phrase “ἱερεύς of the Σεβαστοί and Zeus Καραϊσκός” the term ἱερεύς might be implied before Zeus: in other words, Lykos would have assumed two distinct and independent priesthoods, that of Zeus and that of the Σεβαστοί. Yet in this case it would be difficult to explain why the priesthood of Zeus Καραϊσκός has been registered separately from the other cults mentioned in the inscription (Zeus Ξωτήρ and Athena), and why the imperial priesthood has been mentioned twice in two different points of the text. To put it differently, if Lykos had assumed the imperial priesthood independently of the priesthood of Zeus Καραϊσκός, why not register the latter together with the three other cults of traditional gods, given that he had assumed all of them twice? And why mention a second time the priesthood of the Σεβαστοί? It is much simpler to argue for the existence of a joint priesthood of the emperors and Zeus Καραϊσκός52. In the same way, there must have been also a priesthood of the Σεβαστοί in association with Zeus Ξωτήρ and Athena.

5) An imperial festival in the context of the Thessalian κοινόν?

It is now possible to delineate a picture of the imperial cult in the πόλις of Hypata. The worship of the emperors was served by priests who were also responsible for the management of an annual imperial festival (Sebasta); it seems to have been quite common for these priests to assume also the charge of ἀγωνοθέτης of the imperial ἄγωνες. Every six years a special festival in honour of the emperors took place in association with the traditional cult of Zeus Καραϊσκός. The priests who served in connection with that festival – for the entire interval between two celebrations of it (ἐπταετηρίς) or only in the very year when the festival took place – and most likely took care of its organization and/or founding were called ἐπταετηρικοί. In addition to Zeus Καραϊσκός, two other traditional cults were associated with the emperors, those of Zeus Ξωτήρ and Athena. At Hypata therefore there must have been a joint cult of the emperors and Zeus Καραϊσκός, which was linked to a festival celebrated every six years, and another cult of the Σεβαστοί in association with Zeus Ξωτήρ and Athena. It is not known if the latter envisaged a celebration as well (maybe the annual Sebasta?).

Considering the pre-eminence of the πόλις of Hypata in Roman Thessaly – also reflected in some way in the evidence pertaining to the imperial cult – it might be supposed that the imperial festival taking place at Hypata every six years in association with the cult of Zeus Καραϊσκός had a special status, going beyond the local level so as to be regarded as a festival of the Thessalian κοινόν, which maybe took part in its organization, or in any case ‘endorsed’ it. This hypothesis of course does not exclude that other imperial festivals, organized or ‘sponsored’ by the κοινόν, took place in other πόλεις of Thessaly as well. With regard to this, Th. D. Axenidis considered it to be most likely that the Kaisareia of Larisa were organized by the Thessalian κοινόν53. On a more general level, it may be worth noting that a comparison between various (regional, over-regional, provincial and ‘Panhellenic’) κοινά of the Greek world in the imperial period shows that several cult ‘centres’ could coexist within the same ‘federal’ organization, as most recently underlined by S. Zoumbaki54. It is therefore perfectly likely that also in Thessaly imperial festivals which were organized, or simply ‘sponsored’, by the κοινόν took place in several cities. One of these festivals may have been that celebrated at Hypata every six years for the emperors in association with Zeus Καραϊσκός. In this case, Lykos, though a local priest of the imperial cult, would have been responsible for a festival of the Thessalian κοινόν.

52 Cf. the remarks of A. Chaniotis in SEG 54, 556. See also Camia 2009, 209–212.
53 Axenidis 1947, 36, followed by Gallis 1988, 226; v. supra, n. 8. A Boeotian agonistic inscription of the 1st century A.D. mentions a festival of the κοινόν held in Larisa: IG VII 1857, 1, 4 (κοινόν Θεσσαλίων ἐν Λαρείᾳ) (see also Moretti 1953, s.n. 84); cf. Burrer 1993, 16 (and n. 26), who thinks that the festival referred to in the Boeotian inscription could be either the Kaisareia or the Eleutheria (on which see Axenidis 1947, 15–24). See also Harter-Uibopuu 2003, 213–214.
54 Zoumbaki 2010, 123–125.
6) Concluding remarks

In the absence of other available data, the ‘federal’ character of the six-yearly imperial festival which took place at Hypata must remain a mere hypothesis, which unfortunately cannot be proven. Notwithstanding this, if analysed in the light of the evidence at our disposal and against the background of the situation of emperor cult in Greece and the Greek-speaking part of the Empire at large, the honorary inscription for Lykos allows us to give a better picture of the worship of the Roman emperors in a city of the Empire.

This document reveals the name of a priest of the imperial cult who also held the office of στρατηγός of the Thessalian κοινόν, thus providing one further proof of the fact that the imperial priesthood was usually assumed by individuals of high standing. It also reveals the existence at Hypata of a previously unknown imperial festival, evidently distinct from the annual Σεβαστά, which took place every six years and was celebrated in association with the cult of Zeus Καραϊός. It seems that at Hypata the priests who served in connection with that festival – for a six-year term (ἑπταετηρίς) or only in the year in which that festival took place – assumed a special title (ἑπταετηρικός) that underlined the connection between priestly office and imperial festival. This confirms and strengthens the idea of a close relationship at Hypata – as well as in other cities of the Empire – between the imperial festival and the office of priest of the imperial cult: in the Thessalian city the imperial priests apparently used also to assume jointly the presidency of the imperial festival, or in any case to take care of its organization and some practical aspects, namely the provision of prizes for the victors in the ἀγῶνες.

Finally, the inscription for Lykos shows that at Hypata the emperors were worshipped in association with three traditional cults (Zeus Καραϊός, Zeus Σωτήρ and Athena), thus confirming that the integration of Roman emperors into the local panthea of Greek cities, and their association with traditional cults, represented one of the most common and peculiar characteristics of emperor worship in the Greek world.

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Francesco Camia, Institute for Greek and Roman Antiquity, The National Hellenic Research Foundation, Vas. Konstantinou 48, 11635 Athens, Greece
fcamia@eie.gr