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CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Urban Elites in the Roman East: Enhancing Regional Positions and Social Superiority

Athanasios Rizakis

From the late Hellenistic period, leading citizens of Greek cities played a central role in the conduct of political affairs, thanks to the support of Rome, and served as mediators between their own communities and the central power. As such, they attempted to avoid any possible unfortunate consequences of Roman rule, while also actively seeking the benefits which were to be won by the creation of bonds with Roman notables. These bonds, facilitated by the importance accorded by Roman aristocrats to Greek *paideia* (education, culture), formed the basis of Roman rule in the Greek world under Augustus and his successors. The relations between Greeks and Roman aristocrats extended and deepened after Actium. Moreover, the imperial administration, seeking to improve the government of the provinces, now applied a policy of integrating Romanophile elites within the Roman system by means of the citizenship (*civitas*). These leading citizens subsequently completely assumed civic power and, acting in agreement with the Romans, they took the initiative of introducing the imperial cult, whose priesthoods they performed. From the first century, AD, the imperial cult became a dominant part of the civic landscape and created a bond between aristocratic families and the emperor. This privileged link increased their own prestige and that of their families within their local context. This is reflected in the honors that they received for their generosity and their mediation with the emperor on the part of their city.

Local Patriotism and Euergetic Activities

Nevertheless, such devotion to Rome and the emperor did not distance the provincial elites from the traditional cults of their cities, which they occasionally administered

as a hereditary duty, nor did it diminish their attachment to their place of birth. In fact, such an attachment was particularly strong for those engaged in intellectual activities, as, for example, M. Antonius Polemo, Flavius Arrianus, Claudius Charax, Herodes Atticus, and Plutarch. The last is the most firmly rooted of all in the soil of his small native city of Chaeroneia, which he wished to serve through inclination as much as through conviction. In his *Life of Demosthenes* (2.1–2), he states that he decided to live in Chaeroneia, so that this small town would not become smaller still.

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. In fact, this temporary distancing actually strengthens their bond with their homeland and with it the desire to spend the rest of their life in the place of their birth, assume local civic duties, and indulge in considerable euergetic activity. Dio, orator or philosopher, or both at the same time, is a typical case of these cosmopolitan patriots who remain deeply attached to their tiny native cities and engaged in the affairs of their own homeland or of the 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: "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 wealthier than I am" (*Oration* 46.5–6). After his return from exile (AD 96), all his speeches are preoccupied above all with schemes to beautify his modest city of Prusa (e.g. *Oratio* 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, the expression of love by and the esteem of all, not that statues, honors, or public proclamations 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 (Dio, *Oratio* 44.2–5).

The social behavior of the elite is motivated by the culture of distinction that can be summed up by the word *philotimia*, that is, the "love of honor." This together with patriotism (*philopatria*) are the most important virtues of the leading citizens who are praised by authors during the first and second centuries AD. At the same time, inscriptions offer numerous witnesses to the zeal displayed by elite members on behalf of their *glyketate patris*, their beloved country. 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. The generosity displayed by elites is manifested in various ways, particularly when they have the opportunity to exercise local, provincial, or religious offices or perform costly civic liturgies. To traditional euergetic activities, familiar from the past – such as the perpetual problem of maintaining cities' vital supplies – are now added new types of euergetic activity. These new activities assume a new scale and are mainly concerned with the public distribution of various goods, feasts, and games, but chiefly with the erection or completion of public buildings, temples, galleries, athletic facilities, such as the *gymnasia*, *stadia*, and cultural establishments that embellished and monumentalized civic centers. It is not surprising that most senators accompanied their euergetic activities with large public works, which usually involved the erection or completion of public buildings. The most spectacular example of this kind of great

*euergete*s (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 and spent considerable sums on building and feasts on behalf of their city (Athens), the cities of the province of Achaea, and sometimes far beyond these narrow limits. 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, and a descendant of the Eurycles 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). Similarly important is the euergetic activity of equestrians and other local aristocrats. The most interesting example of this comes from the cities of Asia Minor, where benefactors like the millionaire Opramoas of Rhodiapolis in Lycia (*IGRR* 3.739 = *TAM* 2.3905) can be compared to Atticus.

This euergetic behavior remains constant throughout the high empire, although a change in outlook is to be seen from the early third century AD. 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 agònes*), that is, by games that are "panhellenic and iselastic." This privilege, accorded by the emperor, enhanced the regional position of the cities, linked them with Greek tradition, and also improved the social image and position of the members of the local elite, to whom the cities had entrusted their fate. Among the many cases of this there is, for example, that of Saoteros 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 Saoteros, 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 at that moment that Commodus, a great friend of the people of Nicaea, gave permission to the city to institute a *hieros agon*, entitled *Commodeia*.

Elites' Cosmopolitism, Hellenic Identity, and Personal Ambitions

The peace and tranquility prevailing in the second century, and the renaissance of Hellenism in the eastern part of the empire, offered cities new opportunities to widen their contacts and offered to the civic elites a new arena for a great deal of activity. Indeed, now cultural exchanges between cities on both sides of the Aegean sea increased, whilst old institutions, such as that of foreign judges, were revived. There is great mobility on the part of athletes and artists, who take part in games and

competitions, which constantly increase in number. Likewise, sophists travel more to other cities and give public demonstrations of their knowledge or talent, both during large panhellenic gatherings and at every local festival. Some of them spend long periods in various cities and occasionally offer them their services or make benefactions, in return for which they are granted honors and even hold the eponymous magistracy. The real reasons for such visits are not always clear. In some cases, antiquarian interests may have stimulated such travels by lettered Greeks, the best examples of such being Pausanias, Charax, and Lucian.

Other literary-minded members of the civic elite seek to investigate ancestral bonds between their city and the metropolitan cities of Hellenism. The habit of searching for ancestral links with certain renowned cities, such as Sparta, Argos, and Athens, goes back to Hellenistic times, a period that enjoyed works on genealogy, the origins of cities, and intercity ties of kinship. From the second century, however, this tendency assumes enormous dimensions. The activity of Publius Anteios Antiochus, the historian and orator of Aigeai, in Cilicia, illustrates this phenomenon. A letter from the Argives, addressed to the council and people of the Aegaeans of Cilicia, indicates that Antiochus succeeded in getting recognition of the *eugeneia* of his homeland in Cilicia with the Argives, subsequent to his prolonged stay in Argos. The authorities of Argos address a letter to those of Aigeai, communicating the text of an honorific decree containing the account of Antiochus concerning Perseus and the parentage between the two cities, which Argos is ready to accept (*SEG* 41, 1992, 283). The activity of Antiochus on behalf of his city, when viewed in the context of the Panhellenion, is clearly intended to prove its Greek origins and thus to distinguish it from its neighbor and rival, Tarsus, which also claimed an Argive origin.

If certain candidate cities were not genuine Greek foundations, then it was the job of "mythographers, orators and local poets" to create such ties. They attempted to link their town to the most prestigious Greek communities, whose fame continued to be considerable under the empire. This is the case of Sparta, whose ties with the Ptolemies, during the days of their thalassocracy in the third century BC, and whose later high standing with Rome, may have enhanced the prestige of a Spartan ancestry and pushed many cities, as Cibyra for example, to establish a *syngeneia* (kinship) link with Sparta. On the other side, thanks to the initiative of local notables, cities try to create between them bonds of friendship and understanding, sometimes celebrated by honorific coins. It was probably the personal initiative of Aelius Heracleides, a member of the Smyrnaean elite, that was responsible for the striking of the *homonoia* coinage, in the reign of Commodus, celebrating the relations of Smyrna with Athens and with Sparta, and likewise that of Antonius Polemon between Smyrna and Laodicea.

The creation of the Panhellenion, in the second century AD, was 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 *philotimia* of upper-class Greeks, who were unsparing of their efforts in their attempts to reach their goals. Thus the visit and the activity in Sparta, Athens, and Platea 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, members of the aristocracy of Synnada under Hadrian and Pius, were probably the ambassadors who brought (AD 140–1) the decree of Synnada found at Athens (*IG* 2^2.1075 with *IG* 3.55).

Serving their Cities and their Own Career

However, cities frequently faced various problems and so were led to enlist the help of their great men, particularly when it was a matter of settling serious political or economic questions that involved the future and the prosperity of the *polis*. 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, *Oration* 44.12). Such circumstances also offered the city in question the opportunity to express its appreciation of the effectiveness of the approaches made by the elite and consequently to award them honors in recognition of their services. In fact, this task was not new. Already from the beginning of Roman involvement in the Greek east, eminent citizens of Greek states exploited their friendship with the commanders of Roman armies to ensure the safety and advancement of their own and other communities. These relations became stronger after Sulla. The entourage of Pompey contained several Greeks, of whom Theophanes of Mytilene was the best-known. These individuals cooperated with Rome, thus helping their individual native cities. However, it is during the empire above all that these relations especially increased. In fact, patronage was indispensable to the system. This was partly because no formal bureaucratic mechanisms existed for bringing candidates to the emperor's attention. It was also because the Romans conceived the merit of officials in more general and moral terms than we do today. Thus the degree of subjectivity was greater, as was the degree of latitude of what was acceptable in terms of patronage. Plutarch, who himself enjoyed friendships with many notable Romans, suggests that his compatriots should look for protection from among the Romans. Creating relations with the powerful is, in his eyes, justified only by the desire to serve collective interests (Plutarch, *Moralia* 815 C). In fact, although such personal friendships were of vital importance for cities facing problems, they were not always without their dangers, since 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 the view of Plutarch. However that may be, such use of patronage connections must have been common, since Dio of Prusa (*Oratio* 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 decurions. In an oration delivered in Prusa, Dio (*Oratio* 43.11) defends himself against the charge of employing his personal connections with the proconsul of Bithynia during local political struggles to have his enemies tortured and exiled. It is difficult to show how far the accusations against Dio were true or not. It is obvious, however, that relations with the governor allowed members of the elite, even more than the city itself, to profit, a practice that was extremely well known.

The theoretically unlimited extent of the authority and the 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, they were eager to offer, 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. Over the first two centuries, the local elites worked with provincial governors in a balanced and mutually satisfactory fashion. Needless to say, this cooperation, far from being conducted on equal terms, was very one-sided. Both politicians and moralists openly state that real power resides at the seat of the governor. The governor was all-powerful. 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. This did not mean that a notable had to be a friend of the current governor. Rather, it meant that he had to have access to the appropriate network of friends at Rome. Fronto, an African senator, tells us that, as soon as his friendship with Arrius Antoninus, *iuridicus per Italiam regionis Transpadanae*, became widely known, he "was approached by many desiring the *gratia* of Antoninus." The letters addressed to him by Fronto (2.174, 176, 188) show that these people were local notables who had been directed toward Fronto by mutual friends with requests concerning local administration. Fronto thus functioned at Rome as a channel of communication, through whom such requests were routed. Similarly, Libanius (fourth century AD) tells us that when he was on good terms with the governor, large numbers of those laboring under various injustices would approach him and request his help so that the governor would put an end to their sufferings (*Oratio* 1.107).

Mediators between Rome and the Cities: Diplomatic Activities

Fortunately, the cities were not dependent solely upon the goodwill of the provincial administrators. In some cases, they preferred to apply directly to the highest authority, that is, the Roman emperor, their intention being thereby to overcome any objection on the part of the governor. The business was then confined to the local aristocracy, 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. What motivated cities was the hope of acquiring, by means of embassies, greater prestige than their rivals at the smallest possible expense to themselves. The arguments and appeals employed by ambassadors were various and adapted to the aim of their particular mission, although certain arguments are repeated, and may thus be considered to belong to the rhetorical *koine* of the time. During the Severan period, appeals are frequently made to the loyalty (*nomimophrosyne*) and benevolence displayed by the city toward the Romans. Frequently, however, cities that were unable to employ such means attempted to draw upon the arsenal provided by their historic past, their greatness and beauty, and the fact that

they were a historic cultural center. Such speeches fit well into the cultural milieu of the period, the Second Sophistic. This culture is characterized by rivalry, sometimes feverish, over the leading position of cities, the *proteia*, a demand which largely rested upon the glories of the cities' past. The most detailed reference to the success of a diplomatic mission to the emperor is to be found in an inscription from Caria, which was dispatched after a catastrophic earthquake (Pausanias 8.43.4).

A fundamental task of embassies was the maintenance of rights and privileges that had been granted by the Roman authorities to Greek cities. Ambassadors usually defended the interests of their own community, their own *patris*, although occasionally they promoted the interests of a different community, or of an *ethnos*, or of a provincial *koinon*, or even of an international union (such as the Amphictiony). The rights and privileges were inscribed on stones displayed in public areas, the most spectacular example being the so-called "Archive Wall" in Aphrodisias. This comprises a selection of a large number of such documents highlighting the city's privileges. Often the powerful individuals who, thanks to the relationship that they have established with the Roman authorities, have helped their city are praised.

Embassies were dispatched precisely to express the concerns felt by cities regarding measures taken by the emperor that might do damage to the economic life of their province. Communities applied to the emperor in order to gain approval of measures, at city or provincial level, regarding trade, economy, financial support, judicial and administrative matters, and, in particular, border disputes between neighboring cities and taxes. In cases of extreme necessity, such as natural disaster or fire, the cities issued appeals for financial help. In some exceptional cases leading citizens took the initiative to make a personal appeal to the emperors without waiting for an embassy to be arranged. A typical example of this kind of intervention is that of Aristeides in favor of his own city of Smyrna, damaged by a terrible earthquake. He sent a letter to Marcus Aurelius, in emotive and rhetorical terms, who did not wait for an embassy from Smyrna to arrive but asked the senate to vote immediately money for restoration (Dio, *Oratio* 32.3; Philostratus, *Vita Sophistarum* 2.9; Aristeides, *Oratio*19).

Furthermore, questions were submitted to the emperor regarding the organization of markets and the dates of religious and sporting festivals. For example, in 29 BC, Pergamum received permission to found a temple of the Goddess Rome and Augustus, so becoming a center for the imperial cult. It founded games, the *Rhomaia Sebasta*, which included a trade fair of three days' length. Later an embassy obtained from Augustus a grant of *ateleia* for the period of the games. This *ateleia* held good in particular for the trade fair but also for the port of Pergamum, Elaea. The *ateleia* in question was probably immunity from the provincial tax, that is, the taxes collected by the *publicani*. Imperial intervention was also requested in relation to a number of internal matters, such as the recognition by the imperial administration of a city as the seat of the *conventus*, to which smaller cities were then obliged to pay certain special taxes; the definition of the number of members of the local *ordo*; the improvement of its politico-judicial statutes; and finally the permission to create a *gerousia*.

The most crucial and difficult cases, born of and nurtured by the spirit of rivalry between members of the local elites and between cities themselves, concerned territorial disputes or the struggle for the acquisition of titles and first place among neighboring cities. Their mutual jealousy earned from the Romans the ironic term *hellenika hamartemata* (Dio, *Oratio* 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'!" These struggles, rather than concerning important things, involved trivial affairs, fights over names, *peri onomatôn*, or over *ta proteia*, for primacy (Dio, *Oratio* 38.24). 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 *protetes Eparchias* (first place in the province) – was that between Nicomedia and Nicaea, which inspired Louis Robert (1977) to give it the eloquent title of "the glory and the hatred."

These rivalries frequently caused the proconsul and the imperial administration great difficulties, because large cities that struggled with each other were supported by smaller cities, with the result that the province 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. Such attempts were reinforced by intellectuals, such as Dio (*Oratio* 40 and 41) and Aristeides (*Oratio* 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*. 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. Thus Nicaea, after its support of Pescennius Niger through hatred of its neighbor, Nicomedia, which was allied to Septimus Severus, was deprived of the titles.

The elite played a decisive role regarding the interests of the cities, since rivalries between them were not always devoid of real content. For example, the *proteion* or first place was no empty honor, following Dio's own words (*Oration* 38.26), which seem to negate the disparaging reference immediately preceding. The title imposed the first place of the city in the procession of embassies at the *Koina Bythinias* (provincial assemblies of Bithynia) and indicated that it was the strongest and most brilliant of all the cities in the province: "I may have said already that their doings were not mere vain conceit but a struggle for real empire – though nowadays you may fancy somehow that they were making a valiant struggle for the right to lead the procession, like persons in some mystic celebration putting up a sham battle over something not really theirs" (Dio, *Oration* 38.38). The *proteion* also indicated that the city was the center for the *Synedrion* and, as center of the imperial cult, raised taxes from the lesser cities of the province (*Oratio* 38.26) and was visited more than any other city by the proconsul. 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 AD.

Cities Placed their Hopes in the Elite

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 some cases, attempts were made to send individuals descended from royal families, local dynasts, or at least the oldest families, who enjoyed the widest network of links. As the success of a mission depended on their devotion to Rome and to the emperor, it is therefore not at all surprising that those who undertook to carry out these contacts were above all the leading men of the province, that is, the high priests of the imperial cult. However, such personages certainly did not have a monopoly on such missions. If 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 if they had the requisite eagerness and, in particular, the rhetorical abilities to impress the senate and the emperor and so succeed in their mission, this made them ideal candidates for undertaking such delicate missions, whose nature could vary so widely.

Josephus (*Antiquitates Iudaicae* 15.2.3–5) relates 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 BC). A story in Philostratus' *Vitae Sophistarum* (1.25) regarding the Smyrniot sophist, Polemon, shows despite its anecdotal character the great stress laid by cities on the struggle for the *proteia* and the contribution made by intellectual members of the elite to an outcome successful for the city: "Smyrna was contending on behalf of her temples and their rights, and when he had already reached the last stage of his life, appointed Polemon as one of her advocates." Unfortunately, Polemon dies before being able to complete the mission with which his native city has entrusted him. Nevertheless, the emperor reads the speech of Polemon and is completely convinced by his arguments, "and so Smyrna carried off the victory and the citizens departed declaring that Polemon had come to life to help them."

An inscription from Ephesus, in honor of a lawyer who was sent to 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 Pyth, 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 some time 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.

Local Rivalries and Popular Complaints against Elites' Members

The activities of the local elite did not always receive a positive response from the provincial administrator or from rival politicians or, more generally, from the people of the cities. The sources indicate that quarrels broke out that sometimes led to open civic strife (*seditio, stasis*). Plutarch gives a description of the chief manifestation of such strife, which broke out when there were differences and conflicts between members of the local elite, who were represented by the *boule* and the *gerousia* (council of the elders), and the rest of the citizens, who constituted the *demos* and the majority in the assembly, which met in the theater or the stadium. Thus lack of wheat or barley, for example, could sometimes lead to a great civic crisis and open *seditio*, which threatened the peace of the province and required the immediate intervention of the proconsul. Dio became the target of the citizens of Prusa. They accused him (*Oratio* 46.9) of having stockpiled corn, of practicing usury, and of investing in speculation in real estate Such accusations were highly serious and certainly made the position of the proconsul extremely difficult, since the elite directed its appeals for support and help toward him, in order to defeat their rivals. In some cases, the governor reacted positively to the appeal by nobles who requested his support. The friendly stance of the governor is to be explained by the fact that the good administration of the province and, in particular, the prosperity and order of the city rested upon his close cooperation with members of the local elite. In a recently published document from Beroea, the proconsul L. Memmius Rufus is recorded as issuing an edict under Trajan or Hadrian regarding the funding of the *gymnasion* of the city, which was closed from time to time because of financial problems. He was supported in his effort by the *honoratiores*. As Pliny (*Epist.* 9.5) says, the work of the governors involves treating his charges with humanity, but the "most important part of this quality was to respect inequalities and not to attempt to level everything." The proconsul presumably managed in this fashion to ensure that the euergetic activity and *philonikia* (competitive outlook or behavior) of the elite were not lessened. In extreme situations, when the governor managed to reconcile the warring parties, the reconciliation was celebrated as *homonoia*.

His position was undoubtedly worse when there were cases of maladministration and fraud on the part of the local elite. In the case of fraud, a notable might lose his position as a privileged ally of the governor, become a scapegoat, and face accusation in particular of having proposed ambitious construction projects that led to the economic ruin of the cities and individuals. Such an example, given by Dio, concerns his own pet project, conceived after his return from exile (AD 96), of

embellishing his native city, Prusa (*Oratio* 45.12–14). The project has been welcomed by the people of Prusa and sponsored by one or more proconsuls, as well as by Trajan himself, but later Dio has been attacked, by his opponents, on the charge of impiety and lack of local patriotism and as being chiefly concerned to serve his personal pride and ambition (*Oration* 47). To restrain misconduct and prevent financial chaos, governors might intervene in the case of extravagant projects undertaken by small cities, a common feature of the second and third centuries AD. Cassius Dio (52.30.2–4) was *logistes* of Pergamum and Smyrna and so was well aware of the socio-political problems of Greek cities. He therefore advises that any waste of money over expensive public buildings and games in which cities involved themselves in the attempt to outshine their neighbors should be forbidden, as such activities led to financial ruin. The excessive expenditure in which certain notables engaged, such as Atticus and his son Herodes, brought but ephemeral glory, in the view of Plutarch (*Moralia* 821 F), who categorically rejects such expenditure. "Offering theatrical performances, distributing money or producing gladiatorial shows are like the flatteries of harlots, since the masses always smile upon him who gives them and does them favors, granting him an ephemeral and uncertain reputation."

Local Aristocrats as Models: Civic Honors and Imperial Awards

The euergetic activities of the members of the local elite and the various services that they offered to their homeland had a positive effect upon the social position and prestige of the benefactors and their families, especially if their euergetic activity was considerable or if they had a privileged relationship with the proconsul or emperor (Dio, *Oratio* 44.12, 45.2–3) or if their intervention had contributed to the solution of city problems. Generally speaking, Greek cities were faithful to their elite, from whom help was often requested. In return, they repaid the various services rendered by the elite with honors, offices, and titles (e.g. son of the city, father of the city, etc.) The placing of the honorific monuments in the city center with inscriptions commemorated magistracies, priesthoods and benefactions ensured publicity and the projection of the honorand, together with his status as a role model for the rest of the citizenry. Cities attempted, with the bestowal of honors expressing their gratitude, to oblige *euergetes* to continue their activity and to encourage others to do likewise.

Rome, for its part, honored them, initially with citizenship, which constituted the highest possible honor for provincial *peregrini* and which the members of the local elite were proud to acquire. When T. Statilius Lambrias, of Epidaurus, died, some time between AD 40 and 42, the Athenians, in marked contrast to their earlier attitude, described him as being honored by possession of "that great gift, renowned among all men, Roman citizenship." The award of a high priesthood was an equally great honor and 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. A high priesthood was the highest possible recognition, in one form, of life-long services rendered to the city, to the province, but, above all, to Rome. 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 province," "first in Asia," or "first of the Greeks" (= *primus Acheon*). The exercise of the priesthood could serve, sometimes, as a stepping stone for those ambitious individuals who were not yet senators or knights, but it was not a "boost" for a career in Rome. In fact many other activities of the members of the local elite, in both a civic and provincial context, gave them the opportunity to display their generosity, their abilities, and their devotion to Rome. The participation of the most influential members of the local elite in the game of diplomacy and, above all, in the success of a diplomatic mission was, in addition to being an ornament needed for a successful career, the only area in which members of the local elite could indulge in political activity. Success in an embassy offered the hope of acquiring Roman citizenship, if it had not already been acquired, and the expectation of rising to equestrian rank.

After the reign of Hadrian, the Panhellenion opened a new area of activity for ambitious aristocrats, since contribution to the preparation of the candidature dossier and then participation in the administration of the League was a great honor, in that all its important officials were rich Roman citizens and some of these, or some of their descendants, had had senatorial or equestrian career. The prestige inherent in serving in the League rose from the close association of the Panhellenion with the ruling power. Service in the Panhellenion might also be a means of furthering one's career. It offered members of the local elite the opportunity of contact with a Roman institution at a time when, although the senate and the equestrian order were open to provincials, the places available in these orders were severely limited. By their actions that did such good to their cities, these personages invested in their future and strengthened the chances of ensuring a successful career for their descendants, since it was the privileged political and judicial status of local families that brought future knights and senators to the attention of the Roman authorities. The case of M. Apuleius Eurycles shows how an ambitious officer of the Panhellenion, originating from Aizanoi in Asia Minor, was able to exploit his association with the League in connection with his ambitions for his future career. Eurycles was honored by the Athenian Areopagus with a public statue and portrait as well as their writing a flattering testimonial to him (*OGIS* 2.505). Five or six years, after his term as Panhellene, in AD 162 or 163, he held the post of *curator* to the Ephesian *gerousia* and thus entered into contact by correspondence with Marcus and L. Verus (*Hesperia*, suppl. 6, 1941, 93–6, no. 11). An inscription from Aphrodisias shows that later Eurycles served twice as high priest of the Asian *koinon*, and, at an earlier date, he was appointed, probably directly by the emperor, to the post of *curator* of the free city of Aphrodisias.

The eagerness displayed by the cities in their respect and in the honors voted by the city, the people, and the council to these exceptional persons naturally reflected their rank and privileged status. These persons owed this privileged position to their wealth and to their ascendancy, and the characteristic pair of words found in

honorific decrees passed in their honor, "by family and wealth" (*genei kai plouto*), is extremely explicit. Of such personages, distinguished by their superior education, that is, by their *paideia* and their moral virtues, the great majority are members of third or fourth generations of "talent and wealth combined." Thus in many cases the family had acquired Roman citizenship many generations ago, if it did not descend directly from the Roman colonists who had settled in Greece in republican times and after. In most of these cases, the father of the knight had discharged various municipal and religious offices, of which the most important was the priesthood of the imperial cult. One example of this, which is by no means the only one, 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). Lyciarchs were usually drawn from this elite, but the progress of these *novi cives Romani* toward the highest imperial positions occurred only gradually. No member of the first generation of *cives* was honored with equestrian or senatorial status during the course of the first century AD. Promotion to equestrian rank occurs in the second generation, at the beginning of the second century AD, whilst it is only the third generation, under Trajan, that provides the first consul. The honors that the cities bestowed upon them in certain cases raised them 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* (founder but frequently, in imperial times, benefactor or restorer), reserved for the emperors up to the time of the Flavians, or even the building of a *heroon* and the instituting of a cult or establishing funeral games of a heroic character, to be held at regular interval. 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 were exploiting 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." The very few who received heroic honors held equally high social positions.

Conclusion

The members of the local elite in this period are notable for their twin attachment to Rome and to their homeland. 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 various of its members to the equestrian and senatorial orders, are the counterpart at the 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," with an aristocratic coloring, 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. They were appointed as mediators to function between their city and the Roman administration – in the words of Renoirte (1951), "agents

de liaison" between two worlds – in the domain of both cultural life and political realities.

Benefactors attempted to perpetuate the influence of their families by establishing perpetual foundations, to anticipate and administer distribution of food or the holding of banquets. These habits were particularly common in Asia Minor and the Aegean world. The recognition by their fellow citizens is expressed in honorific decrees that maintain the civic memory of benefactions performed by the families of the elite by means of the continuity of the political duties assumed by the *euergetes* (benefactor), and by their continuing and increasing social role. It is the sign of an eternal familial faithfulness, reflected in the notion of "ancestral benefaction." Civic honors and distinctions awarded in the past or in the present legitimated the rank of the family, its power, and its high social status in general. A *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 belonged to a long tradition of civic values.

FURTHER READING

There is a very rich literature about elites under the Roman empire; the topic has been extremely fashionable for some decades. But the most profitable reading is literature of the imperial times, especially speeches or writings of famous orators and moralists (Dio of Prusa, Aristeides, and Plutarch), members of the upper provincial class. The readings can be completed by modern studies dealing with particular aspects; for instance, the cultural environment of this period and the intellectuals (Borg 2004 b; Desideri 1978; C. Jones 1978; Renoirte 1951; Salmeri 2000; Sterz 1994; Swain 1996; Tobin 1997), the imperial cult (Burell 2004; Herz 1997; Lozano 2002; Price 1984) and policy (Meyer-Zwiffelhoffer 1999; Millar 1992), the social and political behavior of elites (S. Jameson 1966; Quass 1993; Strubbe 2003; Veyne 1992), and finally the bonds or rivalries between cities for primacy (Curty 1995; Hauken 1998; C. Jones 1999; Merkelbach 1978; Robert 1977).