

Provincial population and Roman identity in Bithynia et Pontus. Jesper Majbom Madsen; klajmm@hum.au.dk; The Danish National Research Foundations Centre for Black Sea Studies; Building 328; University of Aarhus; 8000 Aarhus C; Denmark.

Introduction

Bithynia et Pontus is one of the most culturally complex provinces in the Roman Empire. The Bithynian part and the Black Sea coast was dominated by Greek colonies and cities-states founded or re-founded by changing Hellenistic kings, who often chose to base their urban centres on pre-existing Greek city communities. The Kingdom of Pontos, which in parts made up the other half of the province, was prior to the Roman conquest and strongly influenced by Iranian culture. Although somewhat Hellenized, the Pontic Kingdom did not base its power on a city-culture, as we know it from the Greek and Roman world. Instead the administrative structure had been divided between different castles, from where the Pontic court ruled an extensive number of villages and Iranian temple communities.

When Pompey defeated King Mithradates VI in 66 BC a significant reorganization of Pontos and Bithynia was needed in order to adapt the former Pontic Kingdom to Roman administrative standards. In this process the castles were abandoned and cities on the pattern of the Greek polis were founded in order to provide an administrative structure complied with Roman standards. The existing Greek colonies and Hellenistic cities generally kept their pre-Roman form but were made the administrative centres of the land that had previously been under the Pontic or Bithynian crown.

Despite an overall Greek form of administration Bithynia et Pontus did experience significant changes in how the political and public life was organized. One of the most significant changes was that magistrates at the age of 30, later from the age of 22, obtained permanent membership of the council *ex officio*.¹ Since the Hellenistic age magistracies had been mainly held by members of the elite and in an attempt to favour this group, Rome changed the Greek *boule*, where members were elected from the *demos* by lot and presided for a limited period, to the Roman form of *ordo decurionis*, where the local elite *ex officio* obtained membership for life. The favouring of the local elite was even more apparent in the imperial period, when

¹ Pliny *EP.* 10.79; 10.80.

wealthy individuals could pay for admission to the council.² As a result the political and public life of the Bithynian and Pontic cities was more Roman than Greek.³

Roman influence changed practice in both Greek colonies and Hellenistic city-states. The political power was to an even greater extent than before placed with the local elite, where both magistracies and seats in the council were gathered around the wealthiest among the local population. Over time this group received Roman citizenship and was, at least in a legal sense, Roman. Roman festivals were also celebrated in many Greek cities, and members of the local elite also got involved in the imperial worship or other Roman cults as priests or benefactors.⁴

The local elite in Bithynia et Pontus surely interacted with the Romans and tried to obtain the best possible position in the new world order but whether they also identified themselves as Romans is an entirely different question, which is the topic of this paper. The particular question of how the local elite in Bithynia et Pontus responded to Roman hegemony has received little attention and Greek responses to Roman culture needs therefore to be treated on a more general level.⁵

Romanization of Greeks

The cultural influence Roman hegemony had on daily life in the Greek provinces has traditionally received less scholarly attention compared to the West, where the study of Romanization in for instance Gaul, Britain, Iberia or Germania has been a central subject in a national as well as international debate. The different focus on the influence of Roman culture in the provinces of Achaia, Asia, and Bithynia et Pontus is the result of a generally accepted view that Roman culture was inferior to its Greek and Oriental counterparts, combined with the limited interest in Roman history in modern Greece and Turkey, where the Classical and Hellenistic ages or the early Islamic history has been the focus of attention.⁶

That the coming of Rome had a limited influence on the cultural pattern in the Greek provinces is related to the idea that changes in cultural identity were driven by

² Pliny *EP.* 10.112; 10.113.

³ Wörrle 1988 p. 91.

⁴ Price 1984 p. 58.

⁵ For recent studies see Mitchell 1993; Marek 2003.

⁶ For recent examples see Alcock 1997 and Hoff & Rosroff 1997.

a desire to reach a higher level of civilization.⁷ Romanization was, and often still is, defined as a phenomenon that mainly applies to the cultural encounter between Rome and the population of Iron Age communities in the western part of the empire.⁸

Viewed as a process where provincial populations adopted Roman culture in order to reach a higher level of civilization, Romanization, as a term, does not apply well to the Greek world. Here Roman hegemony did not introduce the same cultural changes as in western provinces. Greek remained the official language and the civic structure was already in place and formed the backbone in the provincial administration in the east.⁹ Furthermore the tradition for a law-regulated society was, according to the Romans themselves, an element borrowed from the Greek city-states.¹⁰ Viewed as older and more civilized, Greek culture was believed to have been largely unaffected by the Roman hegemony and elements from Roman cultural because the Greek population saw no reason to adopt an inferior Roman culture.¹¹

Up though the 20th century the view of Romanization changed radically and the idea of the natural attraction was abandoned. Romanization was now explained as either a deliberate Roman policy aimed to win over especially the local elite in order to consolidate Roman rule¹² or as a voluntary adoption of Roman culture as a way to maintain or reach a higher social level.¹³ In the second half of the century, the idea of Romanization changed again and was viewed as an acculturation between Roman and provincial communities, where the coming of Rome promoted a new cultural pattern containing elements from both Roman and native culture.¹⁴ The cultural pattern in the western provinces was now seen as a mixture between Roman and pre-Roman culture and the cultural pattern in the provinces were now described as Gallo-Roman or Romano-British culture rather than either Roman or Gallic; indicating that Romanization was a multi lateral process with regional differences.¹⁵

⁷ Haverfield 1923 p. 11.

⁸ Der neue Pauly 1122-27; Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde, Band 25 pp. 310-318

⁹ MacMullen 2000 p. 13.

¹⁰ Pliny EP. 2.24.

¹¹ Haverfield 1923 p. 13.

¹² Bénabou 1976 p. 1976.

¹³ Brunt 1976 p. 161; MacMullen 1984 p. 57

¹⁴ Webster 2001 p. 212; Cherry 1998 p. 75.

¹⁵ Woolf 1998 p. 7.

A similar redefinition of the cultural influence from the Roman hegemony in the Greek provinces did not occur. Based on the view that Roman civilization was a product of Greek culture and therefore unable to offer a higher stage of civilization, the relation between Greek and Roman culture was still viewed in the light of Greek cultural superiority.¹⁶

Due to the high level of urban development in the provinces of Asia, Achaia, and to some extent also Bithynia, Rome had no need to implement her own urban structure in these regions. The Roman colonies founded in the East were, as a result, too few and too widespread to cause any permanent change in the cultural pattern in the Greek communities in general.¹⁷ Instead of having a Romanizing effect on life in the Greek provinces, the Roman colonies were believed to put under significant pressure from the Greek culture and were gradually Hellenized.¹⁸

Counter to the notion of the Greek lack of interests in Roman culture, a number of studies showed that the influence from Roman was much stronger in Greek communities than previously suggested. A study of civil servants in the Roman administration of Greek origin showed that Greeks, after a slow start, were elected magistrates and pro-magistrates in high numbers and that the Greeks over time were equally involved in the imperial administration.¹⁹

In a study on the imperial cult in Asia Minor it was argued that the imperial cult in Asia Minor was an entirely new form of ruler cult with little resemblances to Greek celebration of the Hellenistic kings.²⁰ The initiative to establish imperial cult in the cities in Asia Minor was often local and promoted by a desire to achieve higher status both as individuals within a community and between cities on a provincial level.²¹ Finally in a number of studies concerning architectural trends and public buildings reached the conclusion that elements from Roman urban life were more widespread than previously believed.²²

These studies provided a new understanding of how Roman culture influenced Greek provincial communities. It was now generally accepted that Roman rule made a

¹⁶ MacMullen 2002 p. 2.

¹⁷ MacMullen 2002 pp. 7-10.

¹⁸ MacMullen 2002 pp. 4-5.

¹⁹ Halfmann 1978 pp. 97-98.

²⁰ Price 1984 pp. 45-47.

²¹ Price 1984 pp. 71-72.

²² In general Thomson 1987; Inge Nielsen 1990; Alcock 1993.

significant impact on the cultural pattern in the Greek provinces and that it was more appropriate to talk of a Graeco-Roman culture rather than just Greek or Roman.²³ To view the cultural pattern in the Greek provinces as an acculturation between Greek and Roman culture broke, at least in part, with the old paradigm and the idea of Greek provincial culture as crystallized and largely unaffected by the presence of Rome. Instead it was generally accepted that Roman institutions such as public baths, gladiatorial games and imperial cult as well as Roman technology, art and artefacts were adopted and integrated in a Greek cultural pattern.²⁴

Despite the fact that Roman influence on public as well as religious life in Greek communities was generally recognized, it did not lead to the assumption that Greek provincial communities were Romanized. Romanization was towards the end of the 20th century generally related to identity and defined as a process, where provincials came to identify themselves as Romans. Romanization was in this respect seen as provincial adoption of Roman lifestyle and identity and, as a result, closely related to Roman material culture, institutions, and public buildings.²⁵

This view was however not applied to the population in Greek communities where the adoption of Roman institutions and material culture was believed not to have affected Greek identity,²⁶ which, it was argued, was more related to myth of origin than to material culture.²⁷ Accordingly Greeks could, due to the flexibility inherent in Hellenism, easily surround themselves with Roman artefacts and different types of buildings originating in Rome or other cultures for that matter without exposing their identity as Greeks to any significant changes. A conclusion that acknowledged the cultural influence Rome had on Greek communities and posed an alternative to the idea of a Greek lack of interest in the Roman world, but continued to see the Greek cultural identity as particularly resistance towards adoption of Roman identity.

To question the relation between identity and material culture in the Greek world was an important step forward in the study of cultural identity in antiquity. No doubt provincials could have surrounded themselves with Roman artefact or

²³ Millar 1993 238

²⁴ Woolf 1998 p. 11.

²⁵ Woolf 1994 p. 117

²⁶ Woolf 1994 p. 128

²⁷ Hall 1997 p. 16.

introduced Roman institutions and public building in order to present themselves as Roman, but it need not have been the case. The choice of artefacts depended heavily on supplies, and the presence of certain artefacts could easily have had more to do with what was available than how the owners chose to identify themselves. The same applies largely to public buildings of Roman origin or buildings erected with the help of Roman technology, which in many cases offered improvements, which alone can explain why they were introduced.

Furthermore, to decide whether or not Greek provincials identified themselves as Romans on the basis of material culture and the existence of public buildings alone is problematic. This, however, is not due to the relationship between Greek identity and myth of origin but because the sentiments behind different choices of artefacts, institutions and the architectural form of public buildings are often unknown. As such we have no way of knowing whether individuals who surrounded themselves with certain artefacts or stood behind the construction of buildings raised in a Roman architectural fashion identified themselves or were identified as Romans.

That local architects in Bithynia et Pontus did construct buildings in a fashion normally regarded as Roman is apparent from Pliny's letters to Trajan, where the emperor is asked to send an architect but replies that Pliny should use local expertise.²⁸ This and other letters sent from Bithynia, mentioning local architects involved in constructing Roman style public buildings, make it clear that Greek architects had a large influence on how Roman architecture appeared, and indicate that architectural trends from Rome were not in any way crystallized but were influenced by trends, fashion, and impulses from other Mediterranean and oriental cultures and therefore problematic as a determinant for cultural identity.

The assumption that Greeks had a crystallised cultural identity defined on myth of origin and therefore unlikely to identify themselves as Romans is more problematic. Cultural identity is thereby viewed as something static, where Roman identity has to replace Greek identity before Romanization can be said to have been accomplished. But is that at all possible? Would not every community, however subdued, keep a large number of elements from the cultural patterns from before the coming of Rome?

²⁸ Pliny EP. 10.39; 10.40.

What we know from Romanization in western provinces is that a number of elements from e.g. Gallic, German or Celtic culture were retained, while at the same time a common cultural identity between especially the local elite and Roman representatives in the province developed. In a province such as Bithynia et Pontus identity was not necessarily a choice between Greek and Roman identity. Instead Roman identity can be seen as a superstructure, where the local elite was Greek or Asiatic of origin but assimilated to Roman standards. A development also apparent in Aelius Aristides speech *To Rome*, where he mentions a membership in a union and at the same time underlines that Greeks had the right to rule in local matters.

If Romanization is viewed as a process of assimilation, where the local elite over time appeared as an integrated part of the Roman elite, the influence from Roman culture becomes much clearer. Cultural assimilation is described by the sociologist Milton Gordon in *Assimilation in American Life* (1964) as a process, whereby the assimilating individuals and groups first imitate behavioural patterns of the dominating culture and later, after successful imitation, adopt into cliques, clubs and institutions of the dominating culture. The admission into the community of the dominating culture accordingly lead to intermarriage, development of common people-hood based on the dominating society leading to the absence of prejudice, discrimination and conflicts over values and power.²⁹

If a similar course of events is applied to the question of Romanization we see a development, where the local elite, after every hope of refuting the Romans was lost, began to imitate Roman officials present in the province, by imitating Roman life style or by taking part in the administration or political life after Roman fashion.

Those who took part in the political and administrative life, local or imperial, were rewarded with citizenship and thereby admitted into institutions such as the imperial cult, which, at least among assimilating groups, developed a common sense of people-hood. Locals with Roman status, especially those in the following generation felt that they were part of the Roman community and just as importantly they were recognised as such at least in a legally sense by Roman officials. The part of the provincial community that had gone through this development had assimilated to Roman culture and reached similar juridical rights as those who had subdued them generations before. Being Roman was not an ethnic identity; Rome was in the

²⁹ Gordon 1964 pp. 68-73.

imperial period represented by officials for many parts of the empire without a unified ethnical appearance. Instead being Roman was a social and political status symbolizing relations to the world most powerful and dominating culture.³⁰ Those who were citizens and thereby part of the Roman community took Latinized names and were engaged in Roman institutions or the public and political life dominated by Roman norms and tradition. However this was not simply to obtain Roman rights and improved social or legal standing, a status they had already, but to show the rest of the local community their Roman status and their superior social and political position.

Roman identity in Bithynia et Pontus

One way to answer the question whether individuals in Bithynia et Pontus saw themselves as part of the Roman community and thereby identified themselves as Romans is to focus on how provincials, primarily the local elite, chose to appear in public. In order to show Roman identity provincials could use *tria nomina* and a Latinized names in public or record merits in the Roman political, religious, or administrative institutions. A *tria nomina* would reveal legal status as Roman citizen in public and Latinized name to e.g. female members of the family would show that the family as a whole identified itself as Roman. Another way to show one's Roman identity and active participation in the Roman community was to record eventual involvement in Roman political life and administration.

One man who clearly identified himself as Roman was the senator and later *legatus Augusti* in the province of Asia, Catilius Longus from the colony of Apameia. A Latin honorific inscription set up in Apameia records that Longus first served as military tribune in the IV Scythican legion under the emperor Claudius. In the reign of Vespasian, Longus was admitted to the senate and later appointed to the post in Asia.³¹ Longus was hardly representative of members of the Bithynian and Pontic elite. His early admission to the senate compared to other senators from the provinces was extraordinary and related to his descent from Roman colonists in Apameia.

Aurelius Flavonius Rufus, buried in Apameia and thereby presumably from the city as well, is another example of man with local origin and a Latinized name, who followed an imperial career. Rufus had a successful career in the Roman army

³⁰ Brunt 1976 p. 162.

³¹ *IK* 32, 2. See also Halfmann 1978 p. 115.

serving first as *centurio deputatus* and later as *primipilus*, the highest ranking officer in the legions first *centurio*, which lead to an appointment as *tribunus militum urbanicianus* in Rome.³² Dated to the 3rd century AD, Flavonius Rufus is a much later example than Catilius Longus, but the name Aurelius Flavonius indicates that his family gained Roman right's before Caracalla's reform in AD- presumably after military service under the Flavian emperors. That individuals of Italian origin or the local population in Roman colonies identified themselves as Romans or followed careers in the Roman army is not surprising. But Roman names and careers in the imperial administration were common also among individuals of Greek descendents living in cities without colonial status.

One example of a career similar to that of Longus is Flavius Arrianus, the Greek writer from Nicomedia, who like Longus started his career in the army, where he followed Trajan on the Parthian campaign. After years of service, Arrianus was admitted to the Senate, presumably during the reign of Hadrian, and reached both the consulate and served as pro-consul and *legatus Augusti* in Cappadocia and Syria accordingly.³³ There is no doubt that Arrianus saw himself as Greek,³⁴ but his role in the imperial administration at the highest level, where he was responsible for enforcing Roman rule, laws, and values strongly indicates Arrianus' sympathy for Rome and that he saw himself as part of the ruling elite of the empire - at least to a degree that convinced Hadrian of his ability to govern within Roman norms and values.

Other members from the local elite in Bithynia et Pontus had similar careers in the imperial army and administration. One family with a large engagement in Roman rule and close relations to the Roman community was the Nicaean *gens Cassii*, a wealthy family from Asia Minor that presumably had the rich Cassius Asclepiodotos as one of its early ancestors.³⁵ The first member of this family to obtain prestigious administrative offices in Rome was presumably a C. Cassius Agrippa *consul suffectus* in 130. Cassius Agrippa has been related to the city of Nicaea by a very damaged and heavily reconstructed inscription found in the city recording that Cassius Agrippa

³² *IK* 32, 8. p. 27.

³³ Halfmann 1978 p. 146; Liddle 2003 pp. 2-5.

³⁴ Swain 1996 pp. 242-248.

³⁵ Millar 1966 pp. 8-9; Tacitus Ann.16.33; Cassius Dio 62.26.2.

was, if correctly reconstructed, *legatus* in the 20th legion in Baetica before he was appointed to the Senate.³⁶

Another of the *Cassii* to enter the Senate was M. Cassius Apronianus, the father of the 3rd century historian Cassius Dio.³⁷ During his career M. Cassius Apronianus managed to reach both the consulships and be appointed governor in the province of Lycia et Pamphylia in about 180 AD and later to *legatus Augusti* in the provinces of Cilicia and Dalmatia sometime later in the 180^s AD.³⁸ Like his father, Cassius Dio also pursued a career in the imperial administration. He may have come to Rome following his father sometime in the beginning of the 180^s AD and initiated his political career as the son of a Roman senator.³⁹ Dio presumably followed what may be considered an ordinary political and administrative career in the imperial administration and held both civic and military offices before he served as *curator* in Pergamum and Smyrna and was appointed to consul twice as well as proconsul and *legatus Augusti* in Africa, Dalmatia and Pannonia.⁴⁰ To judge from their Latin names and careers in the Roman administration the *Cassii* were like Arrianus strongly involved in the up keep of the Roman Empire. They took part in all kinds of Roman institutions, represented Rome in their different appointments and thereby shared similar norms and values. They did not reject their Greek cultural inheritance, but they were part of the Roman world and highly respected and there should be no reason why members of the elite, who served at the highest level of the imperial administration, would have felt less part of the Roman elite and community than other provincials in the Roman administration did because of a Greek origin.

That a limited number of individuals from the local elite chose a career in the Roman administration and took on a sort of behaviour that made them appear Roman or at least as part of the Roman ruling community should be expected no matter how hostile or resistant the population was in general. That a number of individuals or families in Bithynia et Pontus chose to assimilate themselves to Roman culture and identified themselves as Romans is no indication of how the population in general responded to the coming of Rome.

³⁶ Degraffi 1952 p. 32. For the reconstructed inscription from Nicaea, see *IK* 9, 57.

³⁷ Millar 1966 p. 8; Halfmann 1979 nr. 123 p. 194.

³⁸ H. Halfmann 1979 nr. 123 p. 194.

³⁹ For a very speculative attempt to reconstruct the early years of Dio's *cursus honorum* see Millar 1966 pp. 15-17.

⁴⁰ Millar 1966 pp. 193-194.

But to present oneself as Roman by use of *tria nomina* and Latinized names or to be actively involved in Roman institutions were not limited to the relatively few individual who left their hometowns to follow careers in Rome or elsewhere in the empire. Also those who remained in Bithynia et Pontus used Roman names of different types for themselves and their families and were proud to show if they or their families had any active relation to imperial cult or administrative careers in general.

That the local elite was eager to show their identity as Roman citizens is especially apparent in Prusias ad Hypium, where members of the local elite are honoured as first archons in a series of *phylai* inscriptions. It is striking that from Prusias ad Hypium all the archons are presented with *tria nomina* often with a Greek cognomen e.g. T. Flavius Pomponius Domitianus Timokrates⁴¹ or T. Flavius Domitianus Nestor⁴² except in a single case, where Domitius son of Aster appears as archon without a *tria nomina* but with a Latinized name.⁴³ That Domitius was presented in public as the only archon without *tria nomina* indicates that he was not a Roman citizen when the inscription was set up but what the epigraphic material also indicates is that the local elite in general had Roman rights and chose to appear as Romans in public. To present oneself as Roman needed not have been out of pragmatic or political reasons alone and Domitius' archonship shows that Roman citizenship was no precondition for a successful career in a city like Prusias ad Hypium. In a *phyle* inscription raised in honour of M. Domitius Paulinius Falco⁴⁴ it is mentioned that Falco's father had served as *curator* (λογιστης) and presumably had senatorial status.⁴⁵ Mentioning family members with careers in the Roman administration or public appearance with Roman names was not done to impress Roman officials who have been few in numbers in a city as Prusias ad Hypium but aimed at a local audience and further indicates that Roman status and participation in the imperial administration were highly regarded in the local communities.

A similar example is from Nicaea, where an earlier member of the *Cassii* family Gaius Cassius Christos behaved in a way, which related him closely to the

⁴¹ *IK* 27. 3.

⁴² *IK* 27. 5.

⁴³ *IK* 27. 2.

⁴⁴ *IK* 27. 7. 1. 13.

⁴⁵ *IK* 27 p. 55.

Roman community in the province. Apart from his *tria nomina* used in public inscriptions Christos was during the reign of Vespasian or Titus responsible for honouring the Roman governor M. Plancius Varus from Perge on behalf of Nicaea,⁴⁶ and later also on own initiative.⁴⁷ Christos identified himself as part of the Roman community showing his relation to the governor especially by honouring him on a private initiative. But his Roman identity was further indicated by his engagement in the imperial cult in the city, where he served as archpriest; a status recorded on his sarcophagus.⁴⁸ To the population in Nicaea, Christos was presumably still seen as a man with a solid Greek background, but out of his name and public appearance it was also obvious that Christos did identify himself as Roman and part of the Roman community. A similar example to Christos engagement in the imperial cult is found in Heraclea Pontica, where an imperial archpriestess of Antoninus Pius, Claudia Saturnina, was honoured on request of her father Claudius Domitius, and by decision of the city and the provincial council.⁴⁹ Claudius Domitius' status as a member of the Heracleian elite is illustrated by the fact that his daughter is said to have been wellborn (ευγενη).

The tendency to present women from Bithynian cities as Romans is illustrated further by the practice of giving female members of the family names of the *tria nomina* type. From Heraclea Pontica we know of a Tiberia Claudia Aureliana Archelais,⁵⁰ from Prusias ad Hypium an Ulpia Titia Fadilliane Artemonis⁵¹ and a Sexta Quinctia Tyrannis.⁵² These inscriptions are interesting because they show that the use of Roman names was more than just a pragmatic attempt within the political active elite to show their legal status as Romans for political reasons alone.⁵³ That women with no political opportunities indicates that the influence from Roman culture affected not only how the politically active part of the population chose to

⁴⁶ *IK* 9. 25-29.

⁴⁷ *IK* 9. 51.

⁴⁸ *IK* 9. 116.

⁴⁹ *IK* 47. 1.

⁵⁰ *IK* 47. 8.

⁵¹ *IK* 47. 54.

⁵² *IK* 9. 98. For further examples of women with name of the *tria nomina* type, see *IK* 47, 85: Aurelia Heraklidiane Domitia, and *IK* 47, 53: Calpurnia Domitia Markiane and Flavia Domitia Artemonis.

⁵³ Contra MacMullen 1990 pp. 59-61.

appear in public but also how the influence from Rome entered the private sphere of the Greek communities.

The question of whether Latinized names to the female part of the population was an attempt to make the family appear more Roman for political or pragmatic reasons mainly is a question that deserves more attention. It has often been argued that the population in the Greek provinces had a pragmatic relation to Roman culture and adopted elements from the Roman culture primarily to facilitate their everyday life without letting Roman culture influence their Greek identity.⁵⁴ If this is true that the Bithynian elite generally protected their Greek cultural heritage and used Latinized names mainly for political purposes, there would be no reason for daughters to appear publicly with Latin names or to be involved in for instance the imperial cult, which normally was reserved for males. Had it been highly prioritised to preserve a Greek cultural identity, it would be more natural if only males took Latinized names for political reasons, while women without any political opportunities were continuously raised within the Greek tradition. Such division between the public and private sphere would indicate that families in Bithynian and Pontic cities did relate to the political situation but at the same time conserved their pre Roman traditions as unchanged as possible.

This, however, was not the case. The local elite in Bithynia et Pontus gave their daughters Latin names but hardly as an attempt to flatter the Roman officials. Rome and Roman officials had a negligible interest in how the elections of magistrates in provincial cities were carried out. The use of Roman names for male and female members of the family as a way to archive larger political influence by flattering the Romans would have helped little in the local competition for political influence.

At the risk of concluding *ex silencio* it should be mentioned that in the letters between Pliny and Trajan, never treat the question of local candidates or elections in any detail. Only once in the interpretation of the Augustan edict regarding the minimum age for magistracies and admission to the city council, does Pliny mention that it would be preferable if the local elite was strongly represented in the city council and suggests that young magistrates *ex officio* should not be admitted to the

⁵⁴ MacMullen 1990 p. 60.

city council for life before they reach the previous minimum age of 30 years.⁵⁵ The preparation of laws and the list of candidates were in the hands of council members of local origin and a pragmatic appearance as Roman would be little helpful under such conditions, especially if we are to believe that reluctance towards Roman culture in the Greek population was large and clearly expressed.

Instead of seeing local imitations of Roman names as a pragmatic attempt to improve relations with Rome for political reasons only, the adoption of Roman names should be seen as an indication that being Roman was a matter of significant status in Bithynia et Pontus. The local population presented themselves as Romans not to impress Rome or Roman officials but to show their status in the local community. The importance of having a Latin name is further illustrated by the spread of Roman names to the part of the population that appeared without *tria nomina* and presumably therefore, as Domitius from Prusias ad Hypium, were not Roman citizens - for instance Paulinus son of Lucius and Sabinus son of Sabinus⁵⁶ both from Nicaea or Markianus son of Markus who appeared in a *phyle* inscription raised in honour of Cl. Tineius Asklepiodotos first archon in the city between 202-212 AD.⁵⁷ Despite the fact these individuals presumably had no Roman rights, names such as Lucius, Paulinus, Sabinus and Markus show that Roman names were widespread also in the part of the population that had no juridical reasons to appear as such.

Individuals, who in legal terms were not Roman but chose to appear with Roman names is a strong indication that Roman cultural influence in Bithynian cities was significant. But whether Markianus son of Markus identified himself or **was** identified as Roman is difficult to answer. Another reason why Roman names spread between the social levels of the city communities was also that the population outside the local elite imitated members of the local elite more than Roman officials in the province and that Roman appearance became related to power, influence, and social mobility.

The widespread interest in appearing Roman in the cities of Bithynia et Pontus illustrates that Roman identity was desirable and highly regarded by the local population in general. Apart from the legal and economic advantages attached to Roman rights, individuals with Roman citizenship were also a part of the dominating

⁵⁵ Pliny *EP.* 10.79.

⁵⁶ *IK* 9, 171; *IK* 9, 125.

⁵⁷ *IK* 27.1.

community. In practice Roman citizenship meant that members of the local elite were admitted to the ruling elite of the empire and moved from conquered and subjects into the imperial elite - without doubt a desirable social standing. Also for the part of the local population that had Roman rights but did not follow a career in the local or imperial administration, citizenship showed that one was part of the Roman community- which defined them as being on a higher social level than the rest of the local population and helped to developed a common people-hood that abolished discriminations and conflict over power related questions and created a common identity, at least from the assimilating parts point of view.

Being Roman in Bithynia et Pontus was not a question of ethnic relation. From the end of 1st century and the beginning of 2nd century Rome was in Bithynia et Pontus increasingly represented by governors of Greek origin e.g. M. Plancius Varus and Ti. Iulius Bassus both from Asia or C. Iulius Severus from Galatien.⁵⁸ That members of the local elite from Asia, Achaia and other Anatolian provinces represented Rome and thereby Roman rule in some of the most prestigious offices in the Roman administration lifted eventual ethnic reservation against being Roman. Roman identity was also in Bithynia et Pontus a social or political status and should be seen as long termed process, where first and foremost the local elite slowly was adopted into the political and administrative world of the Roman empire.

Already when Pompey organized Bithynia et Pontus as one province the politically active elite was favoured by the grant of life long membership of the city council- *ex officio*. The political elite, and later those with sufficient economic means, experienced special rights and higher social status in the local community- a social mobility provided entirely by the coming of Rome. The local elite in Bithynia et Pontus didn't obtain Roman citizenship with same velocity as their kinsmen in e.g. Gaul but their special political position gave a higher social status compared to the rest of the population.

A study of how Roman citizenship spread in the province of Asia has shown that Claudius was the first to provide citizenship to the local elite in great numbers and to extend citizenship to a group that previously was made up by royal families and client kings in Anatolia.⁵⁹ Claudius' policy was continued first by the Flavian

⁵⁸ Rémy 1988 pp. 27-29.

⁵⁹ Holtheide 1983 p. 56.

emperors, where the first members of the Bithynian and Pontic elite were elected to the senate. In the first half of the 2nd century Trajan and Hadrian continued in many ways what had been started in the 1st century and opened for a general admission of Greeks to the senate.

The 2nd century was further more a period of peace and stability in Asia Minor in general, where the cities in general experienced prosperous times. Greek culture was in the 2nd century highly respected by the imperial house and had a still more dominating role in the imperial administration. In Bithynia et Pontus this development is less clear compared to Asia but also here there were cities in the 2nd century that blossomed with new waterlines as in Nicaea, Nicomedia, and Sinope⁶⁰ and theatres as in Nicaea and Prusias ad Hypium. That Bithynia et Pontus was in a positive development is further indicated in the letters of Pliny, where construction of public buildings in different cities is often discussed with Trajan indicating further a high level of construction activity in the province.⁶¹

As Roman citizenship spread in Bithynia et Pontus, and were elected to the senate and obtained still more prestigious posts in the Roman administration being of Greek origin and being Roman within the elite was more the norm than the exception as indicated by the *phylai* inscriptions from Prusias ad Hypium.

Only in intellectual societies was this development seen different. Here the increasing influence from Roman culture was seen as cultural and moral decline—something the Greek population should be warned against before it was too late.

Intellectual resistance

The notion of a general and profound Greek resistance to Rome and Roman cultural identity is mainly based on the writings of authors from the Second Sophistic tradition e.g. Plutarch, Dion of Prusa and Philostratus, who has criticised the Roman presence in Greek communities and Greeks who involved themselves with the Romans and their culture. In his moral philosophic work *Moralia*, Plutarch criticises heavily members of the local elite in the Greek cities who involved themselves in the up keep of the empire by taking on political careers in ones own.⁶²

⁶⁰ IK.9.1; Pliny *EP.* 10.38. 10.90.

⁶¹ Pliny *EP.* 10.23; 10.39; 10.70.

⁶² Plutarch *Moralia*; *Precepts of Statecraft*; *On Tranquillity of Mind*; and *On exile*

In *Tranquillity of Mind* Plutarch discusses how to achieve inner peace and mentions that Bithynia and Galatia were provinces, where members of the local elite, unsatisfied with their social position in the local communities constantly aimed for more powerful appointments.⁶³ In *On Exile* he is less direct but regrets that approved and merited men chose to leave their hometowns on their own free will to follow personal ambitions in the imperial administration.⁶⁴ The most direct criticism of individuals is found in *Precepts of Statecraft*, he criticizes those who obtained appointments as procurators or governors for prestige and economic benefits only and thereby left the administrative need in their hometowns unattended.⁶⁵

Plutarch's negative view of Greek engagement in the Roman administration should be seen in light of his overall belief that Roman influence on life in the Greek cities was to be kept at an absolute minimum and his fear that Greeks interest in imperial careers would encourage the local elite to leave their hometowns and thereby create a administrative and political vacuum that would increase Rome's influence in the Greek cities.

Another cultural element from Rome that was criticised by Greek intellectuals was the competitions for honorific titles such as first city and mother city of the province. According to Dio from Prusa and Aelius Aristides this competition lead to unnecessary hostility (*stasis*) between Nicaea and Nicomedia in Bithynia and Pergamum, Smyrna, and Ephesus in the province of Asia⁶⁶ and they insisted that such titles did not offer each individual city more freedom. Dio goes even further and argues that only Rome would benefit from this kind of disagreement and use such disputes as a tool to control the province. Concordia, on the other hand, was desirable because union between the provincial cities would make them stand stronger when confronting Rome or in the prosecution of corruptive governors.⁶⁷ This criticism was aimed towards Greeks, who involved themselves with the Roman world and subjected themselves to Roman norms and values. The last point to be mentioned here is Philostratus' criticism of Greeks adopting Roman names, calling it unworthy to take

⁶³ Plutarch *Moralia* 470 B-D.

⁶⁴ Plutarch *Moralia* 605 B.

⁶⁵ Plutarch *Moralia* 814.

⁶⁶ Dio from Prusa *To Nicomedians on Concord* (or. 38); Aristides *To the Cities on Concord* Or. 22.

⁶⁷ Dio from Prusa *To Nicomedians on Concord* (or. 38).

another man's name without having his looks.⁶⁸ Philostratus was presumably aiming at the tradition of taking the emperor's *nomen gentile* when a man received citizenship in the imperial period.

The view sophistic writers had on Roman culture has often been taken as representative not only for the intellectual part of the Greek population but also for the Greek elite in general, and as a widespread attitude towards Rome and Roman cultural identity in the Greek provinces.⁶⁹ The epigraphic material from Bithynian however tells a different story of a local population eager to show their engagement in Roman politics and administration and that Roman names were widely used on all social levels.

The question of Greek competition for Roman honorific titles also seems to be dramatically overstated by the sophistic writers. This is particularly apparent in the case of the Bithynian cities that in the days of Dio had a reputation of getting their governors convicted for malpractice.⁷⁰ Especially the provincial council in Bithynia was well known for its solidarity and ability to stand together, a talent that made Trajan change the status of Bithynia et Pontus to an imperial province and send Pliny as *legatus*.

It is interesting to notice that when Dio, Plutarch, and Aristides reached out to the local population in the Bithynian communities, their criticism of Roman culture and Greeks who either identified themselves as Romans or engaged themselves in Roman institutions and administration was directed towards a large part of the population, where many not only were Roman citizens but also chose to present themselves and their family members as Roman in public. What the second sophistic writers did was to criticise the Greek population for abandoning their cultural inheritance in favour of Roman culture and instead of representing a general view on Rome or Roman culture in Bithynia et Pontus, intellectuals such as Plutarch, Dio, and Philostratus are to be regarded as critics of the general order of society.

Conclusion

The process of Romanization in Bithynia et Pontus was more than just a local elite's pragmatic attempt to imitate Roman culture for political reasons. It brought about a

⁶⁸ Philostratus, *Apollonius EP* 72. See also Goldhill p. 6.

⁶⁹ Swain 1996 p. 414.

⁷⁰ Pliny, *EP* 5.20.

change in the local identity and self understanding. As a direct response to the coming of Roman hegemony, members of the local elite involved themselves with the Roman world not simply to secure the best conditions possibly for their local community but increasingly to obtain a personal career in the imperial administration or ultimately in Rome as magistrates and pro-magistrates.

Roman names were widely used among a large part of the population, which strongly indicates the status attached to an appearance as Roman either with a *tria nomina*, showing the legal status as citizens, or a Latinized name for women or other individuals without Roman rights, showing that the family were or at least wanted to present it self as Roman and that Roman names was integrated in the way Greeks in Bithynia et Pontus chose to name their family members.

No doubt Greek culture continued to dominate cultural patterns in Bithynia et Pontus. Greek continued as the primary language, and Latin was mainly used in official inscriptions and even here often followed by a Greek translation. In the urban landscape, Greek public buildings were still the dominating architectural expression even though Roman building forms and architectural trends as well as technology did find its way into the urban structure of the Greek cities.

Members of the local elite, and the next layers of the population, whose epigraphic habits we know of, remained Greek in the ethnic sense of the word but identified themselves as Roman both politically and socially. After Roman citizenship had been widespread in Greek provinces and Greeks increasingly represented the Roman Empire in political and administrative posts it was unproblematic for the population in Bithynia et Pontus to identify themselves Romans. The cultural interaction between Rome and Greek communities was more than acculturation between the two cultures, where elements of Roman culture e.g. architectural forms and artefacts together with specific political or religiously institutions were introduced and adopted by the Greek population. Instead members of the provincial population, especially the local elite, in Bithynia et Pontus started to assimilate to the Roman way of life by adopting Roman traditions, participating in the imperial administration, and using Roman names and thereby identified themselves as Roman Greeks.

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