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The role of individuals in inscribing Roman state documents:
Governors' letters and edicts

The epigraphic habit is often described in terms of a unifying characteristic of Roman culture, particularly in studies focusing on the Latin-speaking provinces of the Roman empire.¹ In the Greek and Graeco-Roman environment, however, the epigraphic habit is often seen as inherently local in character. Accordingly, the author of a recent introduction to Greek and Latin epigraphy concluded that it is pointless to search amid the diversity of local customs in Greek communities for common elements determining epigraphic practice.² Whether this conclusion is true is a question directly relevant to the interests of the Roman historians, since much of the evidence for Roman imperial administration that is preserved on stone was generated in the Greek cities of the empire. We need to ask how much of the epigraphic evidence we have owed its existence to long-standing Greek cultural traditions; how much to what has been termed an «archive mentality»;³ to the first Roman princeps' impressive and systematic use and promotion of epigraphy as a means of public representation not only in Rome but also in the provinces;⁴ to local community traditions; and, finally, to the interests of individuals and groups other than communities.

The importance of local traditions must, indeed, be highlighted. They were particularly visible in activities concerning religion and had noticeable effect on burial customs and epitaphs. When debating the bestowal of honours to benefactors, speakers in local councils will have done their best to accommodate, and if necessary to defend, long-established local practices. But members of the social

¹ R. MacMullen, *The epigraphic habit in the Roman empire*, *AJPh* 103, 1982, 238–239; E. A. Meyer, *Explaining the epigraphic habit in the Roman Empire: the evidence of the epitaphs*, *JRS* 80, 1990, 78–81; G. Woolf, *Becoming Roman. The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul*, 1998, 78; 93–98.

² J. Bodel, *Epigraphic Evidence. Ancient History from Inscriptions*, 2001, 15.

³ R. Thomas, *Literacy in Ancient Greece: Functional Literacy, Oral Education and the Development of a Literate Environment*, in: D. R. Olsen – N. Torrance (ed.), *The Making of Literate Societies*, 2001.

⁴ G. Alföldy, *Augustus und die Inschriften: Tradition und Innovation. Die Geburt der imperialen Epigraphik*, *Gymnasium* 98, 1991, 289–324.

elite were also connected with, and indeed in some cases active in, more than one city, and such social networking and mobility will have gone some way in assimilating local epigraphic practices. Under the empire, moreover, those elite groups – regardless of how varied their origins were – came to profess a common (Hellenic) identity and to model their behaviour along recognizably similar lines. As a result, in terms of public self-portrayal, differences among cities and regions in the Greek-speaking world need not have been particularly marked. Competition for status was supra-regional,⁵ and it may help explain widespread trends in the epigraphic habit, such as the epigraphic publication of Roman state documents. Among these, documents issued by provincial governors deserve special attention for their value as evidence of the interaction between local elites and the Roman authorities.

Epigraphically attested letters and edicts of Roman emperors from the Greek provinces run in the hundreds. Communications of Roman provincial governors, on the other hand, have been preserved on stone in much smaller numbers. Nevertheless, this last group of epigraphic monuments is of no small significance when it comes to understanding local societies. While the emperor was called θεὸς ἐπιφανής, a visible god, the governor, who was all too visible, faced the problem of being that much less powerful. He could be seen traveling from place to place, dispensing justice, interacting with one's friends and enemies on both private and public occasions. But his authority in the province, and his opportunity of having a considerable impact in provincial life, were in several ways restricted. First, his decisions might be overruled by imperial intervention. Second, and perhaps more important, the end of his rule was foreseeable; even the wisest decisions might not be fully realized in the short span of a proconsul's term. Among the provincial governors' numerous acts, few have been considered good candidates for permanent display and thus survived to our day.

Among those, some appear to have served straightforward practical purposes: for example, a permanent reminder of rights confirmed to a community, or a warning to those who might attempt to violate those rights in the future. Others seem to communicate between the city and the empire. Since, for example, civic communities in the Graeco-Roman world shared a need to accommodate, and if possible to manipulate, imperial power to their benefit, a governor's letter might be given place of honour in the civic environment in order to communicate visibly how the city wanted representatives of Roman government to behave toward it. But other epigraphically attested communications of Roman governors seem trivial in content, or vague in their formulation, or careless in language and

⁵ J. E. Lendon, *Empire of Honour. The Art of Government in the Roman World*, 1997.

style. It is hard to see how they would have been deemed particularly important for the community at large, or in fact for the majority of leading citizens. Even lacking support from archaeological evidence, it seems safe to regard such epigraphic monuments as having belonged to an honorific context. The governors' letters preserved on Opramoas' mausoleum at Rhodiapolis are the prime example.⁶ And if routine communications might have been of interest to individuals or groups for honorific purposes, the same will almost certainly have been true of more substantial documents.

Individuals with a particular interest in seeing governors' letters monumentalized in the civic landscape may have included – besides the immediate beneficiaries – also those involved in the decision to petition the governor, those who undertook the embassy, those who held an important office at the time, and those who were connected with the governor. These were members of the social and political elite, who could bring about public decisions – but who could also sidestep, manipulate, or exploit those decisions toward their own goals of public representation.

However, in trying to guess at the process by which inscriptions came to be, and particularly how individuals may have had a special interest in their creation, it is useful to view them also from the opposite perspective: that of the receiving public. A person's political friends might be counted on to persuade the council or assembly to bestow on him a set of honours. But if permission to set up an inscribed decree of those honours in a prominent location was granted, one would have wanted to ensure, before the decree was set in stone, that one's alliances had a solid base. Lacking that base, the presence of something as conspicuous as a statue or an inscribed honorary decree for a living man who was perceived by many as an incidental and undeserving beneficiary might have proven a disadvantage rather than a blessing for that man and his family. It may, in the end, have been easier and safer to pursue one's immortalization by other means, for example as an agent of public policy.

Of course, inscriptions need not have served only one, single purpose – that is, either exclusively functional or exclusively symbolic. Moreover, inscriptions need not have been equally valued, or valued for the same reasons, by all members of a community; or have retained their original functions for more than a few decades.⁷ But in order to assess their significance as sources for understanding the societies from which they originate, it is indispensable to consider what aims were *primarily* involved in the act of their creation. That is what this paper will

⁶ TAM II 905, cf. C. Kokkinia, *Die Opramoas-Inschrift von Rhodiapolis*, 2000.

⁷ A. E. Cooley (ed.), *The Afterlife of Inscriptions: Reusing, Rediscovering, Reinventing & Revitalizing Ancient Inscriptions*, 2000, 1–5.

attempt to do, focusing particularly on epigraphically attested letters and edicts of Roman governors. It seems that a balance between aiming at personal distinction and showing respect for tradition and public opinion may help explain the existence of more than a few epigraphic publications of governmental acts. The following case studies highlight the role of individual interests as opposed to collective interests in shaping this particular aspect of the «epigraphic habit» 

Marcianus Priscus

I.Ephesos 24⁸ is inscribed on three sides of a square statue base a little more than a meter high. Though the stone was discovered in 1678, its inscriptions were published together for the first time by Hicks in 1890.⁹ The inscriptions then became known as a dossier of three documents, including, in the order established by Hicks and retained in all subsequent publications, a) a Roman governor's edict, b) a civic decree, and c) an honorific dedication. Accordingly, in the Ephesian corpus the dossier is titled «Expansion of the Worship of Artemis: Edict of the Proconsul C. Popillius Carus Pedo and two Decrees».

The three documents do not, however, constitute the epigraphical publication of a governmental edict and related documents. The accepted designation of the texts does not accurately represent their chronological order nor their position on the monument, and hence cannot be assumed to correspond to their importance for the ancient viewer. The description of the texts as an edict and two decrees, which assigns priority to a Roman administrative document, reflects, instead, the scholarly interests of the nineteenth and much of the twentieth cen-

⁸ I.Ephesos Ia, pp. 144–152.

⁹ GIBM III 2, 482. For other publications see I.Ephesos Ia, pp. 144–146. The stone had been broken into two fragments by the year 1678, when the English diplomat Paul Rycaut saw its lower part among the ruins of ancient Ephesos, built into a wall and partly covered with earth. Rycaut copied as much of the text as he could see, and his reference to the base in his book (P. Rycaut, *The present state of the Greek and Armenian churches: anno Christi 1678, 1679*), published soon after, was the beginning of the long history of this epigraphic monument in modern scholarship. In fact, in the same year, 1678, an English merchant had seen and copied the text from both the upper and lower part of the stone, but his evidence had escaped attention until as recently as 1987: U. Jung – G. Petzl, *Brief eines englischen Levante-Kaufmanns aus dem Jahr 1678 – Epigraphisches (Ephesos), Landeskundliches, Alltägliches*, EA 9, 1987, 98–99. In the eighteenth century, the upper fragment was dug up from under a modern street near one of the aqueducts of Ephesos (M. Gude, *Antiquae inscriptiones quum Graecae, tum Latinae / olim a Marquardo Gudio collectae; nuper a Ioanne Koolio digestae hortatu consilioque Ioannis Georgii Graevii; nunc a Francisco Hesselio editae cum adnotationibus sorum*, 1731, 41 n. 33). Finally, by the end of the nineteenth century, both fragments had been brought to England and all three inscribed faces were studied and published by Hicks.

turies. The base supported a statue that had been raised for a citizen of Ephesos, T. Aelius Marcianus Priscus, and the dedicatory inscription was carved on the front face. The proconsular edict and the civic decree were inscribed on the side faces, where they were clearly intended as documents to accompany the primary, honorific inscription that was meant to be read first. These three documents, then, were chosen and arranged with the purpose of illustrating Priscus' merit, and constitute an honorific dossier.

The monument for Marcianus Priscus probably dates from the second half of the second century CE.¹⁰ It honoured this man as the first president of the games for the city goddess Artemis, after the games had been expanded to include the whole of the month of Artemision. The inscription under his statue praises him explicitly for having effected the extension of the festival to the entire month.¹¹ On the righthand side of the base was inscribed the decree of the city to expand the festival. Marcianus Priscus is not mentioned in this document. Instead, the decree apparently reports the grounds of the motion introduced by a man called Laberius Amoinos (ll. 8–27). According to the text, the expansion was a response to the widespread popularity of Ephesos' "own goddess".¹² Since Artemis was worshipped in so many cities around the world, particularly during the month of Artemision, which was named after her, it was seen as appropriate that Ephesos should devote that entire month to the goddess.¹³ The document has the for-

¹⁰ C. Popillius Carus Pedo's proconsulate of Asia dates probably from 162/3. CIL XIV 3610; R. Hanslik, RE 22, 1953, col. 67, s.v. Popillius n. 37. On his career see G. Alföldy, Caius Popilius Carus Pedo und die Vorverlegung des obergermanischen Limes, FBW 8, 1983, 55–67; G. Walser, Römische Inschriftkunst. Römische Inschriften für den akademischen Unterricht und als Einführung in die lateinische Epigraphik, 1993, n. 17; PIR² VI 838; W. Eck, DNP 10, 2001, s.v. Popilius II 1; G. Alföldy, Die lineare Grenzziehung des vorderen Limes in Obergermanien und die Statthalterschaft des Gaius Popilius Carus Pedo, in: Limes Imperii Romani. Beiträge zum Fachkolloquium «Weltkulturerbe Limes» November 2001 in Lich-Arnsburg, 2004, 7–20.

¹¹ An act that involved privileges related to the taxation of goods during the festival and (possibly) the cessation of public business (ἐκεχειρία). Priscus had furthermore, according to the same inscription, established a contest especially in honour of Artemis; he had increased the monetary prize offered to winners of (apparently all) contests during the celebrations; and, finally, he had paid for the statues of the winners at the conclusion of the first expanded festival. The honorary inscription ends by identifying a relative of Priscus, L. Faenius Faustus, as the man who set up the monument (τὴν τεμῆν). The city had decreed the erection of a statue for Priscus, and Faustus had actually provided the monument.

¹² L. b 23.

¹³ L. b 8–34. On the festival's duration see an interesting suggestion in W. Burkert, Die Artemis der Epheser: Wirkungsmacht und Gestalt einer grossen Göttin, in: H. Friesinger – F. Krinzinger (ed.), 100 Jahre Österreichische Forschungen in Ephesos. Akten des Symposiums Wien 1995, 1999, 59–70: Burkert, following G. Seiterle (Artemis, die Große Göttin von Ephe-

mat of an honorary decree, using exactly the same formulae found in decrees for human εὐεργέται, but giving the honours, in this case, to the goddess. The extension of her festival is offered clearly as a civic honour to thank her for the fame of her city.¹⁴ The result of having this particular decree inscribed on the base of Priscus' statue allows for a sort of multilayer construction that would have been appreciated by representatives of the Second Sophistic: Priscus is honoured as the procurer of honours to the goddess, who is herself the source of honour to the city.

In the third and final document of the dossier, the governor's edict, the proconsul Popillius Carus Pedo expresses his agreement with decisions of his predecessors to declare the days of the festival ἁγία; he neither opposes nor endorses the expansion of the festival. He does not, in fact, mention the expansion at all.¹⁵ Might then, this omission be an indirect rejection of the Ephesians' plans to extend the celebrations? Might the form in which the decision to expand the festival is presented in the Ephesian decree – as a bestowal of honours to Artemis – have been designed to preclude negative reactions?

Honorary inscriptions for proconsuls from Ephesos indicate the particular emphasis that Ephesians placed on religion in their interactions with them. One cannot help noticing the Ephesians' particular fondness for mentioning priest-hoods in the selective lists of offices they included in their inscriptions for governors.¹⁶ Considering that honours were often offered to governors during their

sos, AW 10, 1979, 3–16), believes that the Ephesian Artemis' characteristic outgrowths were no representations of breasts but the testicles of sacrificed bulls (cf. L. Portefaix, The image of Artemis Ephesia – A symbolic configuration related to her mysteries?, in: Friesinger – Krinzinger, l. c. 611–417). He therefore suggests that, originally, the statue would have been displayed only for a few days while the festival lasted, otherwise those testicles would begin to decay. In imperial times the testicles will have been replaced by a copy in durable material (70).

¹⁴ The drafters of this document followed the usual pattern of honorific decrees so closely that the only thing missing is praise of famous ancestors. According to the *narratio* of the decree, the goddess Artemis, through her divinity and due to the fact that she was worshipped everywhere, had made Ephesos the most famous city of all.

¹⁵ Whatever the designation ἁγία have meant in this context – for example, a conferal of tax exemptions – it is safe to say that the governor's edict falls short of endorsing the Ephesians' new honours to Artemis, is, the expansion of the celebrations.

¹⁶ Cf. I.Ephesos 706; 3027; 3028; 3029; 3033 (for Iulius Quadratus, whose religious offices are also mentioned in documents from Side and Didyma). I.Ephesos 3028 honours Popillius Carus Pedo as proconsul Asiae. Career inscriptions for governors from the Greek East either give the full cursus or, more rarely, mention only the most prestigious offices including priesthoods (D. Erkelenz, *Optimo Praesidi. Untersuchungen zu den Ehrenmonumenten für Amtsträger der römischen Provinzen in Republik und Kaiserzeit*, 2003, 80–85, part. 80, n. 271). In this document however, Pedo's membership in two priestly colleges is prominently set at the top of a list of his recent offices and distinctions [Γ(άϊον) Ποπ]ιλίου Κάρου

term in the province,¹⁷ their wording may reflect provincial attempts to manipulate a governor's behaviour. Whether Pedo was particularly pious or not, it must have profited the Ephesians, who identified the well-being of their city with that of Artemis, to stress their expectations in this regard: whoever favoured Artemis favoured Ephesos. Maybe it is not a mere coincidence that the only proconsular edict known to begin by enumerating the issuer's various religious offices before his proconsular title comes from Ephesos.¹⁸

It seems quite possible, then, that a governor would be hesitant to express opposition to the Ephesians' plans for expanding the festival precisely because the plans were formulated as an honorary gesture toward the goddess. But before reaching this conclusion, one might ask whether, and why, the governor was likely to oppose the extension in the first place. Instead of seeing Pedo's response as a diplomatic rejection of the Ephesians' plans, might it have been simply a carelessly drafted document in response to a routine request? In fact, this possibility is very unlikely, because the epigraphic record clearly suggests that there was a strong competition concerning markets and fairs of the sort that would have accompanied the expanded festival, and we know of governors who tried to ensure that new institutions did not coincide with existing ones.¹⁹ At least

[Πέδ]ωνα ὑπατον, [ἀν]θύπατον τῆς Ἀσ[ίας], [ἐρ]οσύναις δυσὶν τε[τι]μημένον τῇ τε τῶν [ἐ]πιτὰ ἀνδρῶν καὶ τῇ περὶ θεὸν Ἀδριανόν, πρεσβευτ[ὴν] θεοῦ Ἀντωνίνου καὶ ἀντιστράτηγον τῆς ἄνω Γερμανίας καὶ τοῦ ἐν αὐτῇ στρατοπέδου, πρεσβευτὴν Ἀντωνίνου καὶ Οὐήρου τῶν Σεβαστῶν καὶ ἀντιστράτηγον τῆς κατὰ «Λ[ε]γονον Οὐελτικῆς καὶ τιμητῆν τῶ[ν] ἐν αὐτῇ ἔθνων, ἐπιμελητῆν τῶν ἐν Ῥώμῃ δημοσίων ἔργων». The list of offices partly follows the pattern of a Latin career inscription for Pedo that is preserved in Rome, with the exception that the phrasing by which the two religious offices are mentioned in the Ephesian document is less sober. Instead of simply naming the two offices, the text reads: «honoured with two priest-hoods, both that of the seven men and that for the god Hadrian». The inscription apparently includes offices prior to his proconsulship, but early offices are omitted (on Pedo's career above, n. 10). It is unlikely that his election into the *septemviri epulonum* and the Hadrianales had been the most recent event in his career, as membership in such collegia was usually life-long. On election in priestly colleges see J. Scheid, *An Introduction to Roman Religion*, 2003 (1998), 142–143; on selection to a priesthood late in a man's life being rather rare, M. Beard – J. North – S. Price, *Religions of Rome*, 1998, vol. 1, 103; 2, 197; on combining a sodality with a major priesthood Scheid, l. c. 138–139.

¹⁷ Erkelenz, *Optimi Praesidi* (n. 16) 228.

¹⁸ I.Ephesos 17.

¹⁹ J. Nollé, *Nundinas instituere et habere. Epigraphische Zeugnisse zur Einrichtung und Gestaltung von ländlichen Märkten in Afrika und in der Provinz Asia*, 1982; id., *Marktrechte außerhalb der Stadt: Lokale Autonomie zwischen Statthalter und Zentralort*, in: W. Eck – E. Müller-Luckner (ed.), *Lokale Autonomie und römische Ordnungsmacht in den kaiserzeitlichen Provinzen vom 1. bis 3. Jahrhundert*, 1999, 93–113. On one occasion, a governor is asked to intervene in favour of a small community against a powerful city's apparent boycott of the community's festival (see below).

nine major festivals are known to have been held in Ephesos in the second century CE.²⁰ Through their decision to expand the celebrations in honour of their famous goddess, the Ephesians claimed an even larger share of the religious and economic activities in the region than they had previously had. Neighbouring communities might therefore have argued that there was no need to expand the Artemisia, and that the ancient festival could well continue to be celebrated as it had been since time immemorial.

Therefore the Roman governor's decisions were of great importance in the matter of the expansion of Artemis' festival at Ephesos. But, unfortunately, in attempting to define his exact role, we find that we lack an important piece of evidence: the civic decree inscribed on this stone might in fact be different from the one sent to the proconsul Carus Pedo, and in response to which his edict was issued. The proconsul mentions that the Ephesian decree informed him about his predecessors' decisions concerning the holiness of the festival, but the existing decree contains no such reference. It contains no reference to the Roman authorities at all. The Ephesians must have requested the governor's assent for the extension somehow, but if this was done in writing, through another decree that was sent to him together with the one engraved on the base, that piece, apparently, has not come down to us.

In fact, we cannot even be sure that those events took place during Pedo's governorship of the province. His edict was issued at a time when the honoree of our monument, Marcianus Priscus, was engaged in preparations for the Artemisia as their president (ll. c 16–21). But was this the first celebration of the extended games, and was Pedo's edict issued in the run-up to those? Priscus might have filled the position of festival president at a date before the festival was extended, and he might, in fact, have repeatedly served in this position. We can't, then, be entirely certain that the governor's edict preserved to us was issued at the time of the games' expansion. Instead, it might have been selected for inscription on Priscus' monument merely because it mentioned the honoree's presidency at some time and attested to his long-term support of the festival. For all we know, the statue could be a posthumous honour for Priscus, and, in that a case, the criteria according to which the documents were chosen to decorate his statue base may have been slightly different. Their direct relevance to the games' extension might have been less important than their proof of Priscus' successful presidency of those games on other occasions. The fact that the proconsul Carus Pedo's edict concludes with explicit praise of Priscus might have

²⁰ M. Lehner, *Die Agonistik im Ephesos der römischen Kaiserzeit*, 2004, 125–211: the Ephesia, Artemisia, Dionysia, Romaia, Koina Asias, Balbileia, Olympia, Hadrianeia and Epinikia included contests. The Pythia probably belong to a later date.

been the reason why the document was chosen to decorate his monument, not the fact that it was issued in response to the civic decree engraved on the other side of the stone.

To summarize, there seem to be two possibilities for interpreting Pedo's edict. One: the proconsul's edict was issued in response to a dossier of decisions sent to him, which included the preserved decree that extended the festival; in which case the governor's reaction was evasive, to say the least, and his response remarkably out of tune with the Ephesians' intentions. The proconsul's edict would, then, have been engraved on the base of Priscus' statue despite the fact that it had frustrated the Ephesians' hopes for the proconsul's approval.²¹ Or, two: Supposing that Pedo's edict was not issued on the occasion of the festival's expansion and was, rather, one of many routine documents confirming existing rights, it must have been chosen because it included a commendatory reference to Priscus' presidency of the games at another time. In both cases, the decision to include the edict of Popillius Carus Pedo among the selection of epigraphic documents on Priscus' statue base made sense only from an honorific perspective. This dossier concerns Marcianus Priscus, his city, and their goddess. Any information on the governor's actions it may contain is clearly incidental.

To assign to a Roman state document a marginal role in an epigraphic dossier may seem to invert the hierarchy of power. But local societies had local priorities. Besides, as already mentioned, the motives for inscribing a Roman administrative document need not have been simple -  or simply honorific or simply documentary. In fact, one might suspect that  the documents with the best chances of being eternalized on stone were those flattering to some and useful to many. The main challenge to understanding the significance of an epigraphic monument lies in determining where, in a sliding scale between honorific and documentary purposes, its creation stood. The determination is more easily made in some cases than in others. It is not particularly difficult in cases such as Carus Pedo's edict, where we have fairly good knowledge of both the epigraphic and the archaeological context. Unfortunately, most epigraphically attested documents of Roman officials derive from wholly or partly unknown contexts. We rarely have adequate knowledge of all documents in a dossier and we are rarely able to determine the type of monument to which they once belonged. And documents preserved in isolation will necessarily convey a very different picture. None of the questions discussed above concerning Pedo's proconsular edict would even arise had that document been preserved alone of the three. In those cases, then, where

²¹ Incidentally, the extended festival took place as intended, under the presidency of Priscus. So local officials might have, however deliberately,  misread  governor's reaction as giving permission to proceed with their plans, including the ones he  and not mention.

much less information is available, one must make use of whatever clues the documents may contain as to why they were engraved on stone.

Domitius Rufus

An instance of a fragmentary inscription that nevertheless contains enough information to allow us to guess at the person mainly responsible for its creation is presented by a letter to the asiarch Domitius Rufus. Rufus had established a cult in Tetrapyrgia, a community near Philadelphia in Lydia (middle 3. cent. CE). Preserved on the fragments of a stele,²² the letter is apparently the governor Maximillianus' response on receiving decrees of Tetrapyrgia honouring the asiarch.²³ Rufus had used his influence, as the son of a distinguished family and as a former holder of the highest provincial office,²⁴ to add a market day to the religious celebrations he had sponsored. The governor Maximillianus' consent to the adding of this market day is phrased in terms of an approval of the asiarch's actions. Though we seem to be dealing with the usual reiteration and confirmation of honours for an euergetes, here the 'letter of reference' is addressed to the euergetes himself rather than to his community, something rarely attested in epigraphic evidence. The governor chooses a particularly flattering phrasing: «Let Tetrapyrgia then enjoy the privilege of a market day as an honour to you²⁵ who receives (this privilege on their behalf)» (ll. 9–11). That letter gave many people a reason to cheer: the Tetrapyrgites got their market day, Rufus got his deserved praise, and even Attalianos the half-literate civic official who submitted the documents to the public archive got a chance to hand down his and his son's names to posterity. The 'note on the file'  most as long as the letter itself (ll. 18–32).

Licinius Priscus Juventianus

Other documents seem to belong to a more complex framework of local politics. In an inscription from Corinth dating from the second century CE,²⁶ the proconsul of Achaia endorses Licinius Priscus Juventianus' building projects, praising him emphatically. Though less well-preserved, this letter too appears to be a

²² Or what appears to have been one: «Lapis (stela?) marmoris albi...» (TAM V 230).

²³ TAM V 230, l. 8.

²⁴ The governor's letter need not have been issued during Domitius Rufus' term as an asiarch, as the title «asiarch» was held for life.

²⁵ Literally: by reason of your honour, because of your honour.

²⁶ J. H. Kent (ed.), *Corinth. Results of excavations conducted by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens. Vol. 8. 3: The Inscriptions 1926–1955, 1966, 306*; re-edited in: D. J. Geagan, *The Isthmian Dossier of P. Licinius Priscus Juventianus*, *Hesperia* 58, 1989, 349–360.

reaction to the city's praise of its εὐεργέτης.²⁷ Whereas in Tetrapyrgia everyone will have welcomed Domitius Rufus' initiative to secure a market day, Juventianus' plans in Corinth were different. He intended to use the building material and the building site belonging to an old, now ruined colonnade to construct fifty new shops,²⁸ which he promised to make available for the athletes as lodgings while the games were held.²⁹ Not explicitly mentioned but easily inferred is that, except for those days, the new structures would host the economic activities of their owner. Even if they were needed as lodgings in more than one athletic event, there will have been room for profit. Now, at roughly the same time, Dion Chrysostom had to counter voices in Prusa accusing him for his role in what was apparently a similar project; he too had removed older structures to build shops (ἐργαστήρια) and some of his fellow citizens were disaffected, though he claimed that the site was barely worth the 50,000 he had paid for it.³⁰ There is reason to believe that Juventianus, in Corinth, was spared these problems, and his success may have been in part because he very deliberately used his money to buy goodwill. Rather than paying a certain sum to the city, Juventianus promised a dinar to each citizen if he was permitted use of the land and the building material for his project. If recent calculations of Corinth's population at the time are correct, the citizenry must have numbered somewhat less than 50,000.³¹ Juventianus may have spent roughly the same amount as Dion to buy what modern companies call a «social license to operate». The governor's supporting letter repeated in detail – and thereby approved and sanctioned – the terms of Juventianus' transaction. There may have been those among the citizens who thought Juventianus had done a good stroke of business for himself, but that opinion is not represented in the epigraphic record.³²

On its dating, B. Puech, *Grands-prêtres et helladarques d'Achaïe*, REA 85, 1983, 35–41. But see A. D. Rizakis – S. Zoumbaki, *Roman Peloponnese I: Roman personal names in their social context (Achaia, Arcadia, Argolis, Corinthia and Eleia)*, 2001, 378.

²⁷ The «γνώμη τῆς [β]ουλῆς καὶ τοῦ δήμου» mentioned in l. 21 probably refers to an intention to honour Juventianus.

²⁸ L. Robert, *Un édifice du sanctuaire de l' Isthme dans une inscription de Corinthe*, *HelLENICA* I, 1940, 48.

²⁹ We are not told which games, but the reference is almost certainly to the Isthmia. Cf. IG IV 203, ll. 5–7 concerning the same man: «τὰς καταλύσεις τοῖς ἀπὸ τῆς οἰκουμένης ἐπὶ τὰ Ἴσθμια παραγεινομένοις ἀθληταῖς κατεσκευάσεν».

³⁰ Or. 46. 9: ὅτι νῆ Δία τὰς στοὰς ἐπὶ τῶν θερμῶν ὤκοδόμηκα καὶ ἐργαστήρια· τοῦτο γὰρ ἐστίν, ὃ φασὶν ἔνιοι ἀδικεῖσθαι ὑπ' ἐμοῦ τὴν πόλιν. καὶ τίνα πρόποτε ἢ ὑμεῖς ἢ ἄλλος τις ἀνθρώπων ἐμέμψατο ἐν ἀγρῷ αὐτοῦ οἰκίαν οἰκοδομοῦντα; ἢ παρὰ τοῦθ' ὁ σῖτος πλείονός ἐστι; καίτοι πέντε μυριάδων ἐώνημαι τὸ χωρίον, τῷ παντὶ πλείονος τιμῆς τῆς ἀξίας.

³¹ D. Engels, *Roman Corinth. An alternative Model for the Classical City*, 1990, 81–84.

³² Rizakis – Zoumbaki, *Roman Peloponnese* (n. 26) 343–345, n. 378.

Claudius Aristion

In a famous letter to the city of Ephesos³³ Antoninus Pius once stated expressly that public benefactors did not necessarily address real needs. The statement is supported in both literary and epigraphic sources. Gifts that increased a donor's popularity might be of otherwise doubtful usefulness – or they could be represented as such by rivals. It is in the nature of our evidence that we don't hear of donation offers that were turned down, but we do have clear indications that «promises» (ὑποσχέσεις) were negotiated as opposed to simply welcomed.³⁴ It comes as no surprise, then, that some governors' letters and edicts that survive on stone appear to be connected to controversies over euergetic activity. In the case of Juventianus' donation, for example, the governor's authority was needed to cement what was a potentially controversial deal.

Such controversy is illustrated also in a case from Ephesos,³⁵ in which Roman power was called upon to help protect an important man's gift from repeated abuse and hostile neglect. The gift was an aqueduct for Ephesos, which already possessed at least three. The benefactor was T. Claudius Aristion, *homo innoxie popularis* according to Pliny,³⁶ but not universally so, as some of his fellow citizens had just recently dragged him before Trajan's court. He was acquitted by that court and soon resumed his activities in Ephesos. In this new case, the petitioners were the men charged with the upkeep of Aristion's newly built line.³⁷ The two-man *collegium* appealed to the governor Vicirius Martialis in 113/4,³⁸ appar-

³³ I.Ephesos 1491; cf. last C. Kokkinia, Letters of Roman authorities on local dignitaries. The case of Vedius Antoninus, ZPE 142, 2003, 197–213.

³⁴ W. Eck, Der Euergetismus im Funktionszusammenhang der kaiserzeitlichen Städte, in: M. Christol – O. Masson (ed.), Actes du X^e Congrès International d'Épigraphie Grecque et Latine, Nîmes, 4–9 octobre 1992, 1997, 306–331; id., Administrative Dokumente: Publikation und Mittel der Selbstdarstellung, in: id. (ed.), Die Verwaltung des römischen Reiches in der hohen Kaiserzeit, vol. 2, 1998, 370.

³⁵ I.Ephesos 3217.

³⁶ Epist. 6. 31. 3: *Dixit causam Claudius Ariston princeps Ephesiorum, homo munificus et innoxie popularis; inde invidia et a dissimillimis delator immissus, itaque absolutus vindicatusque est.*

³⁷ The archaeological record suggests that the line provided water to at least two fountains, the baths built by C. Varius Valens, and maybe a sanctuary for Asclepius. P. Scherrer, Die Historische Topographie von Ephesos. Eine Einführung, Forum Archaeologiae – Zeitschrift für klassische Archäologie 4, VIII, 1997; id., Das Ehrenggrab des Kaiserpriesters am Embolos – eine Personensuche, in: H. Thür (ed.), «... Und verschönerte die Stadt...»: ein ephesischer Priester des Kaiserkultes in seinem Umfeld, 1997, 122 (sanctuary).

³⁸ Aulus Vicirius Martialis; W. Eck, Jahres- und Provinzialfasten der senatorischen Statthalter von 69/70 bis 138/139 (part 1), Chiron 12, 1982, 355.

ently when the aqueduct was newly finished,³⁹ and again to Cornelius Priscus in 120/1,⁴⁰ to protest against city dwellers' unauthorized tapping into the line and against peasants inflicting damage by farming too close to it.

Asked to intervene, the first of the two governors defined a distance from the line to be maintained while farming, condemned illicit tapping, and established fines, but seven years later, the problems persisted. If wasteful handling of water resources was causing water shortages in the hinterland of Ephesos, one can't blame the farmers for caring little for Aristion's aqueduct. On the other hand, as a recent study of Frontinus' work shows,⁴¹ supplying water was a very special kind of euergetism. If curators successfully controlled its distribution, the *beneficium* of water from an aqueduct could be selective, differentiated, and time-specific. One could determine who received how much for how long. More than games, distributions of money, or building projects, an aqueduct constituted a permanent instrument of selectively bestowed favours. Aristion's rivals might have chosen to do little to prevent their clients from planting a row of trees a few centimeters away from the pipes.

So, those two governors' letters, while helping local magistrates to implement what appears to be a piece of fair legislation, may at the same time be weighing in on an on-going local conflict. Peasants might have had their own views on the benefits of yet another aqueduct line in the landscape, and land-owning members of the elite might have done less than was necessary to ensure that their tenants kept away from those pipes. The letters protected Aristion, his ἐπιμεληταί and those legally entitled to his water as much as anything and anyone else.

Metras Metrodorou

Some epigraphic monuments that included governors' letters offer a valuable glimpse into local societies, even if it is a glimpse of a few jigsaw pieces. A votive stele dedicated by the priest Metras from the territory of ancient Sardis is certainly such a document⁴². Metras, the priest of Zeus Driktes, dedicated the stele after successfully petitioning the governor and soon-to-be emperor Boeionius Antoninus to permit the Arillenoι to hold a yearly market. The votive stele that Metras erected included the governor's positive response in Latin and Greek,

³⁹ L. 26 εἰς κατασκευὴν may imply that during Vicirius Martialis' governorship construction was still under way.

⁴⁰ Sextus Subrius Dexter Cornelius Priscus; W. Eck, Jahres- und Provinzialfasten der senatorischen Statthalter von 69/70 bis 138/139 (part 2), Chiron 13, 1983, 154.

⁴¹ M. Peachin, Frontinus and the Curae of the Curator Aquarum, 2004.

⁴² H. Malay, Greek and Latin Inscriptions in the Manisa Museum, 1994, n. 523; cf. last Nollé, Marktrechte (n. 19) 101–107.

in which Metras and a man named Isidoros figure prominently. The governor had chosen a formulation that was clearly meant to underline the two local men's role, thereby providing them with indirect praise and a document suitable for honorary and self-representational purposes. Metras clearly advertised this honour and chance for self-representation, both for himself and for Isidoros, when he included the letter on his votive stele. The stele also includes later, short inscriptions attesting to public honours for Metras and Tatia (probably his wife). Hence the stele served many functions: it was the fulfilment of a vow and a dedication to Zeus, an honorary monument for Metras and his wife, and a permanent record of the village's right to a market, all in one.

Among the later inscriptions on Metras' votive stele is one that may reveal yet another function of this epigraphic monument: a letter to Sardis, from a patron of the Arillenoï named Asinius Rufus. The village of the Arillenoï lay in the territory of Sardis, and it seems that the Arillenoï had not acquired their powerful neighbours' assent before petitioning the Roman authorities.⁴³ But the governor had extended an invitation to anyone who objected to the adding of the new market day to step forward within a certain time limit (ll. b 10–14, d 12–16). The responsibility of negotiating with objectors had been thus transferred from the villagers to the Roman authorities.⁴⁴ That was certainly a convenient arrangement for the Arillenoï and a potentially unpleasant situation for Sardis. In consequence, Sardis seems to have stopped participating in the celebrations in honour of Zeus Driktes as it had done of old. Though there are some uncertainties in the restoration of Asinius Rufus' letter, it is clear that this Roman attempts to settle the matter amicably⁴⁵. He exerts pressure on Sardis to improve its behaviour toward the village of the Arillenoï. The document contains neither a ruling nor a decision of any sort. And the reader is not told what effect Rufus' intervention had on Sardis' treatment of the Arillenoï. What it certainly did though, after it was inscribed on stone, was to generate negative publicity for Sardis. With this addition, Metras' stele reminded visitors to the market of the Arillenoï that a powerful man once confronted Sardis on their behalf. Once more, the governor's letter had become one component in a monument serving an intricate mixture of personal and communal, local and regional purposes.

⁴³ Nollé, *Marktrechte* (n. 19) 104.

⁴⁴ If the emperor was not included in the celebrations initially, he almost certainly will have been after that generous governor gained the throne.

⁴⁵ Cf. W. Eck – J. Nollé, *Der Brief des Asinius Rufus an die Magistrate von Sardeis. Zum Marktrechtsprivileg für die Gemeinde der Arillenoï*, *Chiron* 26, 1996, 273.

Atrius Clonius

I would like to conclude this discussion by briefly looking at a document from Thrace. It is a governor's letter from the beginning of the third century CE, preserved on the lower part of a stele.⁴⁶ On the upper part of the stone there was an imperial epistle, but that document is almost illegible now. In the preserved letter, the governor Atrius Clonius addresses an unknown individual, and endorses decisions of his predecessors and an imperial rescript. The governor's letter is little more than an appendix to the imperial epistle, rephrasing the emperor's praise for the unknown individual who was the recipient of the letters. As quoted by the governor, the imperial letter also referred to a matter concerning distributions of money in Augusta Traiana, but the imperial ruling appears to have been oddly neutral on that point. It merely stated «that the old custom concerning the distributions should be retained unless the city decides otherwise». How was the recipient of the governor's letter connected to those distributions? He might have been an individual who contested changes that had been proposed for those distributions. Supposing that a person or a group tried to alter the custom of distributions, bypassing the civic bodies of Augusta Traiana, those who disagreed may have requested imperial intervention. But this seems an unlikely scenario because, in that case, we wouldn't expect the Roman authorities to declare, as they do here, that they would be happy with any decision the civic authorities might take.

More likely, the recipient of the governor's letter was not an individual who contested the changes, but the person who had proposed them. By writing to the emperor, he hoped to receive a letter approving his plan, possibly a weapon to help him overcome resistance in the local arena. He didn't get exactly what he wished for, but the emperor answered nevertheless, and his response was sent to the governor, prompting him to write, too. Both letters were diplomatic and friendly enough to serve their owner's self-representational purposes well, no matter how the problem of the *διαvoαί* was settled in the end.

Conclusion

The above discussion may seem to support the impression that public life in the Roman empire was entirely dominated by ruthless competition: competition among large cities; competition among these and smaller ones that aspired to

⁴⁶ IGBulg III 1581.

a higher status; among elite citizens in the civic environment and among leading figures in imperial politics. It is nevertheless important to bear in mind the nature of the evidence here surveyed. Inscriptions on stone were connected by long standing tradition with public honour, particularly with monuments of personal status, and might still in Roman times have been seen as appropriate for perpetuating individual fame. However, public inscriptions serving primarily individual interests, or such that advertise a community's success in competition with others, do not necessarily belie the vitality of civic institutions or the existence of close economic and social ties between cities, or of fruitful cooperation between cities and land communities; or, finally, between civic and imperial authorities. If such monuments were set up and preserved over generations in the civic landscape, a basic consensus as to their desirability can be assumed.

The imperial authorities were, by definition, external to the political ecosystem of the Greek provinces. Even when their representatives performed well, contributing to the well-being of provincial communities, their role remained that of outsiders and, in the case of provincial governors, their presence predictably ephemeral. All the same, as representatives of Roman rule and as prominent individuals, they had it in their power to bestow a highly valued arbiter of social status: written, official recognition of merit. The fact that praise of individuals could be incorporated in rulings concerning matters of public interest would have made them no less attractive for purposes of public self-representation. On the contrary, it might have made them eligible for inscription alongside civic documents and upon monuments that figured prominently in public space.

To be sure, not all governors' rulings and letters preserved on stone praise or even name individuals, but most do, and they may owe their survival to just this fact. It would, then, be misguided to interpret them as representative samples of Roman administrative practice, which they may happen to be, more by accident than by intention.