



Summary :

In the summer of 123 AD the Roman Emperor Hadrian travelled extensively in the Province of Asia for reasons of formality, as well as for his entertainment (hunting). He founded cities and received honours.

Date

123 AD

Geographical Location

Asia Minor

1. Hadrian: a restless emperor

Hadrian has been named by his recent biographer A. Birley 'the restless emperor' for good reason.¹ During his reign he travelled throughout the entire Roman Empire, reaching Newcastle in Britain, River Nile's valley and Bithynia. Quite often his journeys had military purposes. Moreover, they took place in the framework of the Roman administration, which defined that the emperor should wield the supreme judicial and administrative power at least in the provinces under his own jurisdiction and not of the senate. Hadrian would combine these obligations with religious or cultural aims. He constructed important public buildings, either functional or decorative, in the regions he visited, whereas he was beneficial in many ways to them. However, the two places he particularly loved during his travels were Athens, due to his classical education, and Asia Minor.

2. Bithynia

Hadrian visited the [Province of Asia](#) in the summer of 123 AD. As he had previously been in Thrace, it is assumed that he passed to Asia by crossing Bosphorus, arriving at [Proconnesus](#) first and then at [Cyzicus](#). The northern regions of Asia Minor, [Bithynia](#) in particular, had been hit by a strong earthquake. Thus, the comforting presence of the emperor expressed his encouragement as well. It was a factual answer to the pleadings of the Bithynian cities for the reduction of taxes and for the necessary funds to rebuilt whatever had been destroyed by the earthquake. The most important monument at Cyzicus was [the temple of Zeus](#), founded by the [Attalids](#) about three hundred years ago. The temple was never completed. Thus, Hadrian, not only did he provide the funds for repairing the damages by the earthquake, but also for the completion of the architectural plan and the decoration of the temple, which was even then considered as one of the wonders of the world.

Hadrian spent only few weeks at Cyzicus due to his demanding schedule. Nevertheless, during his stay, he actually saw the beginning of the restoration works, he named the city after him - which was since then also called "Hadrianeia"- and he honoured the city with the title of neokoros. The neighbouring cities of Apollonia and Miletropolis acclaimed Hadrian as saviour and founder. During the period of Hadrian's stay in Bithynia, Antinous, who became later the imperial favourite, joined his suite, although we do not know the exact conditions of his incorporation into the emperor's entourage. Antinous must have been between eleven and thirteen years old.

3. Troad

Then, the Roman colony [Parion](#), which had been founded by [Caesar](#), was refounded by Hadrian and was also named Hadriani.² Advancing towards the south, Hadrian came to [Alexandria Troas](#) and he established the city as a Roman colony (colonia). Combining his imperial duties with entertainment, he spent a few days hunting in the dense forests of Bithynia and he founded three new cities in a mountainous region: [Hadrianou Therai \(Balikesir\)](#), Hadriania (Balat), between the rivers Makestos and Ryndakos, and Hadrianous (Orhaneli), at the foot of the Bithynian Mount Olympus.³ Hadrian and his entourage then travelled towards the valley of the river Caicus, arriving at Stratoneia first, which was not a city yet. In return for the hunt he enjoyed in the region, the emperor proclaimed [Stratoneia](#) as a city, while the Stratoneians, in return for his benefaction, acclaimed Zeus Kynegesios founder of their



city, who was no other than the deified emperor himself.⁴

4. Pergamon

There is no information in literary sources about the visit of Hadrian to [Pergamon](#). However, the inscriptions and the renaming of temples in honour of the emperor certify that Hadrian inevitably had visited the centre of the Attalid kingdom. The temple dedicated to the cult of [Zeus Philios and Trajan](#) (98-117) was extended and it also housed an [oversized statue](#) of Hadrian, while the enormous complex of the [Asclepieion](#), which had remained semifinished since the Hellenistic years, was completed with the financing and the incitement from Hadrian, which was honoured with an inscription as the “most apparent god, new Asclepius”.⁵ The city became “twice neokoros”, a title much more honorary than the simple neokoria.⁶ Despite the honours, the emperor must have made a bad impression, since [Galen](#), son of the architect Aelius Nicon, whom the emperor had benefited, refers scarcely to Hadrian in his works and he describes rather unpleasant events.⁷

5. Sardis

Hadrian's next stop in Asia must have been [Sardis](#), perhaps after a brief visit in [Thyateira](#). The route the emperor followed towards his destination was probably through the valley of the river Hermus, passing from the [Lydian](#) city of Saittai, where monetary testimony certifies the presence of the emperor.⁸ Despite the rich epigraphical material from Sardis referring to Roman dignitaries, there is only one inscription which testifies the presence of the emperor there. It is noteworthy that this inscription is located outside the city, at the foot of Mount Tmolos, on the road to Smyrna,⁹ which Hadrian would take to reach his next destination.

6. Smyrna

Hadrian's benefactions to [Smyrna](#) exceeded all expectations. This could be explained by the presence of [Marcus Antonius Polemon](#) in the emperor's entourage. Polemon was a famous sophist from Laodicea but he lived and taught in Smyrna. Hadrian donated 10,000,000 drachmas to the city for the reconstruction of a grain market and a splendid gymnasium, as well as for repairs in the temple of Zeus, which was located at the end of the Smyrna bay. Radiant, coloured marbles were transported from the whole empire to decorate the new buildings for the embellishment of the city, which would acquire for a second time the title of neokoros. The honours bestowed by the city to Hadrian and Polemon, who had induced the imperial benefaction and had been appointed administrator of the bequeathed fund, were also unprecedented. The city was named Hadriani, the emperor was well attended so that he would spend the most beautiful days of his travel there and he was honoured as a god. Furthermore, an hymn was composed in his honour, which was sung by a chorus of 24 members and became an institution for the city ever since.¹⁰

7. Ephesus

Hadrian probably travelled from Smyrna to [Ephesus](#), the ‘first and greatest metropolis in Asia’, on a ship. It is almost certain that the emperor arrived at Ephesus on a ship, as the city established a [festival](#) in his honour, the Hadriani Epivatiria, to commemorate his arrival in the harbour.¹¹ It is certain that Hadrian was in Ephesus in August 124 AD. Five years later he paid an extraordinary visit to the city for a second time. The outcome of his two visits was several monuments and benefactions, even though it is difficult to distinguish between those from his visit in 124 and those from 129 AD. Nevertheless, Hadrian must have received many honours by the numerous Roman families who lived there, either due to their commercial activities or due to the banishment of the older generations. When Hadrian visited the city, the famous library donated to the Ephesians by Polemaenus the younger in memory of his father Celsus was being built. Nevertheless, the title ‘twice neokoros’ was not given to Ephesus until Hadrian's second visit to the city.

8. Evaluation of Hadrian's journey

Hadrian's journey to Asia Minor in the summer of 123 AD was foremost of a ceremonial-administrative character. It was Hadrian's



responsibility to familiarise himself with the most important cities of his state, to confer benefactions and to accept honours from them. A direct relationship of loyalty between the city and the emperor was established in this way. Moreover, Hadrian, who was particularly interested in classical letters and philosophy, wanted to visit some of the most important cities for the flourishing of arts and letters and breath the cultural air of Asia. Finally, the journey to a region with extremely dense vegetation and natural beauty was a fine opportunity to practise his favourite - and imperative on the emperors - sport, that is to say hunting. Moreover, he had the chance to visit remote and mountainous regions and create there centres of culture by founding cities and settlements, thus reinforcing even further the Roman presence in the East.

1. Birley, A.R., *Hadrian, the restless emperor* (London-New York 1997).
2. For the reestablishment of Parion cf. *CIL* III, 374.
3. Information about this journey, as well as about an attempt against the emperor's life, is provided by Marcus Antonius Polemon in *De Physiognomia* 148.
4. It seems that the house of a certain Tiberius Claudius Socrates, who provided accommodation for the emperor, became a monument in the city and four years after Hadrian's visit the citizens sent a letter to the emperor to require funds for the restoration of the edifice, so that his presence there would be commemorated. See Oliver, J.H., *Greek Constitutions of Early Roman Emperors from Inscriptions and Papyri* (Philadelphia 1989), n. 79. For the assimilation of Hadrian with Zeus Kynegios cf. Robert, L., *Documents d'Asie Mineure* (Paris 1987), pp. 133 ff.
5. Cf. *IGR* IV, 351.
6. About the institution of neokoria and specifically Pergamon cf. Price, S., *Rituals and Power* (Cambridge 1984), pp. 252 ff.
7. The most distinctive example is that he injured a slave's eye with a pen and the man lost his sight.
8. Cf. Weiss, P., 'Hadrian in Lykien', *Chiron* 25 (1995), pp. 213-214 for the coin which depicts Hadrian shaking hands with the personification of the city .
9. The inscription records Hadrian with his spouse Sabina, which had led the epigraphist to believe that the empress was escorting him, at least at this phase of the journey. Cf. Weber, W., *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Kaisers Hadrianus* (Leipzig 1907), p. 217.
10. Cf. *IGR* V 1398, 1413.
11. It is assumed that prior to his arrival to Ephesus, Hadrian stayed at two more cities, Erythrae and Teos or Notion, the seaport of Colophon. The oracle of Apollo Clarius was located in the region of Colophon, which was undoubtedly one of the most important sights and sacred places in Antiquity, although the credibility of the oracles and the education of the priests were not of the highest standards already in the 1st cent. AD. Cf. Robert, J. and L., *Bull. Ep.* (1962), p. 199, where there is an indirect reference to a colossal statue of Hadrian from Clarus with an inscription. The statue was in situ until 1990.

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Glossary :

	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.	