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The Greek Ruling Class under the Empire : a Privileged Mediator between Rome and the Cities *

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Abstract.

The members of the local elite of the Greek cities, firmly rooted in the reality of their times, fully accepted since Augustus' reign the Roman authority whose benefits they recognized. Nevertheless, through their political integration secured via the *civitas* and by taking offices on the imperial or provincial level they continued to ensure the functioning of traditional social and political institutions, particularly in the area of cultural and agonistic life, in the form of banquets, festivals, and games. Their twin attachment to Rome and to their homeland appointed them as mediators between their cities and the Roman administration in the domain of both cultural life and political realities. The close attachment of the civic notables to their *patris* was expressed by various benefactions and services, which embellished their cities and enhanced their importance compared to their rivals. The recognition by their fellow citizens for these services is expressed in honorific decrees that maintain the civic memory of benefactions and their continuing and increasing social role. The members of this 'class' were considered the model of a new civic ethical behaviour whose basic elements correspond to a long tradition of civic values

Introduction

Since the Roman conquest of the Greek world (2nd c. B.C.), thanks to support on the part of the Romans, local notables played a central role in the administration of Greek cities as their accredited protectors¹. Entrusted with this role, they tried not only to avoid the possible unfortunate consequences of Roman rule, but also to actively seek the benefits which could be won by creating bonds with Roman notables. The new element in this relationship, however, was the creation of links on a previously unknown scale between

* A short form of this paper has been already published in G. Rüpke, *Roman Religion and society*, Companion to the Ancient World 9 (Blackwell, London 2007), 317-330.

¹ For this "progressive entrenchment" of the well-off at the expense of the *demos* and the "oligarchisation" of the political life, see Jones 1940, 179-182; Magie 1950, 641 n. 29 [vol. II, 1504]; Quass 1982; Woolf 1994, 124; Veyne 1999, 523-524; the activity of the late Hellenistic notables cannot be compared, as Ph. Gauthier underlines (*BE* 1994, 194), with that of the notables of the Hellenistic period. See, however, the reservations regarding this of Rogers 1991, 98 (on the euergetism of Hellenistic and Roman periods, see Ferrary 1997, 199-225).

Roman aristocrats and Greek intellectuals². Such links were facilitated by the importance assigned to Greek *paideia* in the Roman world which under Augustus and his successors became the basis of Roman rule in the Greek world³. In this new world created by Augustus, the local notables completely assumed the role of mediators between imperial power and the masses whose existence they administered. Their loyalty towards the *Princeps* was expressed in various ways, particularly by the introduction and diffusion of the imperial cult whose priesthoods they undertook. Imperial cult became both the strongest expression of loyalty of the entire province towards Rome and the Emperor and formed a set of common terms of reference capable of unifying the various populations of the Empire in a religious framework.⁴ Furthermore, this privileged link between civic elites and the Emperor increased the prestige of the leading men and that of their families within their local context reflected in the honours they received by their city. On the other hand, this preeminence in local affairs facilitated their integration into the Empire by means of the *civitas romana*⁵ and created the conditions for a successful career beyond the limits of their own cities. The path to a position in the equestrian or senatorial order became possible for the most wealthy and illustrious of these Romanophile civic aristocracy.

I. Elites' Political Attitude: Servants of Rome, Protectors of Their Own City

Loyalty to the Emperor on the part of the ruling class did not mean that the local notables assimilated themselves completely to the Romans and their values. As educated and pragmatic men, they acknowledged the dominion of Rome, although at the same time they were proud of their own Greek cultural superiority. Thus their political and social behaviour is marked by an ambivalent duality, which makes them servants of Roman

² E.W. Gray, *JRS* 42, 1952, 123 (reviewing Magie 1950) speaks of an "open conspiracy" between the aristocrats of the two coasts of Adriatic sea; according to Crawford (1979, 194 n. 7 where other references) the principle is explicitly stated by Cic. *ad Q. fr.* 1.1.25 whereby it is ensured that cities are governed by the desires of the aristocracies'.

³ On *paideia* as an element of identity and as a *lingua franca* for the understanding between élites both in the East and the West, see Flinterman 1995, 90-91; Borg 2004, 9; for the important social role of *paideia* and its association with social status, see Whitmarsh 2001, 91-108; Drecoll 2004, 403-418.

⁴ Cf. Sherwin White 1973, 402-404; Quass 1982, 208-213; with regard to this, see the numerous inscriptions in honour of the emperors as champions and protectors of the civilized world (Sherwin White 1973, 403, n. 5). On the origins of this cult and its symbolic association with local cults (*e.g.* at Athens and Eleusis) see Böhme 1992, 246-48.

⁵ Generally speaking, during the Republic Greeks did not display great desire to acquire the *civitas Romana*, except in some rare cases, the most illustrious one being that of Theophanus of Mytilene, Pompeius' friend. The other great friend of Pompeius, Pythodorus of Tralles, did not acquire citizenship. The fact that Lyson of Patrai, a friend of Cicero, allowed his son (perhaps in about 50) to be adopted by a Roman, albeit exiled (*ad fam.* 13.19, 2), perhaps indicates, in Crawford's view (1979, 195), a change of attitude.

authority and admirers of its political values, whilst also being fervent apostles of the *paideia* and protectors or benefactors of their own cities. Woolf very adroitly sums up this attitude in his successful expression, ‘Becoming Roman, staying Greek’.⁶ Indeed, devotion to Rome and the emperor did not distance the provincial elites from the traditional cults of their cities,⁷ which they occasionally administered as a hereditary duty, nor did it diminish their attachment to their place of birth. Such an attachment was particularly strong for those engaged in intellectual activities, as were, for example, M. Antonius Polemo, Flavius Arrianus, Claudius Charax, Herodes Atticus, and Plutarch. Plutarch is the most firmly rooted of all in the soil of his native city, the small community of Chaeronea, which he served through inclination as much as through conviction. In his *Life of Demosthenes* (2.1–2), he states that he decided to live in Chaeronea, in order that this small town should not shrink yet further.⁸

IIA. Elite’s Social Behavior: Benefactors of Their Place of Birth

This inconstant faithfulness, so to speak, to their place of birth remains unshaken even when leading citizens leave their homeland to take up responsibilities at a provincial or even imperial level.⁹ Their social behavior is clearly motivated by their “love of honor” (*philotimia*) which together with patriotism (*philopatria*), are the most important virtues of the leading citizens who are praised by authors during the first and second century A.D.¹⁰ Dio, orator or philosopher, or both at the same time, is a typical case of these

⁶ Woolf 1994, 116-143. The best known case is that of Dio Chrysostom, who in his orations presents himself sometimes as pro-Roman, sometimes as anti-Roman (a good explanation of this ambivalent attitude is given by Whitmarsh 2001, 200-216). Dio’s example is not unique. The identity of this cultivated elite, the *pepaideumenoí*, is complex, as is stressed by Jones (2004, 13-21), who speaks of “multi-faceted identities”; cf. also Yildirim 2004, 23-52. The strong desire for a cultural identity is not the expression of any resistance to the Roman power, with which notables are in fact closely associated through the holding of what are sometimes important offices; see Flinterman 1995, 49-51, with the relative bibliography on this issue.

⁷ See Auffarth (1997, 219-238), who thinks that, after the loss of political identity, religion becomes a factor in the creation of identity and is connected with a cultural system which sidesteps Roman domination. Priesthoods of traditional civic cults are monopolised by the great priestly families (for Sparta see Cartledge, Spawforth 1989, 164; Lafond 2006, 224-227).

⁸ Plutarch liked to compare himself with Polybius and Panaetius, who succeeded in persuading their fellow-citizens to take advantage of their friendship with the Romans. In his works Plutarch expresses his patriotism in various ways; cf. Renoître 1951, 45-49; Salmeri 2002, 59 ff.

⁹ In fact, such temporary distancing actually strengthens the bond with the homeland and with it the desire to spend the rest of their life in their birthplace, assume local civic duties and undertake considerable euergetic activity; see Quass 1982, 188-189; particularly for Bithynia, see Fernoux 2004, 501-504.

¹⁰ On the phenomenon of euergetism see Jones, 1940, 182-183; Veyne 1992; Gauthier 1985. On the *philotimia* as a model of euergetism, explained by Ph. Gauthier, see the critical observations by Rogers 1991a, 98. Even though urban euergetism is the most important type of benefaction,

cosmopolitan patriots who remain deeply attached to their tiny native cities and engaged in the affairs of their own homeland or of their province. On more than one occasion he reminds his audience of the benefactions made to Prusa by members of his family and especially by himself (*Or.* 46.5–6): “I have performed for you the greatest liturgies. In fact no one in the city has more of them to his credit than I have. Yet you yourselves know that many are more wealthy than I am”.¹¹

The generosity displayed by the elites is manifested in various ways, particularly when they have the opportunity to exercise local and provincial offices or perform costly civic liturgies. Inscriptions offer numerous witnesses to the zeal displayed by elite members on behalf of their *glykytate patris*, their beloved country.¹² In particular, honorific decrees give some indication of the importance assumed by euergetism in the outlook of the elites in their relations with both the ruling power and the masses. To traditional euergetic activities, familiar from the past – such as the perpetual problem of maintaining cities’ vital supplies – are now added new types of such activity.¹³ These new activities assume a new scale and are concerned with, among other matters, the public distribution of various goods, feasts, and games. They are, however, chiefly concerned with the erection or completion of public buildings, temples, galleries, athletic facilities, such as the *gymnasia*, *stadia*, and the other cultural establishments that embellished and monumentalized civic centers. It is no surprise that most senators included in their euergetic activities large public works, which usually involved the erection or completion of public buildings.¹⁴ The most spectacular example of this kind of great *euergetes* (‘benefactor’) is Atticus and his son Herodes, who although Roman senators performed the various higher offices of their own home city in the first half of the second century. They also spent considerable sums on building and feasts on behalf of Athens, this being their native city, on behalf of the cities

examples of euergetism in a rural context are also found; see Ligt 1993. Examples of rural euergetism come mostly from Asia Minor (cf. Rogers 1991a, 76-77) and Syria (cf. Sartre 1991, 292).

¹¹ After his return from exile (A.D. 96), all his speeches are concerned by the desire to beautify his modest city of Prusa (e.g. *Or.* 45.12–13). From his first speech onward, he is ready to offer his services as the city’s ‘guiding light’. He desires, he says (Dio, *Or.* 44.2–5), the expression of love by, and the esteem of, all. He does not want statues, honors or public proclamations to be proposed for him. He does, however, make a point of recalling the honors bestowed on his father and all his family, which are signs of prestige sufficient to ensure him a respectful audience; see Salmeri 2002, 59 n. 25 and 65-66.

¹² The formula is preserved in the bequest made to the *boule* and the *demos* of Ephesos, in 104 A.D., by a wealthy Roman equestrian, C. Vibius Salutaris; see Rogers 1991b, *passim*. For similar expressions and generally on the theme of the patriotism of the elites, see Eckhard 2002. For the importance of the euergetic activity of the local aristocrats, see Danker 1982, *passim*; Meyer 1999, 305.

¹³ For a list of these different euergetic activities, see Quass 1982, 196-198: various examples.

¹⁴ Public works could be undertaken on various occasions and especially in order to celebrate a privilege granted to a city by the emperor or on the occasion of an imperial visit (see examples in Fernoux 2004, 361-393).

of the province of Achaëa and sometimes made benefactions far beyond those narrow limits.¹⁵

This generous social behavior remains constant throughout the High Empire, although a change in outlook is to be seen from the early third century A.D. There is a change in material culture and in the manner of self-presentation by the elite. Agoras, the old centers of public life, are abandoned, whilst public display moves as a whole to the imposing *viae colonnatae* and to places of athletic activity. Thus public building as a major indication of status is gradually replaced by other euergetic activities, such as the introduction of new sacred games (*hieroi agones*)¹⁶, that is, by games that are “panhellenic and iselastic.”¹⁷ Among the many cases of this there is, for example, that of Saoterus of Nicomedia, favorite of Commodus (c. AD 180), who, on the evidence of Cassius Dio (72.12.2), caused his city to profit from his influence, so that, thanks to Saoterus, the people of Nicomedia “received from the Senate authorization to celebrate a festival and to build a temple to Commodus, which seemed to imply a *neocoria*” (“Temple-Warden”). It was then that Commodus, a great friend of the people of Nicaea, granted the city the permission to institute a *hieros agon* bearing the name of *Commodeia*.¹⁸

II.B. Elite’s Assistance of Their Cities in Various Ways in Critical Moments

The aim of the local political elites was not only to embellish their cities with buildings or new sacred games but also to preserve their existing privileges and eventually to

¹⁵ For the benefactions of Atticus at Athens, see Graindor 1930; Tobin 1997. His euergetic activity exceeded the limits of his city and of the province of Achaia. Philostratus (*Vita Sophistarum* 2.1) tells us that *Herodes Atticus* spent 4,000,000 *denarii* on an aqueduct at Alexandria Troas and that his generosity was more appropriate for an emperor than a private citizen. A parallel case from the Greek world, albeit on an entirely different scale, is provided by *C. Iulius Eurycles Herclanus L. Vibullius Pius* (mid-second century). He was a senator, drawn from Sparta, who, to display his support for the emperor, undertook the construction of a stoa at Mantinea (AD 136/7) dedicated to Antinoos (*IG* 5.2.281; *Syll.*³ 841; cf. Quass 1982, 190-191). For examples of senators benefactors from Asia Minor, see Quass 1982, 192-196; Fernoux 2004, 189-190. Equally important is the euergetic activity of equestrians and other local aristocrats of lower status. With the notable exception of Opramoas of Rhodiapolis in Lycia (*IGRR* 3.739; *TAM* 2.3905), and of the anonymous benefactor at Xanthos (Coulton 1987, 171-178), whose euergetic enterprises were on a scale similar to that of Atticus, the other members of the equestrian order engaged in a smaller range of activities. See Quass 1982, 198-208 (examples from all of the eastern provinces).

¹⁶ E.g. the *Damostheneia*, a quadrennial thymelic festival, founded by *T. Iulius Demosthenes* of Oenoanda; see M. Wörrle 1988; Rogers 1991a, 91-100. On the athletic contests during the imperial period see Robert 1984, 34-35. There are some very useful regional studies: Ziegler 1985 (Cilicia); Spawforth 1989 (Achaia). Bouley 2001 (Balkan provinces).

¹⁷ The *hieroi kai iselastikoi* (Robert 1989, 243 n. 161) are the highest-ranking *agones* in which victory was associated with immunities and a package of honours. The prominence given to these festivals in records of agonistic careers reflects their standing.

¹⁸ For the *Comodeia* of Nicomedia, see Robert 1989, 244-245.

acquire more and, more importantly, to help their cities when the latter faced various problems, particularly when the need arose to settle serious political or economic questions that involved the future of the *polis*. The process of solving these problems offered the elite the opportunity for an audience before the governor, the senate, or even the emperor, in order to press the interests of their homeland (Dio, *Or.* 44.12).

The first Roman authority to which civic notables addressed the requests of their cities was the provincial governor. The theoretically unlimited extent of the authority and omnipotence that governors apparently enjoyed, vis-à-vis the cities, naturally caused members of the local elite to turn to them to seek help and support which, under certain conditions, provincial governors were eager to offer,¹⁹ since the Roman authorities were convinced that good provincial government rested upon the smooth cooperation between the proconsul and the local ruling class in provincial cities.²⁰ Although such personal friendships were of vital importance for cities facing problems, they were not always without their risks. These bonds might be utilized either for the common good or for personal advancement, although the latter was the more common course of action, in Plutarch's view.²¹ Thus a successful local career for a member of the local elite depended very much on the quality of his relationship with each of the governors, as did promotion to the equestrian and senatorial order, since governors recommended leading provincials for high offices appointed by the emperor.²²

¹⁹ For the description of this mediation by governors, see Saller 1991, 158 and in particular the last part of chapter 3. At the other extreme, friendship with the governor or his powerful friends at Rome could provide protection from prosecution after the governor's term in the province, as demonstrated by a dispute related by Lucian (Saller 1991, 153-154 et 165).

²⁰ Over the first two centuries, the local elites worked with provincial governors in a balanced and mutually satisfactory fashion. From the third century the decrease in the imperial power enhanced the prestige and standing of provincial governors, whilst at the same time diminishing the influence of the local notables. Diocletian tried to restore the balance; cf. Meyer 1999, 211. There were numerous opportunities for creating or cementing such personal bonds when, for example, the leading citizens of a town contacted governors on municipal business (Saller 1991, 161; Fernoux 2004, 314-316). Needless to say, this cooperation, far from being conducted on equal terms, was extremely one-sided. Both politicians and moralists openly state that real power rests with the governor. Plutarch (*Moralia* 813 D-E) advocates respect towards authority but reminds local ambitious notables of their illusions and criticizes their docility and servile behaviour; see also Dio, *Or.* 43, 4; cf. Desideri 1986, 371-381.

²¹ One of the many such examples of this is provided by Lycia, where the members of the local *ordo* attempted to exploit their position to attract the attention of the governor and of the emperor himself (Opramoas: *IGRR* 3.739).

²² Such a use of patronage connections must have been common, since Dio of Prusa (*Or.* 45.8) was able to boast of having refrained from using his influence with the proconsul and the emperor to personal advantage in quarrels at Prusa regarding the election of *decuriones*. In an oration delivered in Prusa, Dio (*Or.* 43.11) defends himself against the charge of employing his personal connection with the proconsul of Bithynia during local political struggles in order to have his

Fortunately, the cities were not dependent solely upon the goodwill of the provincial administrators. In some cases, cities preferred to apply directly, if that was possible, to the highest authority, that is, the Roman emperor,²³ their intention being thereby to overcome any objection on the part of the governor. The business was then confined to the local aristocracy,²⁴ who either carried out a diplomatic mission to the senate or the emperor himself or addressed a *petitio*, both of these means of communication being frequently mentioned in the epigraphic records.²⁵ Some members of the civic elite enjoyed the possibility of more direct access to the Roman administration, thanks to their personal relations with noble Roman families or their rhetorical abilities and fame. These qualities were sufficient enough to impress the senate and the emperor and hence to ensure success in their mission, making them ideal candidates for undertaking such delicate missions, whose nature could vary so widely.²⁶

enemies tortured and exiled. It is difficult to show how far the accusations against Dio were true or not (cf. Jones 1978, 99).

²³ The majority of intellectual notables did not possess the imperial *gratia* which admitted them to the circle of the '*amici Caesaris*' and gave them direct contact with the emperor. However, a local notable could attain power in indirect ways, for instance through connections to the imperial entourage which was composed of men of the same social status or of persons of lower social status surrounding him, and especially of educated men who served emperors as teachers and doctors; cf. Saller 1991, 63-68.

²⁴ Cities placed their hopes in their leading citizens because these missions required financial support that cities frequently could not provide and because notables alone possessed the necessary intellectual and moral qualities. In the choice of the members of an embassy a great role was played by the importance of the family and in some cases, attempts were made to send to embassies individuals descending from royal families, local dynasts, or at least the oldest families, who enjoyed the widest network of links; cf. Souris 1984, 24-40; Quass 1993, 169-173; Ziethen 1994, 15-36.

²⁵ Embassies and *parapompai* constituted two complementary duties usually assumed by notables, but they differed significantly. Embassies were undertaken outside the civic territory, their costs consisting essentially of travel expenses. On the other hand, *parapompai* involved a number of more expensive steps, carried out on the occasion of imperial visits in the city. In such cases the notables concerned officially assumed all the expenses connected with the stay of the emperor in the city. Likewise, they might defray the expenses for the supply of an army wintering in their cities (cf. Fernoux 2004, 402-403). On the other hand, the cost of petitions (see Haucken 1998) was insignificant. Every imperial subject was a potential recipient of the emperor's *beneficia* and in theory everybody could address a petition to the emperor, but this was extremely difficult for the poor (Saller 1991, 68 with previous literature).

²⁶ Josephus (*Antiquitates Iudaicae* 15.2, 3-5) states that Agrippa confirmed the rights of the Jewish communities of Asia Minor thanks to an oration of Nicolaus of Damascus pronounced before him and a council of Roman office-holders (14 B.C.). Despite its anecdotal character, a story in Philostratus' *Vitae Sophistarum* (1.25) regarding the Smyrnean sophist, Polemon, shows the great stress laid by cities on the struggle for the *prōteia* and the contribution made by intellectual members of the elite to a successful outcome for the city. An inscription from Ephesus (*I.Ephesos* 802; cf. Quass 1993, 169 n. 522), in honor of a lawyer who was sent to

A fundamental task of embassies to Rome was the maintenance of rights and privileges that had been granted by the Roman authorities to Greek cities but also the acquisition of new ones, such as the promotion to the status of *civitas libera* or the assumption of the role of regional *metropolis*, seat of *conventus* to which smaller cities were then obliged to pay certain special taxes.²⁷

Imperial intervention was also requested in relation to a number of internal matters, such as the decrease of the number of members of the local *ordo*, the improvement of its politico-judicial statutes and permission to create a *gerousia*.²⁸ Communities applied also to the emperor in order to gain approval for measures taken at civic or provincial level that might do damage to their status or economic life; such matters concern in addition to judicial and administrative affairs, trade, economy, financial support, taxes and, in particular, border disputes among neighboring cities. Furthermore, questions were submitted to the emperor regarding the organization of markets and the dates of religious and sporting festivals. For example, in 29 B.C., Pergamum received permission to found a temple of the Goddess Rome and Augustus, so becoming a centre for the imperial cult. It founded games, the *Rhomaia Sebasta*, which included a three-day trade fair. Later an embassy obtained from Augustus a grant of *ateleia* for the period of the games, which was valid both for the trade fair and for Elaea, the port of Pergamum. The *ateleia* in question was probably immunity from the provincial tax, that is, the taxes collected by the *publicani*.²⁹ At any rate, the rights and privileges involved were inscribed on stone and displayed in public areas, the most spectacular example being the so-called “Archive Wall”

represent Ephesus before the emperor Macrinus and his son, Diadumenianus, and to defend the *proteia* and other demands made by his homeland, provides us with another case of a successful embassy. Similarly an inscription from Side, in Asia Minor, reminds us of the services of an illustrious citizen “in whose time the city was victorious in all the cases before the most divine emperor.” Q. Popillius Pytho, of Beroea in Macedonia, is honored (*SEG* 17, 1960, 315) for having requested from Nerva the right for Beroea alone, the birthplace of Popillius Pytho, to hold the titles of *metropolis* and *neokoros*. The inscription in the theater must have been erected after the death of Nerva, although Pytho must have made his request at some point between AD 96 and 98. Beroia had probably become *neokoros* of the *Sebastoi*, like Ephesus, for the first time under Domitian. Likewise, Antonia Tryphaina, of Cyzicus, thanks to her connections with Gaius, helped Cyzicus in many ways, especially over the acquisition of the title of *neokoros* of the family of the emperor Gaius. A decree in her honor (*Syll.*³ 366), erected by the *boule* and *demos* (‘city council and all citizens’), express their gratitude for that and other benefactions.

²⁷ Ambassadors usually defended the interests of their own community, their own *patris*, although occasionally they promoted the interests of a different community, of an *ethnos*, of a provincial *koinon* or even of an international union, such as the Amphictiony. For various formulas of requests through diplomatic missions see Habicht 2001-2002, 19-21.

²⁸ *Local ordo*: Oliver 1989, 322-323 no 156 (Parthiopolis in Thrace); improvement of the politico-judicial status: *IL Afr.* 634=*FIRA*² I, 70 (Volubilis); permission to create a *gerousia*: *IGR* IV 783 = Oliver 1941, 163-164 no 52 (Apamea in Phrygia); cf. Giannakopoulos 2008a, 39-43.

²⁹ See Engelmann, Knibbe 1989, 125-129.

in Aphrodisias, which comprises a selection of a large number of such documents highlighting the city's privileges.³⁰

Finally, on occasions of extreme necessity, such as natural disasters, fires or earthquakes, the cities issued appeals for financial help. The most detailed reference to the success of a diplomatic mission to the emperor, which was dispatched after a catastrophic earthquake, has been found in an inscription from Stratonikeia in Caria.³¹ In some exceptional cases, leading citizens took the initiative and made a personal appeal to the emperor without waiting for an embassy to be arranged. A typical example of this kind of behavior is that manifested by Aristeides in favor of his own city of Smyrna, which had suffered terrible earthquake damage. He sent a rhetorically and emotionally highly-charged letter to Marcus Aurelius. The emperor, instead of waiting for an embassy from Smyrna to arrive, asked the senate to vote money for the rebuilding of the city immediately.³²

III. Promoting the Status of Their City into the Regional and Imperial Context

Civic elites, especially in Asia Minor, deployed relentless efforts to prove the Greek origin of their hometowns, by establishing close relations with the old centers of Hellenism and, since the reign of Hadrian, through the membership in the *Panhellenion*, which is the most important manifestation of this spirit of Greek values and cultural tradition. Membership of this league offered both an incentive and a prestigious outlet for the display of *philotimia* by upper-class Greeks, who spared no effort in the attempt to reach their goals.³³ Thus the visit and the activity in Sparta, Athens, and Plateai of Tiberius Claudius Andragathos Attalos of Synnada are clearly to be connected to the desire on the part of his city to lodge its candidature with the Panhellenion. Andragathos and his brother Claudius Piso Tertullinus, who were members of the aristocracy of Synnada under Hadrian and Pius, were probably the ambassadors who brought in A.D. 140-1 the decree of Synnada found in Athens (*IG* 2².1075 with *IG* 3.55).

Conflicts and rivalries between neighboring cities was a frequent phenomenon under the Roman rule.³⁴ According to Dio these struggles, which earned from the Romans the

³⁰ Often the powerful individuals who, thanks to the relationship that they have established with the Roman authorities, have helped their city are praised; for Aphrodisias, see Reynolds 1982, 33-37.

³¹ *I. Stratonikeia*, 1009 and 1029. Pausanias VIII.43, 4 mentions that a violent earthquake overthrew the cities of Lycia and Caria, along with Kos and Rhodes during the reign of Antoninus Pius who devoted vast sums to rebuilt them (other examples in Habicht 2001-2002, 22). Unfortunately, in most cases there is no mention of the embassies' contents and only successful embassies are mentioned (Habicht 2001-2002, 21).

³² Dio, *Or.* 32.3; Philostratus, *Vita Sophistarum* 2.9; Aristeides, *Or.* 19.

³³ See Spawforth, Walker 1985, 1986 and Spawforth 1999; Lafond 2006, 148-158.

³⁴ Robert 1989, 1-39; Sartre 1991, 191-198; see examples of arguments drawn upon the arsenal of their past in Souris 1984, 190-200.

ironic term *hellenika hamartemata*, “Greek failings”,³⁵ rather than concerning important matters, in fact involved trivial affairs, such as fights over names, *peri onomatón* or for primacy, over *ta proteia*.³⁶ This view certainly underestimates the fact that the rivalries among cities were not always devoid of real content.³⁷ Such rivalries frequently caused the proconsul and the imperial administration great difficulties, because large cities that struggled with each other were supported by smaller cities. This meant that the province was occasionally split into two opposing camps, a fact which had negative consequences when the time came to take decisions at the *koinon* or by the governor. This was an important reason why, when differences arose, provincial elites members tried to reconcile opposing sides and bring about *homonoia*, ‘concord’, the creation of which was celebrated with the issuing of commemorative celebratory coins.³⁸ If reconciliation proved impossible, then the emperor was forced to intervene. Imperial authority was required to put an end to great differences between cities and it was the emperor who gave the final judgment.³⁹

³⁵ Dio, *Or.* 38.38: “In truth such marks of distinction, on which you plume yourselves, not only are objects of utter contempt in the eyes of all persons of discernment, but especially in Rome they excite laughter and, what is still more humiliating, are called ‘Greek failings’ (see also Dio, *Or.*, 38, 24); Herodian, III.2, 7-9, with regards to the relentless struggle for supremacy between Nicaea and Nicomedia, speaks of the ‘old evil’ which had weakened Greece; cf. Robert 1989; Meyer 1999, 298; Heller 2006.

³⁶ The best-known example of this rivalry over the *proteia* – that is, the possession of the titles *metropolis* (capital city), *neokoros* (warden of the temple of the Augusti), and *prote tes Eparchias* (first place in the province) – was that between Nicomedia and Nicaea, which inspired Louis Robert to give it the eloquent title (1989) of “the glory and the hatred.”

³⁷ For example, the *proteion* or first place was no empty honor, if one considers Dio’s own words (*Or.* 38.26), which seem to negate the disparaging reference immediately preceding. The title offered the city first place in the procession of embassies at the *Koina Bythinias* (‘provincial assemblies of Bithynia’) and thus indicated that it was the strongest and most brilliant of all the cities in the province. The *proteion* also indicated that the city was the centre for the *Synedrion* and, as centre of the imperial cult, raised taxes from the lesser cities of the province (*Or.* 38.26) and was visited more than any other city by the proconsul (Meyer 1999, 314). Through such visits, the city hoped to gain support against its rival cities in the province. This perhaps explains why the quarrel between Nicaea and Nicomedia, which started under Tiberius, continued at least until the fourth century A.D. (see Robert 1989).

³⁸ Such attempts were reinforced by intellectuals, such as Dio (*Or.* 40 and 41) and Aristeides (*Or.* 23f.), who, in their analysis of interstate relations, rejected every sort of *stasis* (‘internal strife’), promoted *homonoia*, and urged cities with differences to return to a state of *homonoia*. Dio (*Or.* 38, 36-37), analyses this phenomenon in his *oratio* on the *homonoia* between Nicaea and Nicomedia, which was delivered in Nicomedia. Dio, Plutarch and Aristides advise *homonoia* but not in the same way as Rome does (cf. Veyne 1999, 565); on the *homonoia* see, Merkelbach 1978, 287-296; Meyer 1991, 307-313.

³⁹ Imperial rescripts (*krimata*) confirm the possession of honorary titles as privileges (Robert 1989, 218 n. 36; Meyer 1991, 39) which another emperor could revoke. Thus Nicaea, after supporting Pescennius Niger through hatred of its neighbor, Nicomedia, which favored Septimus Severus, was deprived of its titles. A Hadrianic inscription at the city entrance of Nicaea stated that the

IV. Civic Honors and Imperial Awards

The euergetic activities of the members of the local elite and the various services that they offered their homeland had a positive effect upon the social position and prestige of the benefactors and their families (Dio, *Or.* 44.12, 45.2–3). In return, cities repaid the various services rendered by the elite with honors, offices and titles, such as ‘son of the city’ or ‘father of the city’.⁴⁰ The placing of the honorific monuments in the city centre with inscriptions commemorating magistracies, priesthoods and benefactions ensured publicity and enhanced the prestige of the honouree; at the same time this publicity incites *euergetes* to continue their activity and to encourage potential benefactors to do likewise. The honors that the cities bestowed upon them in certain cases raised those honored far above the level of their peers, let alone that of common mortals. An example of this is the use of the title of *ktistes*, which means literally ‘founder’ but in Imperial times usually means ‘benefactor’ or ‘restorer’, a term which was reserved for the emperors up to the time of the Flavians. The benefactor might even be honored with the erection of a *heroon* and the instituting of a cult or the establishment of funeral games of a heroic character, to be held at regular intervals.⁴¹

Rome, for its part, also honored them, initially with citizenship, which constituted the highest possible honor for provincial *peregrini* and which the members of the local elite, as we already saw, were proud to acquire. The award of a high priesthood was a great honor, the greatest possible recognition of lifelong services rendered to the city, to the province, but, above all, to Rome.⁴² The choice of candidates was made according to extremely strict criteria that may be summarized as follows: wealth, social position, good relations of the individual in question and his family with the imperial milieu or with the emperor himself. Despite the heavy financial burden involved, the prestige of the family that undertook this office was enormous, as is evident from the titles bestowed on them, such as “first in the

city had been declared first *metropolis* of Bithynia and Pontos, in accordance with imperial decisions, probably made by Trajan or Hadrian. On the setbacks suffered by cities see Robert 1989, 230-237.

⁴⁰ On this titles, see Canali De Rossi 2007; Giannakopoulos 2008b, 242-251.

⁴¹ Bearers of similar titles were usually rich citizens, who had pursued a successful career in the context of the *imperium Romanum*. As equestrians or senators, they exploited their highly placed contacts to win privileges for their native cities. When they returned to their birthplace, they engaged in such lively euergetic activity that they were deservedly granted the title of *ktistes* or “New Themistocles” or “New Epameinondas” (Meyer 1999, 219). The very few who received heroic honors held equally high social position; cf. Fernoux 2004, 505 et 507-508 (details).

⁴² Cf. Quass 1982, 213; In fact, detailed analysis shows that the families of many of the priests of the Imperial cult had personal ties with Caesar, Antonius and, in later times, with various emperors; cf. Quass 1982, 208-209 (and 209-212 for many examples).

province,” “first in Asia,” or “first of the Greeks” (*primus Acheôn*).⁴³ In addition, the exercise of the priesthood sometimes served as a stepping stone for ambitious individuals who were not senators or knights, but it was not a boost for a career in Rome. In any case, the progress of these *novi cives Romani* toward the highest imperial positions occurred only gradually.⁴⁴ No member of the first generation of *cives* was honored with equestrian or senatorial status. Promotion to equestrian rank occurs in the second generation, in some cases already during the first century AD, whilst it is only the third generation, under Trajan, that provides the first consuls.⁴⁵

Conclusion

The members of the local elite in this period are notable for their twin attachment to Rome and to their homeland. They were appointed as mediators to function between their cities and the Roman administration in the domain of both cultural life and political realities. Firmly rooted in the reality of their times, they fully accepted Roman authority, whose benefits they recognized. The political integration of the elites via the *civitas* into the Imperial system and the promotion of some of its members to the equestrian and senatorial ranks are the counterpart on an individual level of the changes that took place in the social structure and the conduct of affairs of cities that would justify, in the eyes of some scholars, the claim that ‘political Romanization’,⁴⁶ with an aristocratic coloring, indeed existed. The members of the local elite now completely ensured the functioning of traditional social and political institutions, particularly in the area of cultural and agonistic life, in the form of banquets, festivals, and games.

Notables attempted to perpetuate the influence of their families by their close attachment to their own town. This attachment was expressed by various benefactions and services, which embellished their cities and enhanced their importance compared to their rivals. The recognition by their fellow citizens to all these services is expressed in honorific decrees that maintained the civic memory of benefactions performed by the families of the elite by means of the continuity of the political duties assumed by the benefactor (*euergetes*), and by their continuing and increasing social role. Civic honors and distinctions awarded in the past or in the present lent legitimacy to the rank of the family, its power, and its high social status in general. This is the sign of an eternal

⁴³ Robert 1929, 13-20; Quass 1982, 209, n. 235. In some cities, a contest for the best citizen (*aristopoliteia*) was instituted (Lafond 2006, 175-180).

⁴⁴ These families had possessed Roman citizenship for many generations and in some cases were the descendants of Roman colonists settled in the country since the Republican period. In most cases, the relatives of an *eques* had assumed civic and religious duties, of which the most important was the priesthood of the Imperial cult. Less frequently, their promotion was due more to their illustrious lineage than to their own qualities (Fernoux, 479-480 et 486-488).

⁴⁵ See Sherwin White 1973, 409-410; Welles 1964; Quass 1982.

⁴⁶ See Millar 1993, 232-260; On the difficulty involved in defining the term "Romanisation", see Woolf 1994, 117.

familial faithfulness, reflected in the notion of “ancestral benefaction”.⁴⁷ An *euergetes* was not merely a social or political personage. He was the model of a civic ethic whose constituent elements are to be deciphered through the eulogies, public laudatory speeches that the city delivered on the members of its elite who adhered to a long tradition of civic values.⁴⁸

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⁴⁷ These persons owed their local privileged position to their wealth and to their ascendancy and the characteristic pair of words found in honorific decrees passed in their honour, “by family and wealth” (*genei kai plouto*), is extremely explicit. On the importance of the honoured person’s noble lineage, see L. Robert, *Hellenica* XIII, 1965, 212-213; Bowie 1970, 30-32; Rizakis 2010; Lafond 2006, 164-169.

⁴⁸ The moral values attributed to benefactors in honorific decrees were deeply rooted in the philosophical and moral vocabulary of the Archaic and Classical periods, but in the Imperial period we can observe, as Lafond says, “un glissement dans l’expression des idéaux civiques, notamment des valeurs guerrières vers les valeurs culturelles” (Lafond 2006, 42-49).

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