

## 6. The Political Class

### *Ethnic composition*

It is sometimes claimed that in the last century BC, the ruling class of Bithynian landowners – most of them of Thracian descent – were displaced by *immigrés* of Roman or Italian background; a view that has been restated recently, with variations, by Fernoux (2004: Italians) and Corsten (2006: Romans).<sup>1</sup>

There is no doubt that during the last century of the Republic, an increasing number of Italians were active in Asia Minor as *negotiatores* or *publicani*; it was later claimed that during the “Ephesian Vesper” (88 BC), no less than 80,000 Italians were killed. While the actual figure is open to question – the history of the Mithradatic wars has been written by the victors, and the enemies of Mithradates had every reason to exaggerate the number of his victims – there was a substantial Italian presence in Asia, and presumably also in neighbouring Bithynia. But did the immigrants remain in the region, or did they return to Italy with their profits? Fernoux notes that while Cicero’s correspondence names no less than eight Italians with direct financial interests in Bithynia, only one is known to have settled there.<sup>2</sup> That is hardly surprising, since contracting as a *publicanus* and farming an estate represent very different economic strategies, one oriented towards short-term, the other towards long-term goals.

As a way to identify Republican immigrants to Bithynia and their descendants, Fernoux has made a survey of the epigraphic material, focusing on *gentilicia* that can be assumed to indicate an Italian origin.<sup>3</sup> However, of the fourteen *gentilicia* cited, eight – Caesonii, Granii, Hostilii, Pactumeii, Postumii, Veturii, Vedii, Herennii – also occur in the Aegean islands or Asia Minor, some as early as the second century BC. Most of the inscriptions cited date from the second or third century AD, and most were found in urban contexts. Thus, many of these “Italians” may be descended from families that had been settled in the Levant for several centuries (or from their freedmen) and not all belonged to the landowning class.<sup>4</sup>

A recent study by Thomas Corsten (2006) focuses on the Bithynian inscriptions where it is clear from the context that the person named is a landowner: sixteen inscriptions in all (of which one<sup>5</sup> recurs in the list of Fernoux). He concludes that “the epigraphic record no longer attests people with Thracian personal names, i.e. Bithynians, as owners of large estates, but we find Romans in their place”.<sup>6</sup> Of these “Romans”, however, only one bears a *nomen*

*gentile* – Vedius – that is distinctively “Italian” according to the criteria of Fernoux,<sup>7</sup> while several have purely Greek names (Euangelos, Antipatris) or Roman *tria nomina* with Greek *cognomina* (Thraso, Phaedrus). Even among the Roman names, *Claudius* or *Claudia* may imply a family whose ancestors received the Roman franchise in the imperial period, rather than Republican immigrants.

Another problem with any onomastic analysis is the assumption that names are reliable clues to the ethnic origin or cultural identity of their owner. Onomastics reflect social as well as ethnic identity: as emphasized by Madsen (2006), “the elite were ... eager to present themselves as Roman in public by appearing with Latin-sounding names”.<sup>8</sup> Composite Graeco-Roman names could belong to “Hellenized” Italians, but equally well to “Romanized” Greeks or Bithynians who had been manumitted or won the Roman franchise for themselves. The disappearance of Thracian names, central to Corsten’s argument, could be a sign of onomastic Hellenisation rather than Italian immigration.<sup>9</sup> The limited epigraphical evidence for the ethnic origin of the Bithynian landowning class will hardly support the contention that “most, if not all of the Bithynian land that had been in the hands of indigenous noblemen, had fallen into the possession of Romans”<sup>10</sup> by the time of Actium.

There is a further argument against the presence of a large group of immigré *kulaks* of Italian extraction in late Republican and early Imperial Bithynia. It was precisely from such a class of well-to-do landowners that the Roman Empire was accustomed to draw its soldiers, officers, administrators and political leaders. One would therefore expect to find Bithynians well represented in the army, the equestrian order and the Senate – but they are not. From the Julio-Claudian period, not a single Bithynian senator is known and only one Bithynian equestrian<sup>11</sup> – significantly, he does not hail from any of the indigenous cities, but from the Roman colony Apameia. Yet in the same period soldiers and senators from the western provinces, notably Gaul, are familiar sights to Roman eyes. By contrast, Bithynians were not integrated into the higher orders or the imperial service on a larger scale until the second century AD.<sup>12</sup>

Based on the available evidence, a more plausible hypothesis seems to be that large parts of the Bithynian landowning elite – of whatever ethnic origin – survived the Roman conquest and the depredations of the *publicani*, but that their parochial outlook and insufficient knowledge of Latin (the language of administration and command) kept them out of imperial careers until gradually, through imitation of and intermarriage with families of Italian origin, their descendants came to appreciate the opportunities for social advancement offered by Roman domination.

### *Roman citizenship*

As in every Roman province, an important distinction separated the minority who possessed Roman citizenship from the majority of free non-citizens (peregrines). Citizenship was acquired by descent (from a citizen father), by manumission (by a citizen owner) or by imperial grant.

One route to citizen status passed through service in the army *auxilia*, composed of peregrines who were granted Roman citizenship on discharge, but in the Greek-speaking provinces, the army was not a popular career choice. Citizenship could also be granted collectively to entire communities, e.g., by raising them to the rank of a titular *colonia*. An intermediate position was the so-called Latin status, under which the members of a community remained peregrine, but the leading officials received the Roman franchise on their election.<sup>13</sup>

The most complete documentation for Roman citizens in Bithynia comes from Prusias ad Hypium, but since a male citizen is easily identified by his *tria nomina*, it is also possible to assess the proportion of citizens and peregrines in other cities. Furthermore, where the *civitas* was acquired by imperial grant, the *nomen gentile* will be that of the emperor in whose reign the family received the franchise.

Fernoux (2004) has studied the occurrence of imperial *gentilicia* in the seven Bithynian cities, and identified nearly five hundred Roman citizens whose names imply that their family acquired the citizenship from the emperor.<sup>14</sup> When the absolute numbers are related to the duration of each dynasty or reign, it is possible to estimate the chances of obtaining the Roman citizenship at different times and in different cities.

	Nikaia		Nikomedea		Prusa		All Bithynian cities <sup>15</sup>	
	Total	Per year	Total	Per year	Total	Per year	Total	Per year
<i>Julii/Claudii</i>	8	0.08	9	0.09	17	0.17	69	0.69
<i>Flavii</i>	7	0.26	15	0.55	8	0.29	49	1.81
<i>Ulprii</i>	1	0.05	5	0.26	0	0	19	1.00
<i>Aelii</i>	5	0.24	27	1.30	9	0.43	84	4.00
<i>Aurelii</i>	80	0.43	91	1.13	3	0.04	277	3.50

Two trends emerge. First, some emperors were more generous in the granting of citizenship than others; in all three cities, the liberal policy of the Flavians was followed by Trajan's more restrictive attitude.<sup>16</sup> Second, the presence or favour of the emperor is an important factor. The visit of Hadrian in the early

120's is reflected in the high rate of enfranchisements for Bithynia as a whole, and especially in the number of *Aelii* – twenty-five! – attested in the relatively minor city of Klaudioupolis, the birthplace of Hadrian's lover Antinoos.<sup>17</sup>

### *Social stratification*

Some cities may have applied a *census* qualification for membership of the *boulê*, and members might be required to pay a *honorarium* on admittance to the council; furthermore, many magistracies were liturgies requiring the holder to contribute from his own purse. Some that were not liturgies, such as *grammateus* or *politographês*, would require literacy and administrative skills. All told, these factors ensured that by and large, access to a municipal office and to the city council was restricted to the educated, well-to-do elite; the "soundest and most intelligent", as Dion puts it;<sup>18</sup> and that conversely, holding office was attractive as a status symbol: proof that one belonged to the "soundest and most intelligent" group of citizens.

Within the group that was financially and socially eligible, the chances of reaching a municipal office were quite good. In fact, precisely because the pool of potential magistrates was limited, elite members with no political ambitions might be pressed into standing for office. Some groups succeeded in obtaining exemption from serving as city councillors and magistrates. It is significant that one of these groups was philosophers and teachers. Since their profession already marked them out as "sound and intelligent", municipal office-holding held little attraction for them.<sup>19</sup>

The less well off, and perhaps less educated, had few chances of breaking into the charmed circle of city politics, but could indulge their ambitions at the local level, either in their *phylê*, as members of a *gerousia*, or in one of the numerous cultic and professional associations.

In a Bithynian *polis*, political life mainly concerned those adult males who resided within the *polis* territory and enjoyed citizen status. Women, peregrines, slaves and minors could not participate directly in the political process; non-resident citizens (such as Dion, who was a citizen of several Bithynian cities) could, but rarely did. Within this group, there were clear internal divisions that sometimes, but not always, correspond to formal division introduced by the Romans (e.g., census requirements for entry into the city council). For analytical purposes, we can divide the "political population" into four sections corresponding to the level of their participation in political life: the local or *phylê* level; the urban or *boulê* level; the regional or *koinon* level; and the imperial level.

### *The local level*

With the introduction of the *lex Pompeia*, the Bithynian *phylai* had ceased to function as voting-districts, and the *phylai* are never mentioned as a political

force in the speeches of Dion or the letters of Pliny. Yet the *phylê* organisation was maintained and continued to function, as is evident both from the renaming of *phylai* throughout the second century and from the inscriptions set up by, or in honour of, phylarchs. Most of our preserved inscriptions derive from Prusias ad Hypium and Klaudioupolis, but *phylai* are known to have existed in other cities as well (see below for an example from Nikomedia).

A remarkable fact is that, prior to the *Constitutio Antoniniana*, we know of so few phylarchs who are Roman citizens. Of the 24 *phylê* officers of Klaudioupolis named in a list from the year 198, only five have Roman names and presumably hold the Roman franchise.<sup>20</sup> It is equally striking that while some inscriptions describe urban political careers in great detail, we do not have a single case where the phylarchate is mentioned in the same *cursus* as urban offices, e.g. *agoranomos* or archon. It appears that participation in the political life of the local *phyle* did not attract those who were able to achieve political office at the urban level.

#### Some Bithynian careers at the local level

A stone sarcophagus, part of which was discovered in the village of Kayacik north-east of Nikomedia, had contained the body of a local dignitary whose name is illegible. We read that “he several times accompanied (i.e. the emperor), served as ambassador, and was [illegible] of the *phyle Antonianê*.”<sup>21</sup> It is not surprising that emperors should visit Kayacik from time to time – a day’s journey from Nikomedia, it provided a convenient overnight stopping-point. But to serve as ambassador and to “accompany” (*parapempein*) a visiting emperor are honours that usually fall to the leading citizens of the community – in the case of a city, typically someone at the social level of an archon (such as M. Aurelius Augianus Philetianus of Prusias ad Hypium, whom we shall meet below). Perhaps the owner of the sarcophagus *was* the leading citizen of his small community, even if he held no office beyond the *phylê*.

*Aurelius Vernicianus* hailed from Apameia in Syria but lived and died in Nikomedia, where he and his wife were buried in an impressive marble sarcophagus that is now in the Izmit museum (fig. 18). The inscription on the sarcophagus relates how Aurelius rose to become phylarch of the *phylê hierâ*, which is qualified by the adjective *kratistês*, “the most important”.<sup>22</sup> While this is an achievement in its own right, one might expect that as a Roman citizen, Aurelius would have been able to reach an office at a higher level than that of the *phylê*; perhaps being an outsider worked against his prospects.

#### The urban level

Three urban offices recur in most successful political careers: *agoranomos*, *agonothete* and archon (the three A’s), almost invariably in that order. For most, the crowning achievement of an urban career would be an archontate,

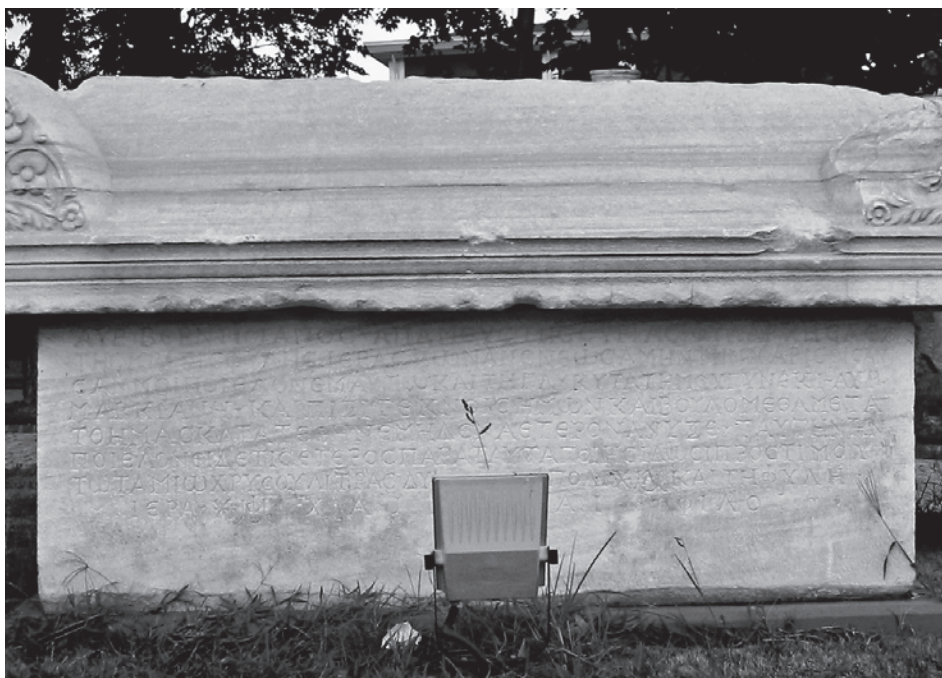


Fig. 18. The sarcophagus of the phylarch Aurelius Vernicianus and his wife Markiane. Vernicianus was a native of Syrian Apameia but rose to become a phylarch of his adopted city, Nikomedia. Izmit museum (author's photo).

perhaps even as the first (senior) archon, but some careerists used their archontate as a stepping-stone to offices at the regional level of the *koinon* (see below).

While *phylê* officers, as we have seen, are predominantly peregrine, urban magistrates almost always possess the Roman franchise. In fact, one might be tempted to hypothesize that the Bithynian cities, like those of Spain, enjoyed Latin status with Roman citizenship for their chief magistrates. This is, however, disproved by some recorded careers. Quintus, son of Quintus, was agoranome and archon of Prusa.<sup>23</sup> Domitius, son of Aster, served two terms as senior archon of Prusias ad Hypium and in numerous other magistracies, yet remained a peregrine.<sup>24</sup> Two peregrine junior archons are known from the same city.<sup>25</sup>

The conclusion must be that in Bithynia, magistrates did not become citizens; citizens became magistrates. The Roman franchise was a marker defining the "bouleutic class" of well-to-do, literate males who dominated urban politics in the larger communities. In the smaller cities, the circle of potential citizen candidates would be correspondingly smaller, and peregrines would have a better chance of reaching a magistracy at the urban level.

### Some Bithynian careers at the urban level

*M. Aurelius Augianus Philetianus* and *M. Julius Gavinius Sacerdos*<sup>26</sup> both started their careers at the urban level in Prusias ad Hypium, holding the three A's in their own names as well as those of their sons; they also held various other offices. The inscription honouring Aurelius Augianus was set up by his wife and records that he furnished oil to the city for a period of thirty days, while in the inscription for Julius Gavinius, his nephew describes the uncle's benefactions in greater detail: money for the restoration of the Domitian baths, 50,000 drachmae for the repair of the agora, a further sum as a contribution to the construction of a new sewer in the city.

Their investment in the career of their sons evidently paid off: both saw a son enter the equestrian order. The inscription of Aurelius Augianus identifies him as the "father of an equestrian" while that of Julius Gavinius, with characteristic attention to detail, gives the son's rank as military tribune, with the qualification "twice".

Both Augianus and Gavinius conserved their energies, and their financial resources, for the political arena of their home town. Nonetheless, both came into direct contact with the emperor, "often" (*pollakis*) appointed to "accompany" (*parapempein*) the emperor when he visited their city. This task included receiving the emperor and his entourage at the entrance to the city, arranging for their accommodation and entertainment. Hosting an imperial visit involved considerable expense – for this reason, the task was often shared among a circle of wealthy citizens<sup>27</sup> – but in return, it offered the chance to meet the emperor and his officials at first hand and to be seen in public with the emperor, raising one's prestige in the city.

These two careerists did not do badly for themselves or their descendants. The father-in-law of Augianus was a phylarch,<sup>28</sup> Augianus himself was an urban councillor and an archon; Augianus junior was an equestrian. In the course of three generations, the family rose through three levels of the political class, from the local to the imperial level.

As his name indicates, *T. Flavius Phidiskos* received the Roman franchise under the Flavians. His son *T. Flavius Silôn* was *grammateus* of Prusa in Dion's time, early in the second century, when he set up a very ornate inscription (fig. 19) in honour of Trajan *ek tôn idiôn*, "from his own resources", giving his titles as *gymnasiarchos* and *grammateus*, with the somewhat self-conscious addition *boulês kai dêmour*: "grammateus of the council and of the people".<sup>29</sup> At the time of writing, *T. Flavius Silôn* was probably still a young man, and we know nothing of his later career.

*Flavius Severianus Asklepiodotos* of Nikaia<sup>30</sup> filled a series of administrative offices in his home city: twice *agoranomos*, treasurer of the corn fund and city treasurer, before being elected first archon. He also served as *syndikos*, acting on behalf of the city in financial matters involving the emperor or the Roman



Fig. 19. Inscription honouring the emperor Trajan, dedicated by the city secretary (grammateus) T. Flavius Silôn, a contemporary of Dion Chrysostomos. Bursa Museum (author's photo).

authorities. When Caracalla visited Nikaia in 215, coming from Nikomedia, Asklepiodotos was elected to “accompany” (*parapempein*) him; on this occasion he also arranged gladiatorial games and wild beast fights.<sup>31</sup> When Elagabal passed through Nikaia three and a half years later, Asklepiodotos once more “accompanied” the emperor and also “arranged for him and his army to winter in the province”. In return, Asklepiodotos was “honoured with the purple” and appointed priest of the imperial cult. His career is known from the inscription on the base of a statue erected by the president of the local *gerousia*, one Timetianos Poliôn (fig. 31).

### *The regional level*

At the regional level, we again find a clear correlation between social standing and career patterns.<sup>32</sup>

Four careers of Bithynians who had reached the regional council, but not the koinarchate, at the time when the inscription was set up, are epigraphically attested;<sup>33</sup> in every case, the route to the provincial council went via a term of office as archon or first archon of their cities. On the other hand, none has served as *logistês*. All recorded Bithynian *koinobouloi* held the Roman citizenship.<sup>34</sup>

Four priests of the regional Imperial cult are known.<sup>35</sup> Only for one of these<sup>36</sup> is a previous archontate recorded, and one does not hold the Roman franchise.<sup>37</sup> To win a place on the regional council, on the other hand, it would seem that citizenship and a previous archontate were quasi-mandatory.

Moving up to the level of the Bithyniarchate, the picture becomes more

complex. Three inscriptions,<sup>38</sup> two of which are fragmentary, give no further information about other offices held. Other koinarchs have a longer list of previous positions, which in all but two cases<sup>39</sup> include either an archontate, the office of *logistês*, or both. One path to the Bithyniarchate thus led through the regular urban *cursus*, including an archontate; but it was also possible for an ex-*logistês* to move directly to the Bithyniarchate without holding any of the lower offices. Indeed, in the minds of the Bithynian élite, there seems to be a close link between the office of *logistês* and that of Bithyniarch, which are often mentioned together. A second-century inscription honours the son of Ulpius Titius Aelianus Antoninus who was “Bithyniarch, Pontarch and *logistês* of the splendid city of Kios”<sup>40</sup> while Ulpius Titius Calpurnianus Fado (third century AD) was “descended from a Bithyniarch and from *logistai*, related to senators and consuls”.<sup>41</sup>

This nexus between *logistês* and Bithyniarch is significant in several respects. A *logistês* (the equivalent of Latin *curator rei publicae*<sup>42</sup>) was an imperial appointee, drawn from the equestrian order; and since the time of Augustus, the census for this class had been fixed at 400,000 HS. In other words, those Bithyniarchs who are known to be ex-*logistai* possessed a sizable personal fortune. Equestrian status was not a precondition for becoming a Bithyniarch: Ti. Claudius Piso from Prusias ad Hypium (whose career will be discussed in more detail below) may have acquired equestrian status *after* holding the Bithyniarchate. In social terms, however, the status of a Bithyniarch clearly approached that of an equestrian.

#### Some Bithynian careers at the regional level

An unfinished inscription from Prusa (fig. 20) gives part of the career, but not the name, of a dignitary who was “[Bithyni]arch and Pontarch, twice priest of the emperor, agonothete and *logistês* for life of the splendid...”.<sup>43</sup> Though the text was never completed, we may take it that our unnamed dedicand held no other urban offices; they would presumably have been mentioned in connection with that of agonothete. The phrase “of the splendid [city]” is paralleled in other inscriptions.

Belonging to the equestrian order and the political class of the province, the protagonist of our inscription did not need to go through the stages of a normal urban career to reach the koinarchate, nor to be selected for the post of agonothete.

In another inscription, the “Augustan” phyle (*phylê sebastênê*) of Prusias honours T. Ulpius Aelianus Papianus, “descendant of a senatorial and consular family”, Bithyniarch, Pontarch, hierophant and Sebastophant, benefactor of Nikomedia and of the citizens of his native city, *politographos* for life, *dekaprotos*, *agoranomos* during a corn shortage (*seitodeia*), *grammateus*, etc., son of Ulpius Titius Aelianus Antoninus, Bithyniarch, Pontarch and “*logistês* of the splendid city of Kios, having held all other urban offices”.<sup>44</sup>



Fig. 20. This unfinished inscription, now in the garden of Bursa Museum, was intended as the base for a statue of a local dignitary who had served as both "[Bithyni]arch and Pontarch" and "priest of the emperor" (author's photo).

The father of Aelianus Papianus went through the urban *cursus* before becoming koinarch and *logistês*. He was of equestrian status and married into a senatorial family.<sup>45</sup> The Aeliani are wealthy; the son has served as *agoranomos* in a time of crisis and undertaken numerous benefactions not only in his own city but in Nikomedia – no doubt a wise move if he was aiming for a Bithyniarchate. It is noteworthy that despite their family's wealth and social standing, both father and son has filled almost every post in the municipal *cursus*: a family tradition?

The inscription honouring *Aurelius Marcianus* of Kios<sup>46</sup> dates from the reign of Diokletian. He served as "*endikos, boulographos, oinoposiarch, Bithyniarch*" but did not, it would seem, hold any one of the three A's. According to the inscription, he was also a "benefactor of the people" and held an office that cannot now be identified (this part of the inscription is illegible) in the *tetrakômia* or "union of four villages". Similar local sub-units are known from other provinces in Asia Minor.<sup>47</sup> Our inscription was found within the village territory of Keramet on the north shore of lake Askanios, c. 25 km by road from Kios itself and on the very edge of Kian territory. It would appear that Aurelius was a local landowner who, living a whole day's journey from the centre of the *polis*, could or would not fill any of the traditional magistracies of an urban *cursus*. He clearly preferred offices that did not require his presence in the city on a regular basis. Nonetheless, he was able to cap his career with a Bithyniarchate.

The phrase “benefactor of the people” is not quite clear; does it refer to the local population (of the *tetrakômia*?) or the city as a whole? The last three lines record that the inscription was set up by one Chrestos, *grammateus tou dêmou*, which suggests that in this case, *dêmos* might refer to the city as such.

#### The Domitii of Prusias ad Hypium

In 189, the five archons of Prusias ad Hypium dedicated an inscription to the emperor Commodus. *T. Domitius Paulianus Falco*, member of a prominent Prusian family, was first archon, holding this post for the second time.<sup>48</sup> His nephew (or possibly his son) *M. Domitius Stratokles* likewise served as first archon and went on to become Bithyniarch and Helladarch, *epistates* and *logistês*.<sup>49</sup> His son *M. Domitius Paulianus Falco* was honoured by the phylarchs of Prusias with an inscription (fig. 21) acclaiming him as “an intimate of the emperor (*sebatognôtos*) ... of a senatorial and consular family ... first archon, priest, agonothete, member of the council for life, the first in every respect”.

The phrase “of a senatorial and consular family” (*genous synklêtikou kai hypatikou*) is somewhat ambiguous. If Domitius Stratokles was a senator, why not say so directly? Perhaps it was not Stratokles himself but one of his brothers or uncles who was of senatorial rank.<sup>50</sup> As he had apparently been *logistês* on more than one occasion,<sup>51</sup> Stratokles was certainly an equestrian,



Fig. 21. Marcus Domitius Paulianus Falco was a friend of the emperor and a much respected local notable in Prusias ad Hypium. The inscription in his honour now lies in the ancient theatre of Konuralp, where less respectful modern-day Prusians have overwritten it with spray paint (author's photo).

and his status within Prusian society was high enough for his son Falco to bypass the position of agoranomos and start his urban career as agonothete, moving up to become archon, then a permanent member (*koinoboulos tou biou*) of the Bithynian council.<sup>52</sup>

### *The imperial level*

An ambitious Bithynian who wanted to pursue a career at the imperial level should be prepared to leave his native province and seek his fortune elsewhere in the empire, in Rome (for a civilian career) or at the frontiers (for a military career). If that were his ambition, he would need to meet the equestrian census of 400,000 HS and be a Roman citizen – ideally, of a family that had been citizens for at least three generations. A score of equestrians (some of whom went on to become senators) and somewhat fewer senators of Bithynian background (among whom the two historians Arrian and Cassius Dion) can be identified.<sup>53</sup> Most spent their entire career outside Bithynia, but a few were directly involved in the urban politics of their homeland.

#### Some Bithynian careers at the imperial level

The career of *Ti. Claudius Piso* is described in great detail in an inscription of the early third century<sup>54</sup> from his native city of Prusias ad Hypium,<sup>55</sup> and it illustrates the routes by which an able and energetic man could work his way up through the political hierarchy: “To the incomparable, Olympian, the first man of the province (*prôtos eparcheias*) by decree of the council of the *koinon*, *proëgoros*, *dekaprôtos*, *poleitographos*, archon of his native city and of the province, judge at Rome, agonothete of his city and of the metropolis, Bithyniarch, Helladarch, Sebastophant of the grand common temple of the Bithynian *koinon* and hierophant of the mysteries, grandfather of a senator, *logistês* of the splendid metropolis Nikomedia ... T. Ulpianus, his friend [set this up]”. There are some ambiguities in this text, notably in the use of *koinon* as against *eparch(e)ia*. It is not clear how the council of the *koinon* could name the “first man of the *eparchia*” since the *eparchia* (province) also included the Pontic *koinon*. Perhaps *eparchia* is here used for the territory of the *koinon*, i.e. Bithynia; but in that case, *archon ... tês eparcheias* seems redundant as a synonym for *Beithyniarchês*.

On the whole, however, Titus seems to have done a very thorough job of recording his friend’s achievements, and we may take it that no significant political offices have gone unmentioned. The young Tiberius came of an old-established citizen family. By virtue of this family’s standing, he was able to bypass the traditional entry-level office as *agoranomos*, aiming directly for the post of agonothete. As an agonothete he could display his social talents and play the role of euergete; he must also have demonstrated administrative abilities since he went on to fill the posts of *poleitographos* (registrar of citizens) and *dekaprôtos* (tax commissioner) as steps on his way to the urban

archontate. From here he passed on to the regional level, becoming junior priest of the *koinon* and Bithyniarch.

It was presumably at this point in his career that Tiberius decided to make his bid for a position at the imperial level: his legal experience as *proëgoros*, i.e. counsel of the *koinon* or province (here confusingly identified as *ethnos*) qualified him for a place on the list of *iudices* at Rome. Perhaps he intended to pursue a legal career in the capital but it seems more likely, as suggested by Fernoux,<sup>56</sup> that he viewed the post of *iudex* as a springboard to the equestrian order and the subsequent appointment as equestrian *logistês* of Nikomedia. The crowning glory of his social *anabasis* was no doubt seeing his grandson Claudius Piso<sup>57</sup> rise to the rank of senator during the reign of Septimius Severus.

Towards the end of the second century, during the reign of Commodus, the equestrian *M. Aurelius Mindius Matidianus Pollio*<sup>58</sup> was honoured by the city of Ephesos with a decree recording his services as collector of harbour duties in the province of Asia over a period of thirty years and, during the same period, as “*logistês* of three cities in Bithynia ... of the splendid *metropolis* Nikomedia, of Nikaia and of Prusa”. Furthermore, he apparently served three terms as Bithyniarch.<sup>59</sup> The combination of high office in Asia and Bithynia, the long periods of tenure, and the iteration of the Bithyniarchate are all rather unusual.<sup>60</sup>

Pollio's father was of Ephesian descent and his family had probably been enfranchised at the mid-second century. His mother's family came from Apa-meia in Bithynia and had presumably been Roman citizens for generations.<sup>61</sup> If we take it that he was born in Ephesos and lived there as an adult,<sup>62</sup> his success as a tax administrator may have recommended him to the imperial authorities and suggested him as an impartial *logistês* of the three major Bithynian cities. He clearly performed his task to the satisfaction not only of the Ephesians but of the emperor as well, since he went on to pursue an impressive administrative career in the capital. The appointment of a single *logistês* for all three cities implies that at this time, there were few serious problems to deal with. So does the fact that Pollio apparently retained his Ephesian and Bithynian posts while at Rome. We may take it that in his case, the office of *logistês* was in the nature of a sinecure.

#### The Cassii of Nikaia

The first member of this prominent Nikaian family known to us is *C. Cassius Asklepiodotos*, a wealthy Bithynian who in the aftermath of the Vinician conspiracy (AD 66) was dragged down because of his friendship with Barea Soranus, one of the conspirators. Unlike some of Soranus' other associates, Cassius Asklepiodotos chose to stand by his friend and was punished with relegation and the confiscation of his estates, but survived to be rehabilitated by Galba.<sup>63</sup> If he was a near contemporary of Soranus, who was suffect

consul in 52, Cassius Asklepiodotos will have been born towards the end of Augustus' reign or early in that of Tiberius. Beyond his rehabilitation in 68, we know nothing of his further career.

In an orchard some five kilometers northwest of Nikaia stands a remarkable monument: from a base nearly three metres in height, an obelisk-like stone spike rises seven metres towards the sky (fig. 22). The "obelisk" itself is triangular in cross-section and constructed of large marble blocks; at least one block is missing, so originally the total height of the monument must have been close to 12m. The base is wide in relation to the obelisk, and squared recesses are cut into its top surface. Corresponding holes are found in the sides of the obelisk itself, to a height of 2.5m above the top of the base (fig. 23). Clearly, the obelisk originally did not stand alone but was flanked by life-sized or larger bronze sculptures, whose hands and feet were fixed to metal cramps in the recesses.

On the rear face of the lowest block of the obelisk, one reads that it was raised by "C. Cassius Philiskos, son of C. Cassius Asklepiodotos, having lived 83 years"<sup>64</sup> (fig. 24). Assuming that Nero's victim was born c. 12, and his son c. 37, Philiskos will have died around the year 120. There is no mention of any municipal offices held by Philiskos himself or his father.

We are not well informed about elite funerary practices in Bithynia (though the remains of a large Hellenistic stone sarcophagus found outside the east-



Fig. 22. Travelling by road from Nikomedia towards Nikaia, a traveller encountered the obelisk-like monument of the Nikaian notable Cassius Philiskos rising from the fields. The "obelisk" still stands, though the top stone has been lost (author's photo).



Fig. 23. Detail of the monument, showing recesses in the side of the vertical stone face, intended for lead cramps to hold standing bronze figures. Similar recesses are cut into the top surface of the base (author's photo).



Fig. 24. The brief inscription on the rear face of the monument gives only the name, age and filiation of Cassius Philiskos (author's photo).

ern necropolis suggests that Nikaiaans were not, in general, averse to funerary ostentation). Still, the combination of obelisk and bronze sculpture sets this monument in a class by itself. His extravagant monument leaves no doubt that Cassius was a leading citizen, perhaps *the* leading citizen of the city; for any others, a monument of this size and character would have been an intolerable display of *hybris*.

Another Cassius of the first century, *C. Cassius Chrestos* is known to posterity from the inscriptions in honour of the emperor set up over the north and east gates of the city (fig. 25): "To the emperor and the imperial house and to Nikaia, first city of the province, the proconsul M. Plancius dedicated this through the agency of C. Cassius Chrestos, who set it up".<sup>65</sup> Plancius dedicates his new gates to the emperor Vespasian.<sup>66</sup>

Over the arched niches flanking the east gate, two additional inscriptions were found, one "to the patron of the city, the proconsul M. Plancius Varus, [from] his friend C. Cassius Chrestos" and an almost identical one from "his friend Ti. Claudius Quintianus".<sup>67</sup> Şahin and Merkelbach hypothesized that niches above one or more of the inscriptions may have held a statue of the proconsul. As patron of the city, the proconsul was clearly its benefactor on a major scale; though no inscriptions are preserved, we may take it that he also paid for the restoration of the west and south gates, and there is other evidence for the proconsul's generosity elsewhere in the province.<sup>68</sup>

As the proconsul's associate, *C. Cassius Chrestos* must have been a man of some standing within the community as well. His sarcophagus (fig. 26) which was found in the necropolis outside the east gate, is a plain, unadorned stone box. Its inscription<sup>69</sup> gives his career as follows: "*C. Cassius Chrestos, presbys* [ambassador], *archiereus* and *sebastophant*, lived 58 years." In this remarkably terse *cursus*, none of the traditional municipal offices are mentioned. The three offices that *are* named all serve to illustrate Chrestos' close relation to the ruling power, just as the inscription over the side arch of the gate identifies Chrestos as the proconsul's "friend". That he was selected as ambassador shows that Chrestos belongs to the highest level of society, while his allegiance to the emperor is attested by the two imperial priesthoods, whose nature is not quite clear. To be worth mentioning in the epitaph, an *archiereus* is presumably a priest of the provincial cult, either at the temple in Nikaia (assuming that it was still functioning at this late date) or, more likely, in Nikomedia.<sup>70</sup> The office of *sebastophant* may refer to a municipal cult.<sup>71</sup> The offices of Chrestos have apparently been listed not chronologically, but in descending order of social status.

The sarcophagus of Chrestos is intriguing in two other respects. The first is that despite his expressed pro-Roman orientation, he had himself inhumed and not cremated. The second is its remarkably modest nature, compared to the often ornate sarcophagi typical of the region. Both are easily explained if his sarcophagus was intended to be placed in a pre-existing family tomb.

Şahin and others have suggested that Cassius Chrestos was a son or brother



Fig. 25. The original bronze letters are lost, but the inscription over the east (Lefke) gate of Nikaia can still be deciphered. At the end of the second line, the name of Cassius Chrestos in the genitive ("through the agency of..."). Similar inscriptions were found over other gates of the city (author's photo).



Fig. 26. The sarcophagus of C. Cassius Chrestos in the garden of Iznik Museum (author's photo).

of Asklepiodotos,<sup>72</sup> but when the evidence of their burials is taken into account, it is more likely that they belonged to separate branches of the family. Chrestos was buried just east of the city, while Philiskos and his relations were presumably interred near his obelisk, some distance northwest of the city but close to a country mansion of his branch of the Nikaian Cassii.

We next hear of the Nikaian Cassii at the mid-century.<sup>73</sup> *Cassius Apronianus* (his *praenomen* is not known) was born around 140, no later than 145, probably in Nikaia. He followed a senatorial career and became governor of Lycia-Pamphylia around 180; in 182 he transferred to the governorship of Cilicia, where he was joined by his son, the future historian Cassius Dion. He reached the consulate in 185 and was appointed governor of Dalmatia, one of the “home provinces” bordering Italy.

*L. Claudius Cassius Dion* (*Cocceianus*?<sup>74</sup>) was born in Nikaia<sup>75</sup> around 164 and was not yet twenty when he went to join his father in Cilicia. He pursued a legal and political career in Rome where, as the son of a senator, he quickly rose through the traditional *cursus*. He spent most of his adult life in the capital, and was approaching sixty when he was appointed to the governorship of his father’s old province, Dalmatia, from which he moved on to the important frontier province of Pannonia Superior. He attained his second consulate, shared with the young emperor Alexander Severus, in 229.

From the time we first hear of them, the Cassii belonged to the elite of Nikaia, at the “imperial” level. Asklepiodotos had friends in the inner circles of the imperial court; Chrestos boasts of his friendship with the governor of Bithynia-Pontus; Apronianus was governor of three provinces in turn; Dion was twice consul. They were also wealthy: even by the standards of the capital, the wealth of Asklepiodotos was important enough to earn a remark from Tacitus, while both Apronianus and Dion were senators. A third point worthy of note is that as far as we know, none of them ever filled any of the traditional magistracies at the urban level – one of the three A’s – nor any offices at the regional level. Admittedly, from the brief mention of Asklepiodotos in Tacitus or the terse style of Philiskos’ epitaphs, we cannot be certain that these two never did. But the epitaph of Chrestos mentions nothing beyond his service as ambassador and imperial priest, while the senatorial careers of Apronianus and Dion, father and son, left them no time for urban careers.

## Notes

- 1 Fernoux 2004, 146-147, 185; Corsten 2006, 88 quoting Fernoux 2004, 185..
- 2 P. Rupilius, Cn. Pupius (*Ad Fam.* 13.9), L. Egnatius Rufus (13.47), Pinnius (13.61), Atilius (13.62), L. Aelius Lamia, M. Laenius (13.63), P. Terentius Hispan (13.65); for a detailed commentary, Fernoux 2004, 147-155. Cicero’s remark (*De lege agraria* 2.40, quoted by Corsten 2006, 92) about Bithynia, *quod certe publicum est populi Romani factum*, is hardly relevant to this issue.

- 3 Fernoux 2004, 154, table 9 listing fourteen *gentilicia* “dont beaucoup sont rarement attestés ailleurs que dans leur berceau géographique d’origine en Italie”.
- 4 E.g. C. Hostilius Ascanius of Nikaia (*IK* 9.34) who was probably of Greek servile descent and identifies himself as a banker (*trapezeitês*).
- 5 TAM 4.1.70, naming P. Vedius Cornelianus Strato.
- 6 Corsten 2006, 89; for a more detailed survey and methodological discussion, see Fernoux 2004, 73-93.
- 7 Fernoux 2004, 160.
- 8 Madsen 2006, 74.
- 9 Fernoux 2004, 73. One also notes the high proportion of Thracian names in the inscription *IK* 26.7 from Melitoupolis.
- 10 Corsten 2006, 88.
- 11 [Ca]tilius Longus, P.f. (*PIR* L 309); for his biography, Fernoux 2004, 416-417.
- 12 Fernoux 2004, 478.
- 13 Spain, for instance, appears to have received Latin status for its cities under the reign of Vespasian; Pliny, *HN* 3.30; cf. Richardson 1996, 190-191.
- 14 Fernoux 2004, 201, tab. 11.
- 15 Nikaia, Nikomedia, Prusias ad Hypium, Bithynion-Klaudioupolis, Prusa, Kios, Apameia.
- 16 Pliny, *Ep.* 10.10-11.
- 17 Fernoux 2004, 205.
- 18 *Or.* 50.1.
- 19 E.g., Flavius Archippos (Pliny, *Ep* 10.58), or the rhetor Aelius Aristides, who went to great lengths to avoid a priesthood in the province of Asia. For the status of philosophers within the community, cf. *IK* 39.18.
- 20 For the text of the list and a discussion of the names, see Marek 2002, 32-33; 38-39.
- 21 TAM 4.1.329.
- 22 Şahin 1973, no. 32 = TAM 4.1.258. Other *phylai* also claimed the titles of *kratistês* for themselves, e.g. the *phylê Plotinianê* (Şahin 1973, no. 33 = TAM 4.1.238.).
- 23 *IK* 39.16.
- 24 *IK* 27.2.
- 25 *IK* 27.38.
- 26 *IK* 27.20; 50; Fernoux 2004, 432-434.
- 27 Fernoux 204, 413-414.
- 28 *IK* 27.6; Fernoux 2004, 434.
- 29 *IK* 39.3.
- 30 *IK* 9.60; commentary in Guinea Diaz 1997, 223-224.
- 31 For Caracalla’s love of such displays on his travels, see Cassius Dion 77.9.
- 32 For a list of officials at the regional level, see Fernoux 2004, 350-352, table 18.
- 33 P. Domitius Julianus (*IK* 27.19); M. Domitius Paulianus Falco (*IK* 27.7); M. Aurelius Asklepiodotianos Asklepiades (*IK* 27.11); *ignotus* (TAM 4.1.42).
- 34 The name, and thus the legal standing, of the *koinoboulos* named in TAM 4.1.42 is not preserved, but since he had previously been agoranome and first archon of his native Nikomedia, we can take it that he held the Roman *civitas*.
- 35 It is not always possible to say for certain whether a priest is attached to a regional or municipal cult. I have chosen to follow Fernoux 2004, 352-354.
- 36 P. Aelius Timotheos from Nikomedia (TAM 4.1.33).
- 37 Sacerdos, son of Menander, from Prusa (*IK* 39.24).

- 38 Aesquilinus (*Inscr. Askl.* 151); M. Domitius Iulianus; [?] Moschos.
- 39 The exceptions are Ti. Claudius Tertullianus Sanctus (*IK* 27.51) who was agoranome, agonothete and grammateus – but apparently not archon – in Prusias ad Hypium, and Aurelius Marcianus (*IK* 29.7 = *IK* 10.726) who was *endikos*, *boulographos* and oinoposiarch in Kios or Nikaia.
- 40 *IK* 27.17.
- 41 *IK* 27.54.
- 42 *CJ* 1.54.3 ; *Curator rei publicae, qui graeco vocabulo logista nuncupatur.*
- 43 *IK* 39.13.
- 44 cf. Fernoux 2004, 474-476, *PIR*<sup>2</sup> U 537-538.
- 45 That is, assuming that the senatorial and consular *progonoi* claimed by Aelianus junior are *maternal* ancestors. If they are his *paternal* ancestors, then the status of the Aeliani has recently been reduced from senatorial to equestrian – a *déroute* the family would hardly want to advertise in an honorific inscription.
- 46 *IK* 29.7.
- 47 Corsten in *IK* 29, p. 82.
- 48 *IK* 27.38.
- 49 *IK* 27.7.
- 50 Ameling, *IK* 27 p. 55; Fernoux 2004, 476.
- 51 *Apo logisteiôn*, *IK* 27.7 line 12 and Ameling ad loc., p. 55.
- 52 There were other prominent *Domitii* in Prusias ad Hypium, e.g. M. Domitius Valerianus (*PIR*<sup>2</sup> D 168) who attained a suffect consulship under Gordian III.
- 53 Fernoux 2004, 416-445 (equestrians), 446-477 (senators)
- 54 To judge from its place in his *cursus*, Piso's term as *logistês* postdates the thirty-year term of Matidianus Pollio (see below), which would have ended c. 190.
- 55 *IK* 27.47; *PIR*<sup>2</sup> C 961; Fernoux 2004, 429-431.
- 56 Fernoux 2004, 430.
- 57 *PIR*<sup>2</sup> C 960; for his career, see Fernoux 2004, 471.
- 58 *PIR*<sup>2</sup> A 1559
- 59 *IK* 13.627 = *IK* 40.T2. The name of Commodus in line 13 was subsequently erased during his period of *memoria damnata* from 193 to 195. Cf. also *ILS* 8858.
- 60 Of course, we need not take the round number thirty to mean that Pollio held both offices for exactly 30 years. It could well be that he was customs collector for about thirty years and that “during the same time” (*kata to auto*), i.e. while a customs collector, he also served as *logistês*. See also Deininger 1965, 61; 151; De Laet 1949, 276.
- 61 For Pollio's family background and biography, see Pflaum 1960 no. 193; Campanile 1993, 347; Campanile 1994, 67-68; Fernoux 2004, 418-419.
- 62 He served as *archiereus* there for a five-day period, in the course of which he gave a series of shows with wild “African animals”; *IK* 13.627, Carter 2004, 47-48.
- 63 Tacitus, *Annals* 15.33; Cassius Dion 62.26 (with the additional information that Asklepiodotos was a Nikaian and that he was rehabilitated by Galba); *PIR*<sup>2</sup> C 486.
- 64 *IK* 9.85.
- 65 *IK* 9.25-28; Şahin 1978, 12-14.
- 66 For the date, see Şahin's comments to *IK* 9.25.
- 67 *IK* 9.51-52; Şahin 1978, 14-15.
- 68 Şahin 1978, 14; Merkelbach 1987, 16.

- 69 I have followed the emendation of the first line proposed by Şahin (*IK* 7.4) though there is not quite enough space for the *kai* in line 1 if the inscription – as it seems – was intended to be symmetrical.
- 70 Şahin 1978, 16-17 and *IK* 9.116 (Nikaia); Fernoux 2004, 527 (Nikomedea). The latter appears more likely, given the absence of other inscriptional evidence for an imperial cult at Nikaia before the third century.
- 71 Against the interpretation of Fernoux (2004, 352), if a sebastophant is subsidiary to an *archiereus*, then it would be meaningless for Cassius Chrestos to give both titles on his sarcophagus, unless they referred to different cults.
- 72 E.g., Şahin 1978, 17: “es bestand sicher ein enges Verwandtschaftsverhältnis ... [Asklepiodotos] könnte der Vater oder ein Bruder des Cassius Chrestus gewesen sein”; less emphatically Fernoux 2004, 487, “peut-être un fils ou un frère”.
- 73 There is no good evidence that M. Cassius Agrippa (Fernoux 2004, 441, no. 20) and [? Cas]sius Agrippa (Fernoux 2004, 461-462, no. 35), nor M. Cassius Nikadas (*IK* 10.1065; 1071) were related to the Cassii of Nikaia.
- 74 The *cognomen* Cocceianus is only found in late sources. For Cassius Dion’s possible family relationship to Dion of Prusa, Millar 1964, 11.
- 75 Photios, *Bibl.* 71 (35b).

