

Herrschaftsstrukturen und Herrschaftspraxis

Konzepte, Prinzipien
und Strategien der Administration
im römischen Kaiserreich

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kings, in Greek terms; and both were beloved of the gods unless the gods drove them mad. A recent edition of an inscription (AE 1996, 1476) from Hierapolis re-interprets this text as an oracle counseling a city not to appeal the judicial verdict of the proconsul of Asia:

Right careful are the counsels and minds of [mortals] nourished by Zeus; when their minds are distressed, they o[pt for] afterthought. [Judging] by decree on his tribunal, in his wisdom he gave forth a bitter interpretation [or possibly “translation”] ... [two lines illegible] ... For in this way you will not miss what the God has uttered, forsooth, and you will ratify it out of piety, which can do you no ill; [a thing that will] suit better and [be] more helpful ...⁵³

Verdicts of a governor accepted by a city, and upheld by Apollo? Who would *not* want to spend his day hearing cases?⁵⁴

The governor's boot and the city's politicians. Greek communities and Rome's representatives under the empire.

Christina Kokkinia

‘The Spartans and the Athenians had reasons to contend against each other: theirs was a contest for real power and privilege – not yours. You are little more than slaves arguing with fellow slaves for honour!’

This, more or less, is how Dio Chrysostom addressed the people of Tarsus.¹ Here he criticizes not only civil strife among the citizens, but also the Tarsians' bitterly contested relations with neighbouring cities as well as with the Roman governors. Look to the past for guidance, keep quiet and fear the Romans: this is typical advice in writers of the second sophistic – and as such is often taken to reflect the realities of civic life and Roman rule in the Eastern empire. But shouldn't a speech writer, such as Dio, be expected to create just as much as to reflect his world?

In fact, the picture that Greek authors of the High Empire paint of politics in their cities and provinces has something in common with the classicising art of the High Baroque. Poussin and Rubens depict ancient stories in the theatrical, dramatic language of the 17th century. With Plutarch, Dio Chrysostom or Aelius Aristides it's the other way around: they apply ancient concepts to describe contemporary realities. Roman rulers are more often called kings than emperors; governors are more often *hegemones* than they are *anthypatoi* or *anti-strategoï*; and external threats are posed by Persians rather than Parthians.² Political analysis owes everything to Plato and Aristotle, and factors unknown to classical times are either discussed in classical terms or they are not discussed at all. Clearly, this is not helpful for understanding the actual functioning of civic politics and the role of the Roman authorities in the Greek cities of the empire.

This paper will attempt to add one more element of uncertainty to the picture. In this paper, I should like to explore how some writers of the second sophistic may have overemphasized the role of the Roman authorities in the political life of Greek cities, while downplaying that of the people. Thinking about the present in terms of the past is only one important element of elite mentality that may be held responsible for such distortions. I should like to point to another complicating factor: the interplay of Roman and Greek identity. Essentially, my argument is that there is a connection between three seemingly unconnected interests: an interest to assert the value of Greek traditions and institutions; an interest to underline

⁵³ Merkelbach-Stauber, SGO I, 02/12/03, republishing Pugliese Carratelli 1963–1964, 369 no. IIIb 1–9 and West 1967, 186 (IIIb): σκεθραὶ πάμπαν ἔασι διοτρεφέων [αἰζηῶν] | βουλαὶ τε πραπίδες τ', ἐπιμηθείης τ' ἀπέλαυσαν | κηδόμενοι σφετέρης· θεσμῶ τ' ἐν βήμ[ατι κροίνων] | πεπνύμενος πικρῆς ἐρμηνείης με[θίησιν ---|---]ασ.μεναι και π..[---|---]κα...ε.λει και μεμβλ[---|] ὡδε γὰρ οὐκ ἀφαμαρτήσεις ἄν τοι θε[ὸς ἀυδᾶ,] | ἐκ δὲ θεουδείης κύρσεις, ἢ σ' οὐ τι [κακῶσει,] | ἀλλὰ συνωρότερον και ἀοσηρω[---|] -----.

⁵⁴ I extend my thanks to the participants in the conference for their useful comments, and especially to J. E. Lendon.

¹ D.Chr. 34.51: καίτοι τὰ μὲν ἐκείνων εἶχεν ἀληθῆ δύναμιν και μεγάλας ὠφελείας, εἰ δεῖ τὰς πλεονεξίας οὕτως καλεῖν· τὰ δὲ τῶν νῦν ἀμφοιβητήματα και τὰ αἷτια τῆς ἀπεχθείας κἀν αἰσχυνθῆναι μοι δοκεῖ τις ἂν ἰδῶν. ἔστι γὰρ ὁμοδούλων πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἐριζόντων περι δόξης και πρωτείων.

² Cf. Spawforth 1994, esp. 243f.

Roman presence; and an interest to downplay the importance of vertical social links in the life of the Greek cities. My main issue will be with Plutarch's *praecepta gerendae rei publicae*, but I will also consider Dio Chrysostom and Aelius Aristides.

Roman Greeks

Modern scholarship has rightly pointed to the illusiveness of the distinction between Greek and Roman in the Roman empire.³ But for my purpose it will suffice to point to an established fact: from the point of view of Greek authors, 'Romannes' and 'Greeknes' were valid categories. No matter how contradictory or ambivalent a given author's statements on the subject, and no matter how futile it may seem from our point of view to try to establish *the* Greek attitude towards Rome; Greek as opposed to Roman was one among a multitude of antitheses that could serve to define one's place in the world, at least at a given moment, at least in front of a given crowd, or for the sake of one literary construction.

Identities can be a matter of quantity no less than quality. Many a member of the elite may have, generally speaking, been both Greek *and* Roman, but few people will have presented, or indeed perceived, themselves as being equally both – certainly not in all occasions and not to all audiences. So occasionally, Greek authors or, to put it differently, authors that were more Greek than Roman, must be expected to deliberately set up a picture of their side of the world as they want it to be seen by the other, constructing and negotiating a version of Greek group identity for a Roman audience. It is inevitable that some elements should be enhanced for a particular audience on a particular occasion, others slightly neglected, still others carefully hidden and merely alluded to. As I will try to show in the case of Plutarch's *praecepta*, if we evaluate statements without contextualizing them in their narrative form, then we do so at our own peril.

The *praecepta*.

A young notable from Sardis named Menemachos needed advice and rhetorical ammunition. Times in his hometown had been difficult, and he was about to enter politics; apparently he was designated for public office, so he looked for expert political analysis and a good collection of *exempla* to include in his future speeches.⁴ He therefore sought a consultant, and found a formidable one in Plutarch.

The work that Plutarch provides to Menemachos is laden with examples,⁵ posing the slight danger that a modern reader lose sight of the overall structure, which is otherwise

³ Out of the extensive literature on the subject: Brunt 1976; Swain 1996; Wallace-Hadrill 1998.

⁴ On Menemachos, Carrière 1984, 29–33. Based on IGRR IV 1492, a dedication of Hadrianic date, Swain 1996, 163–164 considers the possibility that Menemachos was linked with Plutarch's friend Cornelius Pulcher. He had no time to gain his own experience: Plu. mor. 798 B: ἐπειδὴ χρόνον οὐκ ἔχεις ... κατανοῆσαι. On civic strife due to the rivalry between Pardalas and Tyrrenos in Sardeis: Plu. mor. 813 F; 825 D.

⁵ Following Menemachos' wish (Plu. mor. 798 C): τοῖς δὲ παραδείγμασι ποικιλωτέροις, ὥσπερ ἡξίωσας, ἐχρησάμην.

simple. The treatise initially deals with matters bound to be of concern to a young politician at the early stages of his career. He must, first of all, be sure of his motives for entering public life. He must prepare himself by studying the people's character and by adjusting his own to fit public life. Then learn oratory, and choose a way to enter politics. These themes cover a little more than one fifth of the work. The rest (mor. 806 F–825 F) is devoted to actual practice of politics.

Of course (but unfortunately) Plutarch did not deliver a practical guide on performing specific civic services, or on persuading civic bodies to pass decrees. He was mainly interested in morals. But despite their theoretical nature, all of his arguments seem to have a practical aim in common: indirectly, they all appear to underline the need for concord among the leading citizens. This is Plutarch's concluding argument and the warning he expresses most urgently,⁶ but it is also an element that unites, albeit implicitly, all the themes in the main part of this work. Following Plutarch's advice, a politician should be in a position to exercise personal power and acquire honour while promoting the common good and guarding the state against faction.

What kind of faction? Reading the *praecepta*, one gets the impression that unrest in the Greek cities of the Empire occurred either in the form of confrontations between the ruling and the ruled or, less frequently, as discord among luminaries. No sign whatsoever, that the demos might divide its sympathies among different leaders; no word on widespread factions and vertical social links. Instead, in the *praecepta*, civic politics takes place on a stage. The politician is an actor watched, challenged, applauded, liked or loathed by the people. He stands apart from a demos that appears as a uniform entity. The politician is warned that the people are usually hostile to their leaders,⁷ he is advised to learn their character, to constantly be aware of them watching his every move, to try to contain the people's meanest passions. Maintaining the social peace is a matter of successfully controlling the demos in cooperation with the other leaders. There are indications that those enlightened few were in the habit of turning on each other, but not until the end of the treatise do we find a clear warning against pursuing personal rivalries in public.⁸

Owing to an important study by Christopher Pelling,⁹ we know that an analysis based on a boule-demos contrast is characteristic of all of Plutarch's work on Roman republican themes. As Pelling argues, 'what strikes one about Plutarch is how rarely [any] complicating factors are adduced, and how relentlessly and exclusively he presses the simple boule-demos antithesis – indeed how often he reduces and simplifies other modes of explanation so that he can phrase them in these terms.'¹⁰ This antithesis between the council and the people, I believe,

⁶ Cf. Jones 1971, who's discussion of the *praecepta* and assessment of Plutarch's relationship to Roman power is still fundamental.

⁷ Plu. mor. 813 A: παντὶ δήμῳ τὸ κακώθηες καὶ φιλαίτιον ἔνεστι πρὸς τοὺς πολιτευομένους.

⁸ One of Plutarch's statements, in fact, presupposes that the public was accustomed to witnessing rivalries among the aristocracy. In mor. 813 A he says that the people suspected a conspiracy if the leading caste appeared united in pursuing one goal. Interestingly (and maybe unconsciously?), Plutarch confirms this perception. For he advises political allies to avoid appearing united when a matter is brought before the people, even if they are of one mind; in public, he says, they should rather pretend to challenge each others views (813 B-C). One might well call this a conspiracy.

⁹ Pelling 1986.

¹⁰ Ibid. 169.

has invaded also Plutarch's *moralia* and, in the *praecepta*, it has been expanded to include another clearly marked category: that of the Roman rulers.

Plutarch's uniform demos may have actually existed from time to time under certain circumstances; but as a general characteristic of civic life in the Greek East, it is an invention serving a particular purpose in the *praecepta*. By setting the Greek elite against the background of a homogenous and usually suspicious, even hostile public, Plutarch demarcates the terrain of the civic elites as he sees it. The demos marks the lower boundary of the elite's territory. The upper boundary is set by Roman rule. Both boundaries needed to be clearly marked in order to support Plutarch's argument: just as the demos is suspicious against the elite as a whole, the Romans are shown to be generally repressive and intolerant. If he sought to persuade the civic aristocracy to demonstrate unity, it was a good idea to position it between a usually hostile demos and an essentially despotic Rome.

While there can be no doubt that Roman rule under the empire will have been repressive at times, as it probably had been recently in Sardis, we need to keep the scheme of Plutarch's analysis in mind when reading such passages as the famous one on the Roman governor's *calceus* resting on the head of the Greek politician.¹¹ The picture of a governed demos, a leading council, and a Roman governor with undisputable power presiding over all is suspiciously clear and uncomplicated.

I have already indicated why I think that this construction was useful. Plutarch was a prominent representative of what we might call the "cultural rulers of the empire". In his Graeco-Roman world, power may have rested with Roman rule, but authority didn't necessarily do so. Plutarch and his peers ensured that no one doubted the pre-eminence of Greek philosophy, political theory and moral authority. When a classicist like Plutarch went to lengths to match Roman paradigms with Greek ones, his attitude could reasonably be seen as a generous gesture towards Roman traditions. Prominent Romans were expected to learn Greek and it was remarkable if they didn't,¹² but Plutarch, despite several stays in Rome, was content to pick up a little Latin very late in his life. In a cultural sense, Plutarch and his peers among the Greek elite could afford to look down upon the Romans – as long as they lived up to their own Greek standards. Endless quarrels among Greek cities, factions within the civic community and individual luminaries were not helpful in this respect. In more than one instances, Pliny's letters from his province of Bithynia allow his contempt for those quarrelling *grae-culi* to shine through. He does not trust one architect's assessment of a structure, because he knows him to have been a rival of the one who finally built it. Speaking of several building projects in Bithynian cities, he makes little attempt to disguise his scorn for those squabblers who, not managing to agree on anything, started projects only to abandon them later, or for those who ruined other projects by resorting to unintelligent compromises.

The *praecepta* carry an echo of recent events in Sardis involving the intervention of the Roman authorities, and Plutarch may well have been disillusioned by those events. But contrary to what has been argued in a recent article,¹³ his disillusionment concerns the

¹¹ Plu. mor. 813 E; cf. Jones 1971, 133.

¹² As Cato the Elder's demonstrative rejection of Greek letters shows; Plu., Cat. Ma. 2,4; 12,6.

¹³ Halfmann 2002, 83–95.

Greeks rather than the Romans, notably their inability to preserve a degree of unity and thus dignity.

Greek luminaries were no different than their Roman counterparts in that they were both competitive and anxious to assert moral authority. But the guardians of Hellenism¹⁴ were bound to be particularly aware of their obligation to behave as real *aristoi*, and to feel that they had, at least in theory, a different set of responsibilities. Their lack of *homonoia* wrecked the authority of Greek political traditions and made a mockery of Greeks in the eyes of the Romans: this seems to me to be Plutarch's main concern in the *praecepta*.

Dio of Prusa

Avoiding direct references to local rivalries then seems to exist hand in hand with stern reminders of the reality of Roman presence. This is a pattern that may be of some use for interpreting the evidence of two other authors as well. Whatever one chooses to call Dio of Prusa according to his self-representation – a sophist, an orator, a stoic, a cynic – he was a politician as much as anything else, or at least he became one the moment he entered the walls of his native city.¹⁵ For all his arguments against pride and ambition, Dio's own attacks on his rivals are quite aggressive indeed. They are, however, never direct, but highly allusive. In Dio's Bithynian speeches, enemies are generally never mentioned, but they are constantly being argued against.¹⁶ The Roman authorities on the other hand, have an interesting part to play. Prusa was a different place than Chaironeia, so Dio's concerns may have been a little different than those of Plutarch.¹⁷ Like Plutarch, Dio denounces those who call in the Romans, thus compromising civic autonomy. Yet unlike Plutarch, he mentions his own Roman connections more than once, and I am inclined to believe that he does so in order to impress his critics. He seems to be indirectly pointing out that by challenging him, they may be risking a confrontation with his Roman friends.

To hear Dio tell it, his story is that of a just and modest man, working to promote unity and the common good. He is the one who made use of his Roman connections only to benefit his *patris*, the one who always strived to educate and to improve the people, never flattering them, never seeking their support for selfish aims – as he points out more than once. Repeatedly, he criticizes other politicians for corrupting and using the demos to achieve their own goals.

Yet Dio was also the man who had seen his house narrowly escape torching by a mob for allegedly speculating in the grain supply,¹⁸ one who had been accused by civic rivals of sac-

¹⁴ "Guardians of Language" is the title of a book by R. A. Kaster on late antique Grammarians (Berkeley 1988).

¹⁵ Cf. Swain 1996, 188.

¹⁶ Phrase borrowed from Dillon 1997, 237 on Democritus, the great enemy, "hovering in the background" of Plato's *Timaeus* but never mentioned.

¹⁷ See Swain 1996, 187. Plutarch and Dio never mention each other, and Swain argues that this was due to their differences, but one could think of other reasons. Their thought at any rate, as opposed to their life, was not all that different.

¹⁸ D.Chr. 46,6. 8.

rilege against the emperor.¹⁹ Such a man had good reasons to dissuade his fellow citizens against aggressive discord, and to remind them of a higher authority capable of intervening in civic affairs. For Dio, *homonoia* was a philosophical ideal as much as it was an urgent concern of his own. We may therefore want to avoid pressing his evidence on the role of the Roman authorities too much. It is just possible that he placed as great an emphasis on Roman power as was needed to reinforce his own position.

Despite his assertions to the contrary, Dio's family was one of the richest in Prusa. Did he have clients? Patronage – I am referring to patronage in the wide sense²⁰ – is a characteristic phenomenon of societies with a few rich and many poor, and there can be little doubt that such was the world of the second sophistic. There is ample epigraphic evidence that patron-client relationships existed in the Greek East, both on a personal and on a civic level²¹. That said, one must not expect either the works of Plutarch or those of Dio to reflect adequately the importance of patronage in the social life of the cities. On the one hand, patronage is almost absent from classical political theory.²² On the other hand, even the non-institutionalised patronage of the Greek world created vertical ties that stood in opposition to the horizontal associations in society. Introducing such relationships in the discussion would unnecessarily complicate the picture and it would “blur” the outlines in Plutarch's favourite *boule-demos* contrast. In Dio's case, patronage would not quite fit in the picture he paints of the ‘bad politicians’ as isolated figures acting solely in their own interest.

‘I hear that someone speaks of me as of a tyrant’, says Dio in one of his Bithynian speeches.²³ It would be an uncomfortable reality, and one better left unmentioned, if that unnamed villain had faithful followers among the citizens and residents of Prusa.

Aelius Aristides

If an orator's opponents enjoyed public support, we must not expect this orator to dwell on the subject. Beside Dio, Aelius Aristides is another case in point. You might agree that his sacred tales make painfully dull reading, unless one is interested in the details of Aristides' various illnesses, including his pathological vanity. But there is an exception to the rule: the fourth tale is rich on information about his dealings with a number of Roman officials on a matter of great importance for civic life, namely the exemption from civic duties for particular individuals, in this case for distinguished orators and teachers. This, in consequence, should be a valuable source on the role of Roman officials in the life of the cities. While I give a brief account of the main incident in his story, it will be useful to keep in mind Aristides' reason for relating it in the first place. In his words, he includes it so as to commemorate the

¹⁹ Plin. epist. 10,81.

²⁰ As opposed to the ‘English’ sense adopted by Saler 1982, 1 (cf. Millett 1991, 16) and rejected, or at least avoided, by Eilers 2002, 2–18.

²¹ Eilers 2002, 140f. on adoption of Roman, institutionalized patronage by Greek communities. See Van Nijf 1997, 73–128, on patronage of associations.

²² This may be why Plutarch seems unable to adequately express, or to grasp, its importance even in Roman politics. Cf. Pelling 1986, 178–179. On patronage in the Greek world, see Millett 1991.

²³ D.Chr. 47,23: ὅταν δὲ ἀκούω λέγειν τινὰ ὡς περὶ τυράννου, παράδοξον ἐμοὶ φαίνεται καὶ γελοῖον.

honours done to him by the god (Asclepius) with regard to his achievements as an orator and to his dealings with the Roman governors.²⁴

In fact, it all started with a humiliation. The provincial governor, Severus, ignored the list of eligible candidates handed to him by Aristides' native city, Hadrianoi in Mysia, and decided instead to appoint the orator to the office of ‘peace keeper’ (*eirenarches*). Aristides pretends that, per se, this was a flattering gesture on the part of the governor. It wasn't. It went against all conventions of honour to be ordered to undertake an office (74), whether by civic or Roman authorities. If Aristides had not been included in the list despite his wealth, it was because he did not want to, and everything we hear of the governor Severus thereafter clearly indicates that he was well aware of Aristides' unwillingness to undertake civic duties. The governor meant to force him to undertake them.

Soon, a series of letters from Aristides' friends in high places arrived, praising his oratory skills and recommending him to the governor. And after all, these events took place in 153 AD, when Aristides was 37 years old, thus a long succession of previous proconsuls had left him alone. But Severus was a tough nut to crack. With a clever move, he simply asked Aristides to support him in governing the province, in other words to undertake the office even though he may be liable to exemption. Nearly checkmated, Aristides had one of his powerful acquaintances threaten Severus (84), to little avail. The governor indirectly, though clearly, expressed his doubts that Aristides deserved immunity, as he lacked an important prerequisite: pupils (87).

According to a contemporary law,²⁵ cities could name a certain number of exemptions for practicing orators. Aristides was obviously not among those chosen few, either in Hadrianoi, or in Smyrna. In his effort to avoid the claims of his native city, he had maintained that it was not for little Hadrianoi but for famous Smyrna to claim his services as a citizen.²⁶ This had two hardly unpredictable consequences: firstly, the governor urged Aristides to persuade the council of Smyrna to grant him immunity;²⁷ secondly, Smyrna almost immediately, ‘at the suggestion of two or three men’, proposed him for an office too. Aristides' speech in front of the council would now have to counter this additional threat, and of course, it did. A lengthy oration persuaded both the council and the governor to the full. The matter was closed.

²⁴ Aristid. Or. 50,13 (Sacred Tales IV, ed. B. Keil, Berlin 1898): τὸ μὲν οὖν πρῶτον, ὡσπερ ἔφην, οὕτω παρέστη μοι διελεῖν εὐθύς τοὺς περὶ τοῦτο εὐεργεσίας· ἔπειτ' ἔδοξεν ἀνελεῖν ἐπὶ τοὺς ἄνω χρόνους καὶ τὰς ἄλλας προδιηγῆσθαι παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ τιμὰς εἰς τὸ δυνατόν, πρῶτον μὲν τὰς εἰς τοὺς λόγους γενομένας καὶ ὅσαι τοιαῦται, ἔπειτα τὰς ἐπὶ τῶν πράξεων τῶν κατὰ τὰς ἡγεμονίας. As translated by Behr 1981, 320: ‘First, as I said, it was my intention to recount immediately his (Asclepius') benefactions in this matter. Then it seemed best to go back to former times and to preface, as far as possible, the other honours from the god, first as many as there were in regard to my speeches, and then those which pertained to legal actions in each governorship.’ Behr translates *πράξις* with *legal action*. The word can refer to a lawsuit, but usually it has the general meaning *deed, action*, in Aristides as elsewhere, and I see no reason to assume that it was used in the narrow sense here. It seems more likely that the orator expressed pride on his actions concerning those governors in general, including, of course, the lawsuits.

²⁵ Dig. 27,1,6,2.

²⁶ Aristid. Or. 50,73 (Sacred Tales IV): οὐδέν πω τῶν ἐμῶν σαφῶς εἰδῶς.

²⁷ Aristid. Or. 50,87 (Sacred Tales IV): πορεύθητι, ἔφη, πρὸς τὴν βουλὴν, πείσον τοὺς πολίτας.

Aristides relates other cases, showing clearly that he had succeeded in avoiding public office in the past without particular difficulty, and that no governor before or after Severus had chosen to interfere. No doubt, Severus possessed both experience and personal power, but the careful reader will discover interesting details concerning his actions, that risk going unnoticed in Aristides' account. Firstly, the governor almost certainly did not act on his own initiative. Aristides initially relates the story as though he did. The governor chose him for the office of eirenarch, he says, on behalf of what he 'had heard' concerning Aristides' possessions, and, Aristides supposes, concerning his distinction (73). But further on in his story, a detail suggests a different picture: in a letter to Severus, Aristides wrote among other things that 'those who told you my name, obviously said no more than that – the name'. Aristides, then, had been brought to the governor's attention by such people as had no interest in praising or making excuses for him. At the very least, they were not his friends. As for *Aristides'* feelings towards his native town, and in particular towards 'some' of its citizens, again, one has to read carefully, but certain formulations are revealing: referring to Hadrianoi, he speaks of 'a *polis* in Mysia whose name need not be specified' (72). *Polisma* means *town*, an otherwise neutral word, but in this context strongly contemptuous. Its name did not even deserve a reference, because, it is implied, Hadrianoi was utterly unimportant. As for its citizens, a group among them is referred to as 'certain Mysians' (105). Of course Aristides wouldn't do his enemies the honour of naming them in one of his famous works, but referring to them as Mysians amounts to a calculated insult. Far from being simply a geographical reference, the *ethnikon* here is meant to slander Aristides' opponents as 'ungreek', and thus barbaric. In fact, in a different context, Aristides names his birthplace Mysia first among the nations that deservedly lost to Rome the right of self government.²⁸

Apparently, those barbarians had little difficulty in gathering support against Aristides. A few years before they found a sympathetic ear in Severus, they had lead a mob to Aristides' estate that destroyed and looted his house.²⁹ With help from Asclepius, not to mention his powerful Roman friend Rufinus, Aristides had won that case. He had been awarded the disputed estate by the governor Julianus. In consequence, he maintained what he regarded as his property, and, we may conclude, he maintained his enemies too. Although this incident appears last in Aristides' fourth tale, it had occurred first, in the year 146 AD, and it cannot be as irrelevant to his later troubles as Aristides leads us to think.

It was through his foes in Hadrianoi that the governor Severus was motivated to question Aristides' right to immunity. When the same governor urged him next to persuade the council of Smyrna, he may well have known that Aristides had his share of opponents in that city too. The men whom he curses repeatedly as envious sophists were undoubtedly members of the civic elite of Smyrna like him, and, unlike him, such men were usually politically active. We may therefore safely conclude, that their criticism extended beyond Aristides' literary pursuits. All told, he was not tremendously popular, either in Hadrianoi, or in Smyrna. And he is careful to disguise this fact by minimizing the role of the public in his story, and by placing as much emphasis as possible to the power of those Roman officials who – finally at any rate – could be persuaded to acknowledge his merit.

²⁸ Aristid. Or. 26,29 (On Rome): οὐ γὰρ Μυσοὶ τὴν βασιλείῳς ἔχουσιν οὐδὲ Σάκαι οὐδὲ Πισίδαι οὐδ' ἄλλοι μέσοι.

²⁹ Aristid. Or. 50,105 (Sacred Tales IV).

Rome had been just one actor in this drama, but the author's successful interaction with her was the most satisfying story to tell.

Conclusion

All three authors I have discussed here, emphasize the fact that civic life in the Greek cities of their time had been transformed beyond recognition through Rome's presence. Their unconditional reverence for the classical past may be reason enough to doubt this picture. In addition to such scepticism, I hope to have demonstrated, that their role as prominent Greeks in a Roman empire imposed its own set of restrictions, and had its own influence on their representation of civic life in the provinces. Plutarch's approval of Rome and concurrent defence of Hellenic values, Dio's clever reliance on both Greek *paideia* and Roman power, and finally Aelius Aristides' apparent alienation from his *patris* and attachment to Rome: such different rhetorical stances suggest that educated Greeks could consciously craft their social identity. They could insist on their Greek culture, emphasizing its significance to the Romans rulers. Alternatively, they might choose to neglect, deny or even reject it, as a reaction to ongoing internal rivalries. Finally, they could appear on either side depending on the circumstances.

It would be surprising, if this ongoing negotiation of social identity did not interfere with the way they saw and presented Roman rule in connection with that most characteristic of Hellenic institutions, the *polis*, as it lived on in their time.