



## Summary :

By the 2nd century BC already Rome sought to win over the local Greek aristocracy, whose political ambitions were mainly expressed through the gaining of the state of Roman republic, considered the first stage in the process of province-creation in the East. The second stage of the integration of these citizens into the Roman political system was their acceptance into the class of the equites. With respect to the body of the senate, the standard Roman practice was that only distinguished members of the Greek aristocracy from the eastern provinces were accepted.

## Date

Roman period

## Geographical Location

Asia Minor

### 1. Patronage relationships (clientele)

During the period of the Republic, Rome always showed its goodwill towards the ruling class of the cities of Asia Minor, the Romanization of which was among the primary goals of its foreign policy. Already by the 2nd cent. BC, a period during which it begins interfering diplomatically in the affairs of the Hellenistic kingdoms, and more intensely after [Octavian's](#) victory at Actium in 31 BC, Rome, as the dominant power in the eastern Mediterranean, sought to win over the local Greek aristocracy, which was generally well-disposed towards Rome.

During the two centuries of the Roman Republic (2nd-1st cent. BC) a network of interpersonal relationships between the ruling class of Asia Minor and Roman patrons emerged, eventually leading to the creation of a patronage system. The local elites used these patronage relationships mainly to deal with the dysfunctionalities of the central administration, while the Roman patrons secured the loyalty and support of the country folk.<sup>1</sup>

Following the establishment of the Empire in 27 BC, Augustus recognized this international relations system as the institutional framework through which the process of province-creation in the East could be completed and the ideology of pax Augusta could be developed. In reality, Rome's dominance over Asia Minor largely depended on the ascent of its ruling class, which continued to manage the administration of the urban centres, as it did in the past. Realizing the important role that the Greek (or Hellenized) aristocracy would play as a regulator of political life in the East, the first Roman emperor not only opted to not curtail the functions of the local civic officials, but, on the contrary, he promoted various forms of local self-government, like, for example, the existence of [koina](#).<sup>2</sup>

### 2. Political authorities and benefactions

During the Roman period the higher civic offices were certainly targeted to dutiful citizens with administrative skills, but mainly to those who could afford spending money for the city. For this reason, in later periods, especially from the 4th cent. onwards with the gradual appearance of the first signs of institutional decline, election to the higher offices was no more considered an honour, but an obligation.

Depending on the occasion and the institutional framework in which they operated, benefactions to the city included donations or contributions of two kinds: those aimed at securing the election of some member of the local council to a position of authority (summa honoraria) and those carried out on the benefactor's initiative.<sup>3</sup> Although the larger building projects were usually undertaken by the city itself, in many cases the local officials funded the repair or decoration of public buildings: stadiums, [gymnasia](#), [theatres](#), temples, [prytaneia](#), aqueducts, fountains, roads, docks.<sup>4</sup> In periods of drought or of poor harvests, the [agoranomos](#), who was responsible for maintaining the city supplied with grain, was often called upon to cover the needs in foodstuffs out of his personal property. The



*agonothetai* and the *gymnasiarchai* personally undertook the organization of games, the most expensive of which were gladiatorial fights and beast-fights. On a provincial level, the high-priests and the *Asiarchai* (or Lyciarchai, Bithyniarchai etc.), who were responsible for the *Imperial cult* in the respective *koina* of Asia Minor, offered sacrifices and funded celebrations accompanied by symposia and public meals.<sup>5</sup> Notwithstanding the financial obligations, participation in the local council, and above all election to one of the civic offices offered prestige to the *honestiores or splendiores* and set them apart from the *humiliores*, i.e. persons originating from the lower social strata.<sup>6</sup>

Apart from the control of local self-governance and economy, the ruling class of Asia Minor undertook the representation of the cities and the *koina* vis-à-vis the authorities of provincial and central administration. For this reason, the nobility continued to receive training in oratory, not so much for making speeches in the local assemblies, but to be able to become worthy ambassadors of their city in Rome or in the Emperor's court. The movement of the Second Sophistic, which flowered especially in the populous free cities of Asia Minor, was more than a literary revival. It offered crucial intellectual equipment necessary to cultured aristocrats, so that they could report their compatriots' requests to the capital of the Roman state. The securing of important privileges for some cities (such titles as 'free', 'autonomous', 'holy', "*neokoroi*", which the eponymous archons hastened to announce on coinage) was often the outcome of such diplomatic missions.<sup>7</sup> The pecuniary benefits were also considerable. The orator *Polemon* requested of *Hadrian* a large sum for the erection of monuments in *Smyrna* and a few years later *Aelius Aristides* managed to secure a significant imperial donation towards the reconstruction of the city following the devastating earthquake of 178 AD.<sup>8</sup> Although the Greeks of the Roman period did not entertain the same ideals on civic autonomy and independence as their ancestors, hundreds of inscriptions testify to their patriotism and their concern for their paternal gods and their political institutions. By the late 1st cent. AD, but especially from the mid-2nd cent., the ruling class of Asia Minor had acquired a new political consciousness, correlating or even identifying their personal aspirations with the future of the Empire.<sup>9</sup>

### 3. Roman citizenship and social ascend

Apart from receiving local offices and offering benefactions to the city, the political aspirations of the Asia Minor ruling class was expressed mainly through the acquisition of Roman citizenship, which offered a foreigner the rights of a Roman citizen, afforded him prestige vis-à-vis his fellow citizens and paved the way for his family's social ascend. Most Greeks *equites* and *senatores* who had a brilliant career, receiving important posts in the provincial and military administration; these were the descendants of people who had been awarded Roman citizenship as early as the 1st century BC or the 1st cent. AD.

### 4. Equites

The acquisition of Roman citizenship by the inhabitants of the empire's eastern regions was considered the first step in the process of province-creation in the East. The second stage of the integration of these citizens into the Roman political system was their acceptance into the class of the equites.

At this point we should mention that the political aspirations of the Greeks differed substantially from those of the Roman colonists. Contrary to the latter, who formed their identity by imitating or wholly adopting the Roman system, several members of the local ruling class were not immediately interested in the privileges the dominant power had to offer, and for this reason a period of time was required for them to become informed of these and appreciate their importance. There were, however, certain eminent figures refusing to undertake the political responsibilities that came with the rank of the eques, like the orator *Aelius Aristides*.

*Theophanes* of *Lesbos* was among the first Greeks to receive Roman citizenship by *Pompey* in 62 BC. Many other aristocrats of Asia Minor followed his example, especially cultured persons who earned the affection of emperors, like the philosopher *Athenodorus* of *Tarsus*, a personal friend of Augustus. Many cases of social ascend are attributed precisely to the rapports developed with members of the imperial house, especially during *Hadrian's* reign, when the number of members of the equites class originating from the empire's eastern regions rose markedly.

Knowledge of Latin was not necessary for a local aristocrat to become accepted into the class of the equites, but it was certainly



indispensable in order to discharge an office, especially of an office in the judiciary or military, for throughout the Roman period, Latin remained the official language of the army and civil government. Most equites originating from Asia Minor carried only the title of *eques Romanus*, without receiving their respective duties.<sup>10</sup>

## 5. Senatores

The standard Roman practice was that only distinguished members of the Greek aristocracy of the eastern provinces were accepted in the *senatus* (senate). Depending on the geographical and social provenance, their election to this body occurred during three periods. During the reign of the Julii-Claudii (31 BC-68 AD) mainly wealthy Roman landlords of Asia Minor and [Pamphylia](#) and the descendants of the first veteran colonist became accepted; these had, however, already been fully integrated into the local aristocracy of their cities through intermarriages. During the period of the Flavii and Emperor [Trajan](#) (69-117 AD) many members of the Hellenistic royal families received the *latus clavus*, thanks to their noble descent, their wealth or as compensation for the loss of their kingdom: king (rex) Alexander was the son of King Tigranes VI of [Armenia](#) and a descendant of Herod the Great. From the late 2nd cent. onwards and during the 3rd cent. AD, many Greeks became accepted into the senate, some of which possessed high local offices (high-priests of the Imperial cult, Asiarchs etc.) and whose ancestors were already equites. Most of them had cultivated personal relationships with the emperor and descended from ancient, large Greek cities: [Pergamum](#), [Cyzicus](#), [Ephesus](#), [Alexandria](#), [Alexandria Troas](#), [Sardis](#), [Tralleis](#), [Aphrodisias](#), [Nicomedia](#), [Nicaea](#) a.o.<sup>11</sup>

By the 1st cent. AD the senators sent as governors to the East originated from the Greek-speaking populations, especially from Asia Minor. By studying their career (*cursus honorum*), as testified mainly in the honorary inscriptions dedicated to them by their compatriots, we can determine that they were usually the first among their family to become accepted in the senate and their position in that body was rather insignificant. For Rome, however, their appointment in the East was the best possible solution, for the Greek-speaking governors were well versed in the language and the customs of the region and had the support of a whole network of familial relations and clients. Generally speaking, the senators who originated from Asia Minor, as well as from the eastern provinces of the empires, usually rose to eminence in administrative rather than in military posts.<sup>12</sup>

- 
1. Badian, E., *Foreign Clientelae (264-70B.C.)* (Oxford 1958) passim.
  2. Macro, A.D., "The Cities of Asia Minor under the Roman Imperium", *ANRWII*, 7.2 (1980), pp. 658-697, esp. pp. 660-663. Although Rome in many cases favoured timocratic or oligarchic polities, we cannot discern any tendencies towards the Romanization of the Greek institutions. The inscriptions of the Roman period continue to mention the *boule* (council), the *bouleutes* and the *archons*, while the *ecclesia* continued to convene regularly.
  3. Macro, A.D., "The Cities of Asia Minor under the Roman Imperium", *ANRWII*, 7.2 (1980), pp. 658-697, esp. pp. 677-682 and 687-688; Cramme, S., *Die Bedeutung des Euergetismus für die Finanzierung städtischer Aufgaben in der Provinz Asia* (Köln 2001), pp. 41-49.
  4. In Miletus, Sardis and Aizanoi, the construction of many buildings is connected with the initiative of eminent local families, while in Didyma with the name of religious *archontes*. Cramme, S., *Die Bedeutung des Euergetismus für die Finanzierung städtischer Aufgaben in der Provinz Asia* (Köln 2001), pp. 85-270.
  5. Campanile, M.D., *I sacerdoti del koinon d'Asia (Isec. a.C.-IIIsec. d.C). Contributo allo studio della romanizzazione delle élites provinciali nell' Oriente greco* (Pisa 1994); Worle, M., *Stadt und Fest im kaiserzeitlichen Kleinasien. Studien zu einer agonistischen Stiftung aus Oinoanda* (München 1988). See also Veyne, P., *Le pain et le cirque. Sociologie historique d'un pluralisme politique* (Paris 1976) passim.
  6. Macro, A.D., "The Cities of Asia Minor under the Roman Imperium", *ANRWII*, 7.2 (1980), pp. 658-697 (esp. pp. 688-689).
  7. Swain, S., *Hellenism and Empire. Language, Classicism, and Power in the Greek World, AD 50-250* (Oxford 1996). The eponymous *archontes* -



political as well as religious officials- were responsible for the local mints; they regularly had their names inscribed on the coinage. All of these local *fasti*, constitute a typical example of the ruling class' self-promotion in Asia Minor during the Roman period. Harl, K.W., *Civic Coins and Civic Politics in the Roman East, A.D. 180-275* (Berkeley -Los Angeles - London 1987), pp.21-30.

8. Macro, A.D., "The Cities of Asia Minor under the Roman Imperium", *ANRW II*, 7.2 (1980), pp. 658-697, esp, pp. 692-694; Harl, K.W., *Civic Coins and Civic Politics in the Roman East, A.D. 180-275* (Berkeley – Los Angeles – London 1987).

9. In Plutarch we can see a typical example of the way in which a cultured Greek of that era dealt with the ascendancy of Rome. Swain, S., *Hellenism and Empire. Language, Classicism, and Power in the Greek World, AD 50-250* (Oxford 1996). Harl, K.W., *Civic Coins and Civic Politics in the Roman East, A.D. 180-275* (Berkeley -Los Angeles – London 1987), pp. 26-30.

10. Many of the Greeks who received offices worked in the service of the emperor, in charge of the Greek correspondence (*ab epistulis Graecis*). The majority of the eastern *equites* originated from cities of the province of Asia. Demougin, S., "L'ordre équestre en Asie Mineure. Histoire d'une romanisation", in Demougin, S. - Devijver, H. - Raepsaet-Charlier, M.-T. (eds.), *L'ordre équestre. Histoire d'une aristocratie* (iiie siècle av. J.-C.-iiiie siècle ap. J.-C.) (*Bruxelles-Leuven, 5-7 octobre 1995*) (Rome 1999), pp. 579-612, with a list of the equites of Asia Minor.

11. Based on the sources known to date, Q. Pompeius Macer from Mytilene was the first Greek senator to receive the office of *praetor* in 15 AD. Halfmann, H., *Die Senatoren aus dem östlichen Teil des Imperium Romanum bis zum Ende des 2. Jh. n. Chr.* (Göttingen 1979); Halfmann, H., "Die Senatoren aus den kleinasiatischen Provinzen des römischen Reiches vom 1. bis 3. Jahrhundert (Asia, Pontus-Bithynia, Lycia-Pamphylia, Galatia, Cappadocia, Cilicia)", in *Atti del Colloquio Internazionale su Epigrafia e Ordine Senatorio (=EOS, Roma 14-20 maggio 1981) II* (Roma 1982), pp. 603-650; Levick, B.M., *Roman Colonies in Southern Asia Minor* (Oxford 1967), *passim*.

12. Throughout the Imperial period more than one third of the senators who governed in the East originated from the Greek-speaking provinces. Rémy, B., *Les fastes sénatoriaux des provinces romaines d'Anatolie au Haut-Empire (31 av. J.-C.-284 ap. J.-C.): Pont-Bithynie, Galatie, Cappadoce, Lycie-Pamphylie et Cilicie* (Paris 1988), pp. 257-262, Swain, S., *Hellenism and Empire. Language, Classicism, and Power in the Greek World, AD 50-250* (Oxford 1996). 242-248.

---

### Bibliography :

	<b>Wörrle M.</b> , <i>Stadt und Fest im kaiserzeitlichen Kleinasien. Studien zu einer agonistischen Stiftung aus Oinoanda</i> , München 1988, Vestigia 39
	<b>Swain S.</b> , <i>Hellenism and Empire. Language, Classicism, and Power in the Greek World, AD 50-250</i> , Oxford 1996
	<b>Levick B.M.</b> , <i>Roman Colonies in Southern Asia Minor</i> , Oxford 1967
	<b>Macro A.D.</b> , "The Cities of Asia Minor under the Roman Imperium", Temporini, H. (ed.), <i>ANRW II</i> , 7.2, Berlin 1980, , 658-697
	<b>Campanile M.D.</b> , <i>I sacerdoti del koinon d'Asia (I sec. a.C.-III sec. d.C.). Contributo allo studio della romanizzazione delle élites provinciali nell'Oriente greco</i> , Pisa 1994, Studi Ellenistici 7
	<b>Harl K.W.</b> , <i>Civic Coins and Civic Politics in the Roman East, A.D. 180-275</i> , Berkeley – Los Angeles 1987
	<b>Badian E.</b> , <i>Foreign Clientelae (264-70 B.C.)</i> , Oxford 1958
	<b>Cramme S.</b> , <i>Die Bedeutung des Euergetismus für die Finanzierung städtischer Aufgaben in der Provinz Asia</i> , Köln 2001



	<b>Demougin S.</b> , "L'ordre équestre en Asie Mineure. Histoire d'une romanisation", Demougin, S., Devijver, H., Raepsaet-Charlier, M.-T. (επιμ.), <i>L'ordre équestre. Histoire d'une aristocratie, IIe siècle av. J.-C.-IIIe siècle ap. J.-C. (Bruxelles-Leuven, 5-7 octobre 1995)</i> , Rome 1999, 579-612
	<b>Halfmann H.</b> , <i>Die Senatoren aus dem östlichen Teil des Imperium Romanum bis zum Ende des 2. Jh. n. Chr.</i> , Göttingen 1979
	<b>Halfmann H.</b> , "Die Senatoren aus den kleinasiatischen Provinzen des römischen Reiches vom 1. bis 3. Jahrhundert (Asia, Pontus-Bithynia, Lycia-Pamphylia, Galatia, Cappadocia, Cilicia)", <i>Atti del Colloquio Internazionale su Epigrafia e Ordine Senatorio (=EOS, Roma 14-20 maggio 1981)</i> , II, Roma 1982, 603-650
	<b>Rémy B.</b> , <i>Les fastes sénatoriaux des provinces romaines d'Anatolie au Haut-Empire (31 av. J.-C.-284 ap. J.-C.) Pont-Bithynie, Galatie, Cappadoce, Lycie-Pamphylie et Cilicie</i> , Paris 1988
	<b>Veyne P.</b> , <i>Le pain et le cirque. Sociologie historique d'un pluralisme politique</i> , Paris 1976

Webliography :

	Political economy of the Roman Empire <a href="http://www.stanford.edu/group/sshi/Conferences/1999-2000/empires/hopkins.pdf">http://www.stanford.edu/group/sshi/Conferences/1999-2000/empires/hopkins.pdf</a>
--	--

Glossary :

	<b>agonothetes, the</b> Official assigned with the task of organising and hosting the contest in the framework of a contest.
	<b>agoranomos, the</b> Civil official responsible for the maintenance of the market and the price balance of foods.
	<b>equestrians, the (equites)</b> The lowest class of Roman aristocracy, whose economic wealth derived mainly from civil professions (bankers, publicans, merchants), yet without political privileges. The Roman Republican period was marked by their strives against the senators. The equestrians were won over mainly by leaders who desired to promote a monarchic type of government pushing aside the Senate.
	<b>gymnasiarch, the</b> The man responsible for the supervision of the youngsters and the adolescents who were trained at the gymnasia and at the palaestrae. This rank, widely diffused in all cities of the ancient Greek world, constituted a public office which was usually bestowed on the most eminent and rich citizens, since it required great expenses.
	<b>gymnasium</b> The gymnasium was one of the most important centres of public life in Greek cities. The institution of the gymnasium, directly connected with the development of the Greek city, aimed to create virtuous citizens and gallant warriors. As educational institutions of public character, the gymnasia were intended for the physical and theoretical education of the young and consisted of separate spaces for special purposes.
	<b>honestiores or splendiores, the (lat.)</b> Those coming from upper social strata. From the 2nd c. B.C. onward the class of the honestiores included the senators and their families, military officials and their children, as well as those who had been in public office and their children.
	<b>koinon, the</b> The term koinon pertains to every confederacy of ancient cities.
	<b>latus clavus, the (lat.)</b> Type of tunic with two wide vertical purple strips, worn by the senators.
	<b>prytaneion</b> Public building, in which the prytaneis of the city had common dinners, and where the official visitors and the honored



people were hosted.

**Roman-Asia Minor type of theatre, the**

The edifice of the theatre as it was formed during the Roman period in Asia Minor. It was a merge of the Greek and the Roman type, with koilon larger than the semi-circle and monumental mutli-storeyed scene, which often adjoined to the curve of the tiers and clogged the whole construction.

**senate, the**

The top political body of the Roman state. During the early Republic, it was represented by the council of the consuls, the top archons of the roman state. Later on, its power and responsibilities increased. As a result, it became the main governmental body of Rome. However, during the Imperial period, the responsibilities of the senate were restricted.

**senator, the (1. Roman, 2. Byzantine)**

1. A Roman body of men that originally advised the king and then the consuls; Heredity was not the only means of joining the senate and "new men" or *novi homines* could become part of it; Augustus revised the senate and left the body with less power and bolstered hereditary claims as a means to enter the senate; it continued to make laws and conferred powers on new emperors.

2. Member of the senate. The senate, a roman institution transferred from Rome to Constantinople by Constantine I during the Byzantine period was an advisory body whose rights and responsibilities were not clearly defined. It was consisted of imperial officers coming from the upper and were ranked according to hierarchical levels: *virii illustri* (perfectus praetoriae and the magister), *virii spectabili* (proconsul, vicarius and the comes), *virii clarissimi* (consul praetoriae) and *virii perfectissimi* (praeses and duces). Since the 6th c. AD a new title was established for the upper officers (*virii gloriosi*). The years that followed officials were entitled to officers regardless their position as senators or if they were about to be admitted to this body.