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Privatizing Power in the Late Roman Republic: The Case of L. Licinius Lucullus

Alyson Roy

Abstract: The late Roman Republic witnessed the consolidation of power in the hands of individual aristocrats. Simultaneously, wealthy Roman elites increasingly conveyed social status through domestic spectacle – that is, the decoration, aesthetics, and entertainment functions within their homes and villas. These two developments were explicitly linked. As traditional paths to power became less accessible, Roman elites frequently enhanced their power through alternative means. Domestic spectacle offered potent opportunities both for solidifying electoral support and for forming, and maintaining, political relationships. Using L. Licinius Lucullus (cos. 74 BCE) as a case study, this paper traces how private display and conspicuous consumption became integral to elite identity, offering complementary paths to power that ultimately broadened access to political authority.

Keywords: consumerism; prestige; villas; banquets; cultural capital; conspicuous consumption

In his description of Marcellus' ovation of 211 BCE, the Roman historian Livy identified three important elements of a process that came to define elite Roman prestige in the late Republican period (c.100-44 BCE): the seizure of luxury goods during conquest, the parading of war booty in the city of Rome, and the public display of those spoils within the city.¹ The catalyst for this process was the triumphal parade, a ritual procession granted to a conquering general at the behest of the Senate.² The triumphal parade lauded a general's military achievements and garnered him significant social capital. Its ability to enhance social status made it a foundational element of elite self-representation dating back to at least the fourth century BCE.

The allure of the triumph was undeniable, but by the second century BCE, Roman elites faced a problem: the more they conquered, the more opportunities there were for triumphs, which diluted the cultural capital of any individual parade.³ The influx of Hellenistic booty in the second century BCE in particular saturated the triumphal "market" and yielded a shift in how elite Romans visually conveyed their prestige.⁴ As both ancient and modern writers have noted, Rome's Hellenistic wars introduced a thirst for art among Roman elites and

¹ Livy 25.40.1; 26.21.6-9.

² That Marcellus' parade was not a triumph, but rather the lesser honor of an ovation, is particularly interesting in light of the increasing shift toward domestic spectacle as a source of prestige, in that Marcellus, denied a triumph, held a full, unofficial, triumph on the Alban Mount the day before his ovation and was purportedly the first to decorate his home with some of his plunder (Livy 26.21.6). See also Welch 2006.

³ For more on the expected qualifications for a triumph, see Lundgreen 2014.

⁴ Welch (2006) rooted the development of a "booty" mentality in the second century BCE.

fundamentally changed Roman iconography.⁵ As art and display became a source of prestige, the performance of elite power expanded to include the domestic sphere, where the display of luxury materials became its own form of cultural capital.

The marriage of elite self-expression and domestic display helped privatize triumphal prestige. Commissioning or owning conquest imagery could substitute for the triumph as an expression of social achievement, making wealth an important foundation for the performance of power. This shift provided both a potential solution to the social pressures facing Roman elites in the second and first centuries BCE to achieve political advancement, and yet also created further difficulties.

Once conquest became commodified, elites were no longer restricted by the geographic and class limitations that the triumph once imposed. As expressions of power became rooted in wealth and display, Roman style cultural capital became accessible including to elites outside Italy, for whom office-holding in Rome was not a feasible option for denoting status.⁶ The intense wave of monumental self-expression that spread across the empire in the first centuries BCE and CE stemmed in part from the growing commensuration between prestige and conspicuous consumption.⁷ As such, private display became another integral element of elite identity, offering divergent paths up the *cursus honorum* that ultimately broadened access to political authority.

Conspicuous consumption was not, however, a new or even purely Roman form of self-expression. Many Mediterranean elite cultures revolved around various forms of ostentatious display, from banqueting to funerary rites to community rituals to monumental architecture.⁹ Consequently, connoisseurship – namely, the purposeful consumption and display of luxury objects to convey wealth, aesthetic taste, and cultural knowledge – created a shared language of power.¹⁰ Indeed, the shared nature of this visual language was a critical element of its effectiveness, because it made the products widely legible to elite, as well as non-elite, viewers.¹¹

Once connoisseurship could garner prestige, elite identity increasingly centered on the ability to express social distinction through one's collecting habits and aesthetic tastes. Yet, the commodification of prestige also contributed to the problems Roman elites faced in distinguishing themselves from their peers. Roman political culture became a fraught competitive landscape in the second and first centuries BCE. As many scholars have noted, the constraints of Roman cultural values such as the *mos maiorum* placed significant pressure on elite

⁵ See Welch 2006 on war booty; Hölscher 2018 on Roman visual culture; Evans 2011 and Bounia 2004 on collecting.

⁶ The triumph could only legally take place within the city of Rome and only magistrates with *imperium* qualified. For more on the rituals and qualifications for the triumph, see contributors to Lange and Vervaeke 2014.

⁷ Wallace-Hadrill 2008: 73-143.

⁹ For more on consumerism in the ancient world, see Walsh 2014. Funerary archaeology has also revealed a lot about dining as an elite social behavior. See for example Draycott and Stamatopoulou 2016. Food and other ephemeral luxuries also reflected one's social identity; see Dalby 2000.

¹⁰ For more on the origins of the visual language of power, see Loar et al. 2018, especially the introduction and the chapter by MacDonald.

¹¹ Tronchin (2012: 267) stated: "Patrons and visitors alike needed to be fluent in the same visual language, one that spoke to the multifaceted ideals of Roman elite identity."

males not only to reach the consulship but also to do so in a way that allowed them to surpass the achievements of both their ancestors and their peers.¹³ As such, it encouraged increasingly extreme measures to achieve recognition, since that recognition needed to be public.¹⁴ Private display offered a means of enhancing one's political and social reputation outside of martial achievement, and drew political power further into the domestic sphere.¹⁵ This is not to say that collecting replaced traditional methods of performing political power; rather, it was incorporated into political culture as an additional means of earning, maintaining, and projecting power.

The integration of conspicuous consumption into elite identity is not a new field of inquiry. Two of the most frequently cited case studies are Cicero and Verres, yet it is necessary to look beyond those two case studies to other actors in order to assess how connoisseurship became first a supplement for other expressions of political power, and then ultimately a major source of cultural capital. In particular, I argue that L. Licinius Lucullus (cos. 74 BCE) deserves far greater attention in any study of how prestige-display came in the late Republic to include conspicuous consumption.¹⁶

Lucullus' oft-rebuked luxury indulgences were more than mere extravagance, however; rather, they were a performance of his political power and connections. Lucullus' methods reflect the increasing extension of political boundaries into the home. As Cristina Rosillo-López and others have noted, Roman elites relied on dinner parties for political networking and conversations.¹⁷ Yet, the harsh criticisms leveled at Lucullus, Verres, and others over their lavish tables indicates that these dinner parties frequently became a visual performance as well, through the display of luxury materials, many of which had been plundered.¹⁸ Lucullus and his peers contributed to the development of a display-based elite culture that transcended the traditional elite identity that was tied to office-holding and triumph hunting. By decentralizing military prowess as a requirement for social advancement, this new display-based elite culture further incorporated elites across the empire.

The Domestic Turn: Situating Prestige within the Domus

Rome's prestige economy has long been a subject of scholarly interest. From the second-century

¹³ For more on the cultural pressures of *mos maiorum*, see Flower 1996 and 2006.

¹⁴ Including, for example, the extrajudicial massacre of conquered peoples, such as that perpetrated by L. Licinius Lucullus (cos. 151) on the town of Cauca in 151 (App. *Ib.* 51-55; 59-60). The intricacies of Roman aristocratic competition and the relationship between military success, political power, and prestige have been explored from numerous angles in recent years. For martial elements, see Rosenstein 1990; Pittenger 2009. For non-martial approaches to public power, see Rosillo-López 2017; Steel and van der Blom 2013.

¹⁵ Tronchin (2012: 280, fn. 28) referred, for example, to the connoisseur as a "domestic triumphator."

¹⁶ For Lucullus, see RE Licinius 104.

¹⁷ Rosillo-López 2022: 39. See also Pina Polo (2023) on how villas became information hubs.

¹⁸ For example: Cic. *Verr.* 2.1.19.49-50; *Verr.* 2.4.26.62-63; *Verr.* 2.1.26.65-67. The sumptuary law limiting dinner party extravagance, and its subsequent repeal, also reflect the increasing frequency of dinner parties, and the luxury goods associated with it, as a source of prestige-display (FRL 68).

“booty mentality” and its influence on domestic display to connoisseurship, the prevailing scholarly theme has been that Roman collecting habits were fueled by aristocratic competition and the influx of foreign luxury goods into Rome via conquest.¹⁹ These two elements, as noted above, at times worked against each other, creating additional pressures on individual Roman elites who wanted to achieve recognition. I do not challenge this theme; rather, I want to build upon this excellent work in a narrower case study to examine how material culture could function as an alternative expression of power, one that could even challenge existing social expectations for elite behavior. The career of L. Licinius Lucullus is often invoked in discussing how domestic display ran afoul of normative elite social behavior. Yet, by examining Lucullus’ career and private life, and particularly the moralizing critiques of his famed retirement, within the context of a display-based elite culture, it becomes clear that Lucullus was one of those at the forefront of a remarkable shift in social practices among Roman elites.

Analysis of the privatization of prestige rests on a few key scholarly questions. First and foremost is the question of how plunder was transferred from public spaces – encapsulated by the ephemeral triumphal parade and the erection of monumental architecture – into the private sphere.²⁰ Thanks to the work of Katherine Welch, it is generally accepted that the political and military realities of the second-century BCE centralized spoliated decoration as a key element in an elite man’s projection of political power.²¹ Intertwined with this issue is the question of the social role that domestic space played in elite Roman life. As Shelley Hales and others have demonstrated, the *domus* played an active role in elite life, projecting status in multifaceted ways.²² The importance of the home as a platform for political power is evident in the numerous references to elite dinner parties sprinkled throughout Cicero’s letters, as well as in the growing size and elaboration of these elite homes in the late Republic.²³

While such questions focus mainly on the social and political aspects of domestic display, one cannot ignore the economic component.²⁴ Rome was a culture of appropriation driven by demand for both the seizure and the production of luxury goods.²⁵ The desire for foreign luxuries in the late Republic and early Empire was unprecedented, and the increasing complexity and eclecticism of domestic space underscores how rapidly the social role of domestic consumption was changing.²⁶ These changes encouraged the conspicuous display of wealth and power,

¹⁹ For the booty mentality, see Welch 2006. For collecting and connoisseurship, see Carey 2003; Bounia 2004; Rutledge 2012. For the role of luxury in connoisseurship, see Wallace-Hadrill 2008; Dalby 2000.

²⁰ As many scholars have noted, there was no hard and fast division between public and private in Roman culture. For more on this, see Wallace-Hadrill 1994 and Hales 2003.

²¹ Welch 2006.

²² Hales 2003; Tronchin (2012: 279) argued that “domestic ensembles” served as a form of autobiography for the collector. Similarly, Guy Métraux argued that houses were “active environments” (1999: 396). See also Hales 2000: 44; Pina Polo 2023; Rosillo-López 2022.

²³ For example: Cic. *De Fat.* Frag. 4; Att. 9.1.3, 13.37.2; Cic. *Ad Am.* 9.20.2, among others. The *domus* of M. Aemilius Scaurus, for example, reportedly could hold 2,000 people (Métraux 1999: 395).

²⁴ Such rapid changes necessitated the movement of artisans and specialists, many of whom came from conquered territories, throughout the empire. Flohr stressed that the demand for art “facilitated the emergence of a substantial supply economy” that provided a living for artistic specialists (2019: 101).

²⁵ Loar et al. 2018.

²⁶ Flohr 2019: 101-103; Tronchin 2012.

particularly in the form of acquiring luxury goods and hosting parties and feasts at which to exhibit one's wealth.²⁷ Such rapid changes also spawned social critique, and much of our evidence for luxury consumption in fact comes from Roman authors lamenting the extravagant prices laid down for luxury objects.²⁸ Pliny the Elder, for example called out individual Romans whom he felt overspent on luxury goods simply to advertise their wealth and taste.²⁹

These critiques indicate that aggressive appropriation was not uncommon.³⁰ Gaius Verres' obsessive focus on collecting, to the point of coercing locals to acquire desired pieces, was an extreme example of the growing elite trend toward collecting and displaying luxury items that referenced those that entered the city via the triumphal parade.³¹ In a similar vein, Plutarch stressed that many of those killed during Sulla's proscriptions died for their property, which included their art:

Only a tiny portion of the dead were killed because they had angered or made an enemy of someone; far more were killed for their property, and even the executioners tended to say that this man was killed by his large house, this one by his garden, that one by his warm springs. Quintus Aurelius, a man who had never played any part in public life, thought that the sympathy he felt for others' misfortunes would be the only effect the troubles would have on him. One day he went to the forum and read the list of proscribed men. Finding his own name there, he said, 'Alas, I am undone! My Alban estate wants to see me dead.'

ἦσαν δὲ οἱ δι' ὀργὴν ἀπολλύμενοι καὶ δι' ἔχθραν οὐδὲν μέρος τῶν διὰ χρήματα σφαττομένων, ἀλλὰ καὶ λέγειν ἐπῆει τοῖς κολάζουσιν ὡς τόνδε μὲν ἀνήρηκεν οἰκία μεγάλη, τόνδε δὲ κῆπος, ἄλλον ὕδατα θερμά. Κόϊντος δὲ Αὐρήλιος, ἀνὴρ ἀπράγμων καὶ τοσοῦτον αὐτῷ μετεῖναι τῶν κακῶν νομίζων ὅσον ἄλλοις συναλγεῖν ἀτυχοῦσιν, εἰς ἀγορὰν ἐλθὼν ἀνεγίνωσκε τοὺς προγεγραμμένους εὐρὼν δὲ ἑαυτόν, "Οἷμοι τάλας," εἶπε, "διώκει με τὸ ἐν Ἀλβανῷ χωρίον." καὶ βραχὺ προελθὼν ὑπὸ τινος ἀπεσφάγη καταδιώξαντος.³²

Verres would himself ultimately fall victim to the extremes of connoisseurship. Marc Antony proscribed Verres and then tracked him down in Massalia (Marseilles) to get his hands on Verres' Corinthian bronzes.³³ Roman literary discourse on luxury consumption emphasized

²⁷ Dalby 2000.

²⁸ See Wallace-Hadrill 2008: 315-355.

²⁹ Examples: C. Gracchus purchased two silver dolphin figurines for 5,000 sesterces (Pliny *HN* 33.147). L. Crassus purchased a pair of chased silver goblets by the artist Mentor for 100,000 sesterces (*HN* 33.147) and purchased other vessels for 6,000 sesterces per pound (*HN* 33.147). The heirs of L. Crassus sold bronze dinner couches (*HN* 34.8), suggesting that he had likely purchased some at an earlier date. P. Lentulus Spinther owned onyx wine jars, though it is unclear if he purchased or looted them (*HN* 36.12). Varro owned a marble group of winged Cupids playing with a lioness by Arcesilaus (*HN* 36.4). Caesar purchased a pearl for Servilia (Suet. *Caes.* 50.2). See also Rutledge 2012: 57-8.

³⁰ Miles 2008: 105-151.

³¹ See fn. 17. For more on Verres and Cicero's prosecution of him, see Miles 2008: 105-151.

³² Plut. *Sulla* 31.5-6, translated by Robin Waterfield. Sallust also noted that some proscriptions targeted people for their wealth (*Hist.* 1.55(48) 9-11, 14-15).

³³ Pliny *HN* 34.6. Verres purportedly refused to hand over his bronzes, so Antony had one of his agents send Verres some poison in Antony's most expensive myrrhine cup. Verres drank the poison and then smashed the cup

the symbolic association with conquest inherent in these displays, underscoring that owning objects that evoked or mimicked triumphal plunder held greater social capital than ordinary prestige goods.³⁴

The popularity and utility of luxury goods drove elite Romans both to purchase and sometimes also loot Hellenistic art and luxury goods to decorate their homes. Although, after Cicero's vehement attacks on Verres' acquisitory excesses, overt interest in acquiring authentic Greek statues became problematic and connoisseurship shifted to other modes of expression.³⁵ Verres' collecting interests served as a cautionary tale rather than a successful advertisement of how art could be deployed to augment a political reputation. Unlike Verres or Cicero, who focused on collecting specific objects, Lucullus demonstrated how domestic display more broadly – from the design of one's house and gardens to the objects housed therein – could safely evoke one's status. Despite the moralizing attacks against Lucullus' behavior, he demonstrated the remarkable potential of domestic life as a source of not only social, but also political capital.

Today Lucullus Dines with Lucullus: The Career and Collection of L. Licinius Lucullus

Due in part to the rhetorical evidence from Cicero, scholars have argued that in the decades after Verres' downfall, Roman elites shifted their focus from the appropriation of Greek statuary to other forms of conspicuous consumption.³⁶ L. Licinius Lucullus and his contemporary, Q. Hortensius, have served as the main examples of this shift.³⁷ Yet, the contemporary accusations that Lucullus was more a connoisseur of pleasure and a gastronome obscure the fact that through his homes, Lucullus was crafting a subtle and ongoing performance of his triumph, marrying military and political prestige with domestic cultural capital. To illustrate this, we must examine his career and the accusations leveled against him against the backdrop of the dramatic changes – and the fear they invoked – to elite social practices in the first century BCE.

L. Licinius Lucullus was an *optimates* from a distinguished Roman family. His grandfather was consul in 151, and his father reached the praetorship. Through his mother, he was related to the powerful Metelli, including the pontifex maximus Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius, and through his own two marriages, he deepened his aristocratic connections.³⁸ Through his brother Marcus

(Pliny *HN* 34.6). Petronius' *Satyricon*, while a much later example, mocks the obsession with collecting luxury goods by having his nouveau-riche characters collect whatever they can. Petronius himself collected bowls and drinking cups and fell victim to Nero's desire for one of his myrrhine bowls; he met the same fate as Verres and likewise destroyed the bowl to spite Nero (Pliny *HN* 37.20).

³⁴ Velleius Paterculus and Pliny the Elder noted the relationship between public display, private collecting, and the triumph. Velleius Paterculus noted the triumphal connotations of importing marble for use in private homes (1.11.5), while Pliny the Elder associated new fashions with particular triumphs (ex: *HN* 34.8.14).

³⁵ Miles 2008: 218-19. Miles argued that the private collecting of antique statues waned in the decades after Verres' trial and did not become popular again until the late first century CE.

³⁶ Miles 2008: 218-226.

³⁷ We have reproving descriptions of the private collections of L. Lucullus (Varro, *Rust.* 1.2.10; Pliny *HN* 34.36; Plut. *Luc.* 39.2), Q. Hortensius (Pliny *HN* 35.130, 34.48), and M. Terentius Varro (Pliny *HN* 36.41), for example.

³⁸ Although his marriage to Clodia, the youngest of the daughters of Ap. Claudius Pulcher, brought unwanted notoriety and led to divorce (Plut. *Luc.* 34.1; 28.1). On the identification of Clodia, see McDermott 1970.

Terentius Varro Lucullus' adoption, Lucius Lucullus was also related to the family of M. Terentius Varro.³⁹ Lucullus' initial career followed traditional paths. He began a successful military career during the Social War and quickly linked his career to that of L. Cornelius Sulla, to whom he was also connected via marriage.⁴⁰ This proved a fruitful relationship for Lucullus, whose loyalty as the only officer to support Lucullus' march on Rome in 88 BCE led him as proquaestor to head diplomatic missions on Sulla's behalf, collect resources, and mint money.⁴¹ Perhaps most famously, as consul in 74, Lucullus marched through Cappadocia to invade Armenia, which was against accepted procedure since he left his province, where he achieved a significant victory at Tigranocerta that soured opinions on him back at home.⁴² Hoping to build off that victory, Lucullus returned to Rome in 66 to request a triumph.

Like most elites of his generation, Lucullus was expected to achieve distinction through his military career, particularly if he hoped to advance politically. Upon returning home, he found his request for a triumph and his organization of Asia blocked by political enemies, and, ultimately, his career stalled in the 60s just as his rival Pompey was ascendant.⁴³ At this point, Roman sources dismissed Lucullus as a man who turned to self-indulgence, abandoning his duties and career.⁴⁴ Modern historiography until recent years, with the notable exception of Arthur Keaveney, followed this rhetorical critique. As Ernst Badian stated in his *OCD* entry for Lucullus: "He now concentrated on living in refined luxury, but lapsed into insanity before his death.... [He] lacked the easy demagoguery that was needed for success in both war and politics in his day."⁴⁵ This dismissive summation encapsulates the prevailing attitude toward Lucullus' later career among his detractors.

Ancient Roman writers such as Plutarch and Cicero read Lucullus' retirement as a lapse into narcissistic self-indulgence. Scholarship has often situated the moral judgements on luxury within the context of Roman anxiety over Hellenistic cultural influence.⁴⁶ Plutarch, on the other hand, attributed Lucullus' extravagance not to his famed Hellenism, but rather more broadly to the decadence of the East, to which Lucullus' military exploits had introduced him.⁴⁷ Similarly,

³⁹ Marcus reached the consulship in 73 and as governor of Macedonia earned a triumph in 71 (MRR II 109; RE Licinius 109; Strabo 7.6.1; Plin. *HN* 4.92; 34.38). Lucius preceded his brother to the consulship, reaching it in 74 BCE. See also Pina Polo and Díaz Fernández 2019: 274-5. Lucius served as quaestor in 87 (Pina Polo and Díaz Fernández 2019: 274-75), and as praetor in Africa in 77 (Díaz Fernández 2015: 408-409; Brennan 2000: 544-545).

⁴⁰ Sulla's wife Caecilia was Lucullus' cousin (her father was L. Caecilius Metellus Dalmaticus).

⁴¹ Thonemann (2004) persuasively argued to date Lucullus' quaestorship in 87 BCE, based on the inscriptions honoring Lucullus' proquaestorship, which date to 96 (*IG* 9.2.38, 12.1.48; see also Pina Polo and Díaz Fernández 2019: 167). For Lucullus being the only officer (quaestor) to support Sulla, see Sumner 1973: 178.

⁴² The actions and career of his brother-in-law, P. Clodius Pulcher, further undermined Lucullus' reputation. For more on the vagaries of Lucullus' career, see Keaveney 1992.

⁴³ *Triumph ex Ponto de rege Mithridate et ex Armenia de rege Tigrane*. MRR II.169, Itgenshorst no. 256, Rich no. 256.

⁴⁴ Keaveney (1992: 143-165) sought to redress the general assumption that Lucullus was no longer active in public life upon his retirement and proposed that Lucullus' investment in his villas was more a reflection of aesthetic interests than decadence.

⁴⁵ *OCD* "Lucullus."

⁴⁶ See for example Gruen 1992.

⁴⁷ Tröster 2008: 27.

Cicero nicknamed Lucullus and his peers “Tritons of the fish-ponds,” or *piscinarii* (fish-fanciers), drawing attention to his Eastern influences.⁴⁸ While much of the extant evidence about Lucullus’ career is, thanks to Plutarch, cast in the light of a slow slide into decadence, reading between the lines of Plutarch’s narrative suggests that Lucullus’ actions, particularly in retirement, were not so much a rejection of duty and a turn toward excessive self-indulgence, but rather the transfer of his political interests from public activity to domestic spectacle.⁴⁹

Plutarch associated the purported shift in Lucullus’ character from admirable phil-Hellene to indulgent Eastern profligate to Lucullus’ return from the Mithridatic Wars, implying that the forced leisure of waiting three years for the Senate to vote him a triumph played a significant role in his behavior.⁵⁰ Yet, underneath the accusations that Lucullus abandoned his political duties when he chose luxury and retirement over an active political life, it is clear that Plutarch read Lucullus’ descent into barbarism as connected, at least in part, to his conquest of Tigranocerta.⁵¹ We can see threads of this influence throughout Lucullus’ post-retirement behavior that indicate the impact of his experiences in the East, but this was about more than simply embracing Hellenistic-Persian styles, particularly considering the dubious reception such influences had.

Like many of his wealthy contemporaries, Lucullus owned multiple homes, some of which he paid for out of the spoils from his Armenian campaign.⁵² We know, for example, that he purchased a hilltop villa at Cape Misenum from Sulla’s daughter Cornelia, but that he also owned at least three other villas, including the famous villa on the Pincian hill just outside Rome and his villa near Tusculum.⁵³ Plutarch explicitly linked Lucullus’ extravagant architectural designs to the East. Plutarch described the chambers and galleries of Lucullus’ villa which overlooked the sea, built from his Armenian spoils, and decorated lavishly with porticoes, paths, paintings, sculptures, curiosities, and much more.⁵⁴ Of Lucullus’ famous fishponds, Plutarch proclaimed that when the stoic Tubero saw them, he dubbed Lucullus “Xerxes in a toga,” due to the visual connection between Lucullus’ canal and the isthmus cut by Xerxes.⁵⁵ Part of Plutarch’s critique of Lucullus’ extravagance connected back to the accusations leveled against Lucullus by his mutinying soldiers. By claiming that Lucullus spent all the wealth he garnered from his eastern

⁴⁸ Miles 2008: 221.

⁴⁹ Keaveney, for example, broke down several of the more fanciful slights against Lucullus, such as that he dined like a satrap, which Keaveney suggested referred to Lucullus’ penchant for covering his couches in purple (1992: 145).

⁵⁰ Plut. *Luc.* 38.

⁵¹ Plut. *Luc.* 29.6. Plutarch repeatedly references the various spoils and luxuries that Lucullus encountered both on his travels through the East, such as in Alexandra (*Luc.* 2), and particularly as he pursued Mithridates and Tigranes. The implied shift in behavior after Lucullus’ Armenian campaign is further underscored by Lucullus’ reported frugality while on campaign, which led to some of his soldiers mutinying because they felt they were not receiving enough spoils (Plut. *Luc.* 35).

⁵² Plut. *Luc.* 39. For example, when he garnered six thousand prisoners and substantial spoils when he captured Mytilene; he likely sold these ‘assets,’ because we know he donated some money to the aerarium, as expected (Plut. *Luc.* 3.3-4.3; see also Keaveney 1992: 30-31).

⁵³ For references to Lucullus’ villas, see Plut. *Luc.* 39; Vell. Pat. 2.33; Tac. *Ann.* 12.1.

⁵⁴ Plut. *Luc.* 39-41.

⁵⁵ Plut. *Luc.* 39.3.

campaigns on constructing and decorating his various villas, Plutarch implies that none was left for Lucullus' soldiers in the wake of his triumph.⁵⁶

Plutarch's description of Lucullus' villa in Naples reflected the complicated relationship that Graeco-Roman elites had with luxury, and especially the somewhat performative distaste that many contemporary writers expressed for excessive indulgence. Indeed, Cicero used Lucullus as an example to caution moderation:

One must be careful, too, not to go beyond proper bounds in expense and display, especially if one is building for oneself. For much mischief is done in this way, if only in the example set. For many people imitate zealously the foibles of the great, particularly in this direction: for example, who copies the virtues of Lucius Lucullus, excellent man that he was? But how many there are who have copied the magnificence of his villas! Some limit should surely be set to this tendency and it should be reduced at least to a standard of moderation; and by that same standard of moderation the comforts and wants of life generally should be regulated.

*Cavendum autem est, praesertim si ipse aedifices, ne extra modum sumptu et magnificentia prodeas; quo in genere multum mali etiam in exemplo est. Studiose enim plerique praesertim in hanc partem facta principum imitantur, ut L. Luculli, summi viri, virtutem quis? at quam multi villarum magnificentiam imitati! quarum quidem certe est adhibendus modus ad mediocritatemque revocandus. Eademque mediocritas ad omnem usum cultumque vitae transferenda est.*⁵⁷

Considering the rhetoric deployed against Lucullus, it is important to consider what value such lavish indulgence might have offered Lucullus, beyond simply an opportunity to pander to his vanity, as his detractors might have claimed.

When situated within the social and political context of the 60s BCE, Lucullus' actions suggest a shift toward wealth and connoisseurship as an expression of power instead of exclusive focus on political ambition. We can see evidence for this shift in the work of contemporary writers, both those explicitly critiquing Lucullus, such as Plutarch, and those such as Sallust, who criticized those of senatorial rank in broader strokes. Sallust hinted at the obstacles that men of illustrious families faced in distinguishing themselves politically from their peers. He argued that attempting to achieve glory in battle was pointless, because the Senate would always demand more.⁵⁸ Power, he proclaimed, could be achieved with spoils.⁵⁹ Indeed, Wolfgang Blösel argued that from the second century BCE, the *plebs urbana* was increasingly disinterested in a general's military exploits unless he produced significant booty, because they were no longer conscripted into the army.⁶⁰ Wealth, therefore, and especially wealth garnered through territorial conquest, produced both the social and the actual capital

⁵⁶ Similarly, Plutarch has Lucullus demur on extending dinner invitations to his social equals at times, preferring, it seems, to entertain Greeks (Plut. Luc. 41).

⁵⁷ Cic. *De Off.* 1.140, translated by Walter Miller.

⁵⁸ Sall. *Hist.* 2.98(82).5-6.

⁵⁹ Sall. *Hist.* 3.48(34).6.

⁶⁰ Blösel 2016: 79.

required for one's reputation; and, by implication, plunder increasingly provided aesthetic value that could enhance the experience of the guest at an elite Roman's home.⁶¹ It is unsurprising, therefore, that to Sallust, elite Romans only had one desire, and that was to conquer and despoil in order to augment their wealth.⁶²

Sallust, of course, along with numerous other writers, embraced a worldview that condemned *luxus*. Roman literature is, consequently, rife with exegesis on the moral implications of *luxus*. Such critiques reflect an attempt to curb what was seen as an alarming trend toward privatizing power.⁶³ As Shelley Hales argued:

The house sucked in public achievements of the entire *gentes* but scattered out aspects of the family's life into Rome. The truly successful families of Rome were those who had got this balance and whose houses were simply the center of a nexus of communications that linked house to outside – life and death, public and private were all played out equally within and without the house.⁶⁴

Lucullus used his homes as conduits to link his personal achievements – especially his conquest and triumph – to his political and social power.⁶⁵ Thus when Lucullus' butler asked whether he needed to use his spoliated tableware when he was dining alone, Lucullus' response reflected this nexus of power: "today Lucullus dines with Lucullus."⁶⁶ His plundered tableware was a critical element of his power performance, and thus he deemed it necessary even when he was not entertaining guests.

The moralists' fixation on Lucullus' dining habits is indicative of the critical discourse on luxury. As Emanuela Zanda noted, luxury was understood metaphorically as an illness or disease, one that came from the outside, as luxury goods themselves did, and could corrupt the "body of society."⁶⁷ In that context, Lucullus' gastronomic interests, which have enduring fame even today, were doubly reflective of Lucullus's excesses. He was corrupted by his embrace of foreign luxuries, but his dining interests also made him dangerous, as they could spread corruption to others. This concern underscores how much social power Roman elites had within

⁶¹ Hans Beck argued that the rise in *ambitus* and *cursus* legislation reflected "a complex negotiation of the aristocracy's most basic ethos as a ruling elite: a negotiation that clustered around the question of the elite's most fundamental assets, and its defining traits as a status group, including the notion of the accumulation, and actual use, of symbolic and of actual capital in the pursuit of its most basic goals" (2016: 150).

⁶² Sallust indirectly tied his critique to Lucullus by writing it in Mithridates' voice and having Mithridates lament that the Romans sought to conquer him for his wealth. Sall. *Hist.* 3.48(35).27-28; Mithridates' comment: 4.69(67).5.

⁶³ As Catharine Edwards (1993) suggested, morality and moral critique were themselves expressions of power that sought to curb political ambition.

⁶⁴ Hales 2000: 53.

⁶⁵ Rosillo-López (2022) argued that face-to-face conversations were critical to Roman political networking, and that dinner parties facilitated those conversations. Lucullus' home, therefore, allowed him to continue his normal political networking.

⁶⁶ Plut. *Luc.* 41.3.

⁶⁷ Zanda 2011: 18.

their homes, enough to create genuine concern over the future of the *res publica*.⁶⁸

Such criticisms reflected contemporary concerns over the role that conspicuous consumption was coming to play in not just reflecting but creating power in Rome. Status had always been something that needed to be (re)performed and (re)acknowledged by others, and as domestic spectacle in its myriad forms became a dominant prestige-marker, it is unsurprising that elites such as Lucullus continued to perform their status even in the face of moral judgment.⁶⁹ From the late second century BCE, wealth became increasingly important in Roman politics and society, but there were also increasing attempts to curb conspicuous consumption in order to protect the political and social status quo. The well-known second-century BCE sumptuary laws reveal legal attempts to limit the privatization of power, particularly with respect to banqueting.⁷⁰ These laws were, as Emanuela Zanda articulated, “weapons of self-defence used by the Roman ruling class” to protect traditional paths to power.⁷¹ Part of the fear of private power stemmed from the fact that it was, essentially, economically wasteful because it benefited only the individual.⁷²

Seen in this light, Lucullus’ villas were less examples of extreme consumption and more a form of political behavior that was becoming increasingly common. In fact, even as Cicero criticized Lucullus’ extravagance, he also acknowledged that many imitated Lucullus’ style.⁷³ Some have argued that the second century BCE witnessed the beginning of a trend toward the “de-militarization of [the] Roman nobility” as wealth became a more important source of “growth potential” for generating political power.⁷⁴ Though, it should be noted that not everyone has agreed with Blösel’s argument for a general demilitarization of the nobility. François Cadiou, for example, persuasively argued that the demilitarization argument is a modern historiographical construct. Nevertheless, Cadiou recognized that changes in the late Republic created multiple competitive paths for advancement among the nobility.⁷⁵ Therefore, we should understand the increasing privatization of power not as a replacement of the traditional paths for social advancement, but rather one way in which the Roman nobility

⁶⁸ There is a hint of this concern in Cicero’s letter to Papirius Paetus in August 46, when he notes that he was critiqued for inviting Hirtius to dinner (*Ad Am.* 9.20.2), and in the potential impact of social criticism leveled at dinner parties (*Att.* 9.1.3).

⁶⁹ Martin Jehne stated that “In Republican Rome, the standard tension [of status dissonances] was conceptualized as a conflict of wealth and *dignitas*... status has to be acknowledged by others again and again, and for that, it has to be demonstrated, proven, performed, confirmed, and so on” (2016: 190-91).

⁷⁰ The second-century sumptuary laws include the *lex Orchia* of 182, which limited the number of guests that could attend a private banquet; the *lex Fannia* of 161 limited how much an individual could spend on a party and banned specific foods deemed too luxurious; the *lex Didia* of 143 extended that limitation to all of Italy and instituted punishments for violation, which reflected the growing social power of rural villas; and lastly the *lex Antia* of 71 banned serving magistrates from attending private banquets. See Hollander 2016: 22. Zanda (2011: 18) surmised that houses were not subject to sumptuary laws, unlike the banquets held within, because they had public and private functions.

⁷¹ Zanda 2011: 70.

⁷² Zanda 2011: 11.

⁷³ Cic. *De Off.* 1.140.

⁷⁴ Blösel 2016: 81 and Hollander 2016: 25, respectively.

⁷⁵ Cadiou 2018: 405.

sought to exercise power in tandem with the *cursus honorum*.⁷⁶

Therefore, Lucullus' villa design was not merely an attempt to monumentalize his wealth; rather, his villas conveyed his personal achievements and created a communal space that mirrored political spaces and, therefore, reified his political power.⁷⁸ The gardens of his Pincian Hill villa, begun in 60 BCE, for example, emulated Persian garden styles and thus subtly advertised his martial exploits over Tigranes. In doing so, his gardens and villa continually (re)performed his triumph and visually consumed the fruits of that conquest, including Eastern aesthetic styles. His gardens likely offered a visual counterpoint to Pompey's theater complex, whose gardens, as Ann Kuttner has demonstrated, visually narrated the scope of Pompey's military triumphs.⁷⁹ Indeed, from its location on the Pincian Hill, Lucullus' villa had a commanding view of the Campus Martius, and could likely, therefore, see Pompey's theater complex.⁸⁰ Considering the rivalry between the two men and the role of Pompey's supporters in delaying Lucullus' triumph, the location and design of Lucullus' gardens were particularly evocative in crafting a narrative of Lucullus' accomplishments.⁸¹

While contemporary sources stated that Lucullus' villa design was too ostentatious and, by implication, was too *avant garde* for current tastes, their arguments are reflective more of the anxieties over Roman values than of reality.⁸² Eastern – both Hellenistic and Persian – architectural and aesthetic styles were becoming increasingly popular in elite rural spaces. While Varro snubbed many of these architectural spaces as overly ostentatious and detrimental to Roman values, including the Hellenistic fashion for having an anteroom (*procoetion*), exercise room (*palaestra*), dressing room (*apodyterion*), colonnade (*peristylon*), aviary (*ornithon*), pergola (*peripteros*), or fruit room (*oporothea*), his contemporary Vitruvius in fact insisted that such elements, particularly the peristyle, were essential to any effective domestic space.⁸³

Furthermore, Lucullus' villas were set in a wider architectural context in which they communicated in both form and function with other Roman villas. Luxurious houses and villas became increasingly common along the Bay of Naples from the late second century BCE, for example, and their incorporation of elements of public architecture, such as colonnades and *palaestra*, demonstrated that villas functioned as extensions of the social and political landscape of the city. Roman townhouses were rooted in the urban landscape and served as both physical and social reference points in daily life, including influencing public perceptions of political

⁷⁶ Indeed, Plutarch stressed that Lucullus continued to play a role in traditional politics, including going to the forum to show support for friends (*Luc.* 42.5-6).

⁷⁸ Vitruvius, for example, stressed that elite homes needed architectural elements such as peristyles, libraries, picture galleries, and basilicas to mirror public buildings since some public business, such as lawsuits or hearings, could and did occur in private homes (*De Arch.* 6.5.2).

⁷⁹ Kuttner 1999. Pompey's gardens had plants, broadly speaking, from each of the regions he conquered and also had myrtle and laurel to reflect his triumphal achievements. See also Davies 2017: 215-244.

⁸⁰ See Davies 2017: 218 for a map with the location of both the Horti Luculli and Pompey's theater.

⁸¹ As Beck argued, "A house's decoration, its architecture, and its location were all geared to the public proclamation of fame, and, in turn, reflected the social status of its owner. In addition, the act of daily living was a way not only to display distinction before the public eye, but also to engage in aristocratic competition" (2009: 368).

⁸² Cicero, for example, had seven or eight villas of his own.

⁸³ Rothe 2018: 45. See Varro *De Agr.* 2.2.2-3; Vitruvius *De Arch.* 6.5.2

leaders.⁸⁴ The Italian villas of these aristocrats, however, are often seen as outside the political and monumental landscape. Yet, while many aristocratic villas were situated in rural landscapes, they were an extension of the monumental topography of Rome and its empire.⁸⁵ Indeed, these spaces brought the empire to Rome just as triumphs did. They were decorated with the fruits of conquest, but they also appropriated fashions and techniques from conquered regions.

By incorporating Eastern pleasure gardens into Roman architectural spaces, moreover, Roman architects effectively subordinated the East to Rome. As Mantha Zarmakoupi argued, “In the framed gardens of the peristyle, the foreign pleasures of the East were under Roman moral control.”⁸⁶ Since most Roman aristocrats had multiple villas, such spaces offered them the opportunity both to perform their status and to establish political bonds with local communities that could advance their own careers or the careers of those they supported.⁸⁷

The most alarming social function of villas according to Roman moralists was the private banquet. As mentioned previously, as both second-century BCE sumptuary laws and changing social practices attest, spectacle, including banqueting and hosting, had become the main form of “prestige-making,” and were a valuable source of social power.⁸⁸ Lucullus is, of course, famous for the banquets he hosted, including one where guests not only dined on rare birds, but they also enjoyed birdsong from Lucullus’ private aviary.⁸⁹ The social importance of banqueting for Lucullus is evident in the fact that he named each of the dining rooms in his Pincian Hill villa, and each had a fixed budget for any dining that took place there. In the most expensive of his dining rooms, Lucullus reportedly paid the equivalent of fifty thousand drachmas for a banquet that Pompey goaded him into hosting.⁹⁰ That he did so due to Pompey is particularly revealing, since Pompey was, essentially, responsible for diminishing the value of Lucullus’ triumph by using his supporters to block the vote for three years, taking credit for completing the conquest of Mithridates, and preventing the ratification of Lucullus’ *acta*. Pompey, was, therefore, a focal point for Lucullus’ extravagance in order to out-perform him socially, since Pompey, as a new man, in theory had to work harder to achieve the same recognition.

Reevaluating the extant sources on Lucullus’s relationship with Pompey hints that Lucullus’ behavior was not a rejection of political life, as Plutarch claimed, but rather an extension of that

⁸⁴ Beck 2009: 366, see also Hölkeskamp 2004: 121.

⁸⁵ Larmour and Spencer (2007: 12) applied this concept of architectural metonym to triumphal architecture, but I argue that villas such as Lucullus’, paid for through spoils, should also be considered metonymical examples.

⁸⁶ Zarmakoupi cites Foucault’s discussion of discipline in this argument (2018: 89).

⁸⁷ Howe 2018: 110.

⁸⁸ Beck 2016: 131-2. As Beck noted, the *lex Orchia*’s attempt to impose limits on banqueting “points to the performative realm of public life at Rome” and suggests that social power was shifting into the *domus* (2016: 135). There had long been expectations that elites would open their homes to others for dinner parties as part of their regular performance of social power (for example Cic. *Ad Frat. Frag.* 4; Plaut. *Stich.* 588-90; Plaut. *Pseud.* 876-77; Ter. *And.* 452-455; Cic. *Verr.* 2.26.65-66; Val. Max. 2.6).

⁸⁹ Varro *Rust.* 3.4.3. Adding to the public-facing elements of his villa, Lucullus also had libraries that he kept open to the public (Plut. *Luc.* 42.104).

⁹⁰ Plut. *Luc.* 40.1; cf. 41.3-6.

political life.⁹¹ Lucullus, like many men of his generation, faced a difficult political context. His *dignitas* had taken a few hits, from criminal accusations against family members to his soldiers' mutiny.⁹² And Lucullus, like so many others, found himself overshadowed by the ambitions of Sulla and Pompey. While some, such as Lucullus' brother-in-law P. Clodius, turned to extreme political behavior to achieve their goals, Lucullus instead drew on the still mostly untapped potential of privatized power to display his status. The heightened moralizing censure from Lucullus' detractors highlights that many were aware that power was beginning to shift. Not only was power increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few individual political powerhouses such as Sulla, Pompey, and Caesar, but social capital, display, and conspicuous consumption played an increasingly vital role in political and social prestige.

Conclusion

Lucullus's embrace of privatized power put him at the forefront of a critical shift in elite power. Wealth, connoisseurship, and social cachet were, from the late first century BCE, equally, if not more important than office-holding. With the influx of luxury goods coming into Rome via conquest from the second century BCE, many Roman elites adapted their social behavior to incorporate domestic space into the wider socio-political landscape. Domestic space, consequently, became an even more significant backdrop for political power than it had been previously within Rome. And while not a direct consequence of this process, wealth was also becoming an increasingly significant expression of social status. In the late first BCE and first century CE, domestic spectacle – that is, using the home as a platform for conveying social power – diffused throughout the empire. Elites from diverse cultural backgrounds used conspicuous consumption and euergetism to develop both social and political prestige.

Domestic spectacle offered potent opportunities both for solidifying electoral support and for forming political relationships that could allow someone like Lucullus to maintain influence outside political traditional roles. Indeed, the banquet's power to garner social capital was so widely accepted that dinner parties became a fundamental element of social behavior, as is evinced in everything from the archaeological record to Pliny the Younger's letters to Martial's poetry, in which fictional guests worry about not being invited to dinner parties.⁹³ Thus, while Lucullus remained a fixture in contemporary discourses on the evils of luxury, his actions were, by the first century CE, so central to elite identity that domestic spectacle became a recurring

⁹¹ Plutarch charged that Lucullus let the Roman people down by turning away from public life (*Luc.* 38).

⁹² For example, his brother was prosecuted for actions during the First Mithridatic War (Pina Polo and Díaz Fernández 2019: 324), while his father had been prosecuted for his actions as praetor during the slave revolt in Sicily (Brennan 2000: 478-9).

⁹³ See Rosillo-López 2022: 83-126 and Pina Polo 2023. We see examples of informal, domestic political networking in Pliny's letter to Avitus (Ep. 2.6), or his letter to Apollinarius (Ep. 2.9), in which he included going to dinner parties as a way of garnering political support for his friend, who was running for office. Similarly, Martial, himself a product of social mobility in the provinces, frequently used the dinner party as a motif, often to highlight inequities between social classes or the relationship between patron and client (ex: 2.11, 2.18, 3.7, 3.12, 3.38, 3.60, 3.63, 4.64, 4.66, 8.23, 10.47). For more on elite dining in the empire, see: Dunbabin 2003; Wen 2022; Gold and Donahue 2005; Luley 2014.

motif in the literature and remains evident in the magnificent townhouses and villas excavated across the empire.

Despite the lingering negativity toward Lucullus' actions, he demonstrated the power that domestic space had to produce cultural capital. In doing so, Lucullus and his contemporaries engaged in a wider movement in which elite identity centralized around conspicuous consumption. The relationship between elite identity and conspicuous consumption is well-studied, but it is important to remember that for Romans, this process was rooted in controversial reinterpretations of the triumph, plunder, and domestic architectural design that challenged engrained social expectations regarding normative elite behavior. Their eventual success, however, transformed elite identity into something that could be shared regardless of geographic location or political position. Thanks to Lucullus and his ilk, to be Roman, one merely had to consume.

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Abbreviations

FRL = Manuwald, F. (ed). *Fragmentary Republican Latin: Oratory Part I*. Loeb Classical Library.

IG = 1903. *Inscriptiones Graecae*. Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin. De Gruyter.

Itgenshorst = Itgenshorst, T. 2005. *Total Illa Pompa. Der Triumph in der römischen Republik*. Hypomnemata 161. Göttingen.

MRR = Broughton, T. 1951-1952. *The Magistrates of the Roman Republic*. American Philological Association.

OCD = Hornblower, S. and A. Spawforth. 1996. *Oxford Classical Dictionary*. Third Edition. Oxford.

RE = Pauly, A. and G. Wissowa, and W. Kroll, *Real-Encyclopädie d. klassischen Altertumswissenschaft* (1893–)

Rich = Rich, J. 2014. "The Triumph in the Roman Republic: Frequency, Fluctuation and Policy." In C. Lange and F. Vervaet (eds.), *The Roman Republican triumph: beyond the spectacle*. Roma: Edizioni Quasar.

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Beyond “Greeks”: Toward More Inclusive Histories of the Ancient Mediterranean

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Abstract: This article argues that a commitment to the category of “Greeks” in framing the study of the ancient Mediterranean embeds us in the legacies of nationalism, colonialism, and racism, and rests on a problematic evidentiary basis. After reviewing the ways that scholarly narratives subtly endorse this legacy, I examine two case studies, Classical Athens and the world of the Hellenistic kingdoms, to argue that minimal impact of Greek identity discourse does not justify framing their histories through the category of Greekness. The paper closes with a consideration of how to reframe “Greek” history in more inclusive and coherent ways.

Keywords: Greekness, modern historiography, identity, Athens, Hellenistic World

The application of the term “Classical Studies” to a discipline that has traditionally focused on the study of Greek and Roman culture and society has justly come under fire recently for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that it advances the Western/white appropriation of a set of histories that are equally situated in Africa, Asia, and Europe. Likewise, the theft of “Ancient History” by historians of the Greco-Roman world merits criticism for implying the insignificance to the point of annihilation of the early (non-white) pasts of other parts of the globe such as East and South Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and the Americas.¹

A seemingly easy solution is to replace such problematic terms with something more honest like “Greek and Roman Studies,” but matters are not so simple. For one, “Greeks” and “Romans” still primarily connote European, and their “European” political histories are given primacy in ancient and modern narratives. For another, this label excludes, or treats as relevant only in relation to two peoples, the histories of Phoenicians, Egyptians, Anatolians, Etruscans and many other non-Greco-Romans. Yet there is a third problem that has received little attention in discussions of what do with and call our discipline, which involves the validity of the term “Greek” itself as a primary category of historical analysis. As Kostas Vlassopoulos has observed, “there was never a single political, economic, social, or cultural centre which could give unity to the Greek world or Greek identity.”² Despite this well acknowledged absence, Greek unity and identity remain the *precondition* for much of the teaching and research conducted under the name of “Greek” history, archaeology, art history, and (somewhat more justifiably) philology.

In what follows, I attempt to deconstruct the implications of Vlassopoulos’ observation, both for how we currently interpret “Greek” evidence and tell “Greek” history, and for how we might more accurately and inclusively tell that history going forward. In a first section, I explore

¹ See, e.g., Goody 2006, 26-67.

² Vlassopoulos 2013, 36.

the use of the concept of “Greek” in a wide range of contexts, from world history and Greek survey textbooks to scholarly interpretations of textual and material evidence, in order to show that the term does not innocuously refer to “Greek-speakers,” but rhetorically inherits the 19th-century imperialistic and racist concept of a “Greek” nation that is easily analogized with the expansionist European and settler nations of the modern period, facilitating (often unintentionally) the public and scholarly reception of “Greek” history as peculiarly Western and white. In the next two sections, I observe that a discourse of Greekness was intricately bound up with ancient imperialistic discourse, but call into question the importance of that discourse to the behaviors and power dynamics of “Greeks,” first in classical Athens and then in the world of the Hellenistic kingdoms. Here I argue that if such a unity and identity were either lacking or unimportant, then it makes little sense, and reinforces modern imperialist and racialized views of this ancient past, to continue to impose this label in our narratives and interpretations. In concluding, I consider paths forward, acknowledging the challenges of presenting a “messier” history but insisting that we face these challenges rather than continuing to accept what makes sense for the dominant group.

Greekness in Today’s Ancient Histories

Awareness of the minimal and ideologically charged role of the idea of Greekness among the numerous “Greek” communities throughout the ancient Mediterranean and Black Sea world is quite common among scholars. This role was limited to particular contexts, most prominently in responding to Persian assaults (and a Near Eastern imperial worldview) that inspired some of these communities to equate their distinct desires for autonomy with a collective alliance to resist the Persian onslaught.³ The call to define “our freedom” as Greek, rather than as a set of separate communal freedoms, established the right for Athens to decide how that freedom was to be achieved, and at whose expense. The result was the creation of an Athenian Empire over the Aegean island and coastal states, and in the 4th century, similar discourses of Greekness led to hegemonies by Sparta, Thebes, Athens, and finally Macedon, now as often to resist the dominance of another “Greek” state as to oppose Persian aggression. All these examples highlight the fundamentally political and imperial contexts in which Greekness, the conception of a single people who shared similar culture, language, kinship ties and a territory known as “Hellas,” was implemented as a discourse of identity and power.⁴

The implication of this work has, however, been more assumed than investigated: that the idea of Greekness should represent a basic organizing principle for how we conceptualize ancient (Mediterranean) history.⁵ College courses, textbooks, and popular works all make “Greek history” a standard offering to their various publics, an offering that consists largely of narratives about what “Greeks” felt, thought, ate, wrote, “achieved” and “created.” These “Greeks” are granted special ownership over specific vase styles and painting techniques,

³ On the Near Eastern roots of Greekness as a response to empire, see Haubold 2013, 98-126.

⁴ E.g., Perlman 1976, 1985; E. Hall 1987; Faraguna 2003; Rhodes 2007; Low 2018.

⁵ Even the argument of Stier 1970, questioning the view of Greekness as a nationality or ethnicity, still takes for granted the concept’s historical centrality as a cultural identity.

building types, literary genres and myths, and of course the *polis* itself, despite many non-Greek groups having a share in the creation and consumption of these sociocultural products. In discussing examples, I should be clear that my aim is not to fault any specific authors, but to highlight the engrained nature of this particular form of Greco-centrism in which we all, myself included, have been implicated.⁶ One multi-editioned work celebrates the “accomplishments of the Greeks in innovative political organization, including democracy, history writing, literature, drama, philosophy, art, and architecture...” while bemoaning “their perpetuation of slavery, the exclusion of women from politics, and their failure to unite to preserve their independence...”⁷ For the authors of OUP’s *Ancient Greece* textbook, the Greeks developed “a culture marked by astonishing creativity, versatility, and resilience.”⁸ “The Greeks valued truth and beauty,” a third text informs students, and “were proud of their way of life...”⁹ In treating the Hellenistic period, the most comprehensive English language survey defines its subject via an opposition between Greeks and “those far larger areas, profoundly alien in speech and culture to the Greek spirit,” while a more recent treatment of this same era centers on “the unity of the Greeks—or the lack thereof.”¹⁰ Even the absence of Greek unity is noteworthy precisely because unity is the expected norm, however infrequent.

Who are these Greeks who did so much and had such similar thoughts and mindset? Survey texts rarely address the question directly.¹¹ This is not an innocent omission, even if unintentional, particularly for works whose primary audience is assumed to know nothing of the subject. But in fact, this audience is being expected to “know” who the Greeks were, which for most initiates means equating ancient Greeks with modern Greece. This assumption is buttressed by the implicit answers that these books give, whether through their titles (*Ancient Greece* or some variation), the choice to start with the topography of the southern Balkans or the Bronze Age societies of this same geographical area, or the similarly narrow understanding of “Greeks” that runs through the opening narratives of Hellenistic histories, where the only Greeks that matter emanate from Philip and Alexander’s initial sphere of influence in the Balkans and Aegean. Greeks, in case you didn’t already know, are from Greece, which is just what you think it is.¹² This impression is further strengthened, although in this case understandably given our evidence, by a focus on the political history of the 5th and 4th-century “mainland” (i.e., the southern Balkan peninsula) in pre-Hellenistic survey texts. It would be misleading to suggest that they fail to convey the broad geographical extent of Greek habitation

⁶ For the sake of manageability, I limit this discussion to English-language textbooks, and leave it to others to determine the applicability of my argument to public-facing works of Greek history in other languages.

⁷ Martin 2013, 1-5; Cf. Sowerby 2015, esp. x-xi. Less overt in their assumptions, but still comfortable using “Greeks” as a subject of agency, are Parker 2014 and Osborne 2014.

⁸ Pomeroy et al. 2018, esp. 1-4

⁹ McInerney 2018, esp. 14-28.

¹⁰ Green 1990, xv. Chaniotis 2018, 4. Cf. Thonemann’s “story of the Greek adventure in the East” (2016, vii).

¹¹ McInerney 2018, 28 endorses the polemical jingoism of Isokrates’ famous cultural “definition” of Greekness (see below for further discussion of this author). Chaniotis 2018, 4-5 comes closer in implying the role of kinship in articulating “real” and invented ties between Greeks and non-Greeks, but still does not clarify who these Greeks are. The idea seems to be that non-Greeks can become Greek, but only if they develop kinship ties with “real” Greeks, which implies that this acquired Greekness is less real.

¹² On the relationship between “ancient Greece” and today’s conceptions of modern Greeks, see Beaton 2019, 3-12.

in West Asia, the Western Mediterranean, the Black Sea coast, North Africa, and Central/South Asia, but in doing so they reinforce the centrality of Greece and Greeks, first by explicitly or implicitly ascribing the ultimate origins of these settlements to “Greece,” and secondly by assuming the importance of “being Greek” to understanding who the inhabitants of these settlements were and how they related to their neighbors.

This last point is important for demonstrating that we are not here dealing with labels used for simplicity’s sake or to indicate a group of people detached from identity, e.g., “Greek-speakers.”¹³ Not only is the focus on individuals and communities who are described as Greek because of their historically posited origins in a Greek “motherland,” which is itself a modern construct that elides a host of complex and more locally defined *metropoleis*, but their relations with “non-Greek” neighbors are often explored through concepts like assimilation, colonialism, the middle ground, and hybridization, which are predicated on a pre-existing cultural binary that continues to determine how the groups involved are understood post-contact. “Greek” language, ceramics, architecture, and institutions are the defining features of settlements that originate in “Greece,” but if we find these features in a neighboring settlement, they indicate diffusion, Hellenization, or glocalization. Greek-speaking Elymians or Karians are not included in our “Greeks” who have accomplished so much—even Maussollos just knew whom to hire.

I have dwelt at length on the survey text because it is both symptomatic of broader trends in more specialized scholarship and also helps to inform the basic categories of this scholarship, as well as the even broader surveys of world history that include sections or chapters on the “Greeks.” The latter are perhaps less remarkable, but worth briefly discussing, particularly because there is nothing inherent to world history, besides its pedagogical roots in Western Civilization courses, that dictates a focus on the “Greeks.” Yet a brief examination of several major world history textbooks reveals narratives featuring either brief moments of Greek political collaboration or a more generalized sense of Greek accomplishment.¹⁴ As for scholarly production, there is of course more variation. Publications on political history tend to shy away from the “Greeks” because of the importance of *polis* and *ethnos* autonomy; works in the fields of social and cultural history, archaeology, art history, or philosophy, while in the main emphasizing the individual, local or regional nature of their studies, are at times prone to also identifying their material as “Greek.”¹⁵ One example that serves as a bridge between surveys and specialized scholarship is Vlassopoulos’ already cited *Greeks and Barbarians*, which aims to reach a primarily undergraduate readership while also offering a new and thoroughly researched interpretation of Greek/non-Greek relations. Despite his observation that the Greek world lacks a center, as well as his endorsement of concepts like the middle ground and hybridity that might encourage a move beyond polarities, Vlassopoulos remains firmly convinced of the applicability of “Greek” to a whole range of cultural productions that were never or only belatedly understood as such by the ancient perspectives we have, a range that

¹³ This objection has been raised twice by anonymous reviewers of earlier versions of this article.

¹⁴ Strayer & Nelson 2019, 102-11, 159-61; Bentley et al. 2021, 184-204; McNeill 2021, 155-66. Adelman et al. 2021, 190-198 presents a more inclusive approach to the ancient Mediterranean but still ends up talking mostly about the “Greek” city-states.

¹⁵ Of note is Tuplin 1999, who in treating the question of Greek racism declares (49): “Of course, ‘Greeks’ did constitute a single entity in contradistinction to barbarians,” treating the sources as descriptive rather than persuasive arguments meant to construct both categories.

includes archaic poetic genres, the early centuries of the Classical-era “Panhellenic” shrines, ceramics and painting, temple architecture and sculpture, and the epigraphic habit. His explanation of the successful globalization of the overall cultural package of the “Greeks” due to its adaptability by other cultures depends on the assumption that “Greek” culture was not already global during its period of emergence. This assumption seems at least worthy of investigation, first because there is no evidence before the 5th century of a perception of common culture in terms of Greekness, and second because of the intense participation in this culture by “non-Greek” communities from quite an early date. Why do we speak of the foreign consumption of “Greek” vase paintings in Etruria in a different way than in non-Athenian (or non-Corinthian) “Greek” cities? Were Attic vases seen as “ours” by these cities despite the very real sense of difference that they felt politically (and no doubt culturally) with Athens?

To be fair to Vlassopoulos, his conclusions are meant to synthesize the more focused studies of material and literary culture that have come before his work, and as such he mirrors the tendency of most scholars studying this evidence to describe it using a Greek label that poses as objective while insinuating (again, intentionally or not) an unproven idea of a coherent national culture. De Jüliis envisions the history of southern Italy as the result of the “continuous dialectic between two fundamental protagonists: the Greeks and the Italians (Italici).”¹⁶ For Jenkins, the Nereid Monument from Lykia projects a self-image in which “taste for Greek things and ideas ultimately prevails” over Lykian and Persian elements.¹⁷ In both examples, the term “Greek” elides a diversity of distinct peoples, communities, and product origins, while at the same time implying that local political or cultural differences were typically understood in terms of broader “national” categories. Where cultural mixing occurred that might suggest the irrelevance of this polarity, it is still assumed to represent a deeply engrained substratum that survives in the face of blending and variation. The underlying message is that where we find Greek culture, it is “Greeks” who are responsible, either directly or because they have produced a culture that non-Greeks seek to emulate. Non-Greeks like the dynast who commissioned the Nereid Monument are certainly granted agency, but real credit still goes to “Greeks” as the authors of what is adopted. That studies exist to challenge this way of understanding “Greek” history and culture is noteworthy, but they have not made an impact on the historical image that we project outside our discipline, via textbooks and popular works, and exercise uncertain influence on the majority of teacher-scholars within the field.

In recounting these select but representative examples of what is conveyed by “Greek” in surveys and scholarship, I have also begun to hint at the weak basis for this image of a coherent culture and identity rooted in “Greece” and distinct from surrounding peoples. In the realm of culture, products are either more local in origin, such as Attic pottery, or so widespread as to defy any meaningful Greek/non-Greek boundary that is not imposed on the evidence by later commentators, both ancient and modern.¹⁸ The basis for “Greeks” is stronger when it comes to

¹⁶ De Jüliis 1996 (new edition, 2021). For a critique of this view that still maintains ethnic polarities, see Búndrick 2019. Cf. the contributions in De Angelis 2020.

¹⁷ Jenkins 2006, 201, largely following the interpretation of Demargne & Childs 1989.

¹⁸ Even the interpretation of the ethnic Other in vase paintings has to assume that the “us” represented by figures that contrast with Egyptians, Thracians/Skythians, or Persians is always “Greeks,” but it makes more sense to include whoever was consuming these vases, which include western Anatolians, Etruscans, and other groups who could have also contrasted themselves with these “Others” without thinking that this made them Greek.

ethnographic and political conceptions of the world, starting at least with Hekataios. It is to this evidence that I now turn to argue that it is neither justified nor politically neutral to frame our study of the ancient Mediterranean through the concept of “Greeks.” To be clear, I am not questioning whether peoples that we now identify as Greeks played an important role in ancient history or even that there was not a clearly conceptualized Greek identity available for people to claim; rather, I propose that it is both misleading and an implicit endorsement of imperialism to think of these historical actors as Greeks, i.e., as people who instinctively and consistently claimed this identity. While questions of agency and identity are often seen to constitute separate issues, I maintain that the two must be treated together: those responsible for the events, objects, and ideas produced in the past should be labeled as they understood themselves, not according to labels that conveniently match modern organizations of the world, which are themselves politically and culturally charged.¹⁹ What Aristotle wrote about the *polis* does not necessarily bear on Spartan political thought, just as the Pan Painter tells us nothing firm about Aitolian art.

Acknowledging the impossibility of making my case through a comprehensive consideration of the evidence, I limit myself to two contexts. First, I look at Classical Athens, home of almost all the key ancient texts in which the concept of “Greeks” was central to the worldview their authors espoused. Considering the agenda of these sources is crucial for determining their impact among Greek-speaking communities outside and, especially, inside Athens. I then turn to the world of the Hellenistic empires, where an imperial discourse espousing “Greek” freedom or privileges is not as pervasive, chronologically or geographically, as general narratives often suggest. Both cases have been chosen for their renown as sites in which discourses of Greekness featured prominently and influentially. My goal is not to challenge scholarly consensus when it comes to political events and motivations, but to highlight how this consensus implicitly invalidates the choice to frame such history as one of “Greeks.” It is my contention that if I can show that even in these environments, Greek identity (and therefore identification) was an ideological claim of empire that did not dominate the thinking of most Greek-speakers, then it will go a long way to cast doubt on the appropriateness of the Greek label for the many other contexts in which Greekness is rarely or never mentioned in our sources.²⁰ To make my case, and to avoid legitimizing what I hope to call into question, my use of “Greek” in what follows always refers to a term of discourse, ancient or modern, without implying that such discourse is legitimate in describing a people or a culture.

Athens and the Nation

I take as my starting point Jonathan Hall’s work on Greek identity, which contains two important insights. First, the interaction of elites from local communities, especially at regionally

¹⁹ The theoretical distinction between “emic” and “etic” identifiers is only partially helpful here: the name “Hellene” is emic insofar as it truly was an identity claimed by certain Greeks at certain times; yet its implied or explicit importance in modern histories of antiquity is etic because unjustified, as I hope to show.

²⁰ These other contexts are worthy of investigation as well, and require more careful scrutiny that hopefully this piece inspires. For while some scholars have also questioned the importance of Hellenic identity (e.g., Zacharia 2008; Vlassopoulos 2015), they still retain a commitment to Greekness as a basic category of analysis.

important sanctuaries like Delphi and Olympia, led to the articulation of broader, “aggregated” regional identities such as Dorian and Ionian, and eventually, over the course of the 6th century, Greek identity. In other words, local identities preceded “national” identities. Second, Greek identity was largely articulated in “internal” opposition to non-elites. During the late Archaic Period, Greekness was an elite prerogative that not only had little purchase among the majority of the Greek-speaking population, but may have been explicitly employed to emphasize class differences rather than commonality.²¹

The experience of the Persian Wars resulted in a redeployment of Greek identity. Slogans of Greek unity and freedom clearly aimed to create solidarity across class lines by framing Greekness in opposition to the invading Persians.²² Most scholars (and all textbooks) allow this fact to put them at ease in assuming that, from 480 BC on, being Greek mattered to most Greeks. In doing so, they overlook the important qualification that Hall makes in his discussion of early Classical Greek identity, namely that it was articulated in predominantly Athenian contexts to serve the interests of Athenian imperial power and cultural hegemony.²³

The attraction of these imperial discourses as central voices in the modern shaping of “Greek history” is in itself telling, but I wish to take Hall’s argument further and contend that Athenian imperial and elite discourses on Greekness blind us to the ways that Greekness rarely mattered even to many Athenians and, by extension, to non-Athenian Greek speakers. I explore the misleading way that Athenian or Athenian-adjacent voices have been taken to represent the views of those people whom we call “Greeks” about themselves. By “rarely” I refer not just to the empirical infrequency with which we find this label used by non-elite or non-Athenian voices, but also to the minimal impact that expressions of Greekness would have had on people used to hearing and referring to themselves with more local forms of identity. They may have agreed that they were Greeks when the question was posed, but there were no institutional mechanisms to make such an identity primary or instinctively “transformable” from *polis* or “tribal” identities.²⁴ Without institutional mechanisms, such as rituals, oaths, or a visual propaganda, it is doubtful that Greek identity often qualified as the “largest group to command

²¹ Hall 1997, 2002; cf. Honigman 2007. I find decisive Hall’s arguments (2002, 90–124) against the theory that Greek identity emerged as a result of oppositional encounters with non-Greek speakers throughout the Mediterranean and especially in the context of *apoikia* foundations (so-called “Greek colonies”) in southern Italy, Sicily, North Africa, the Black Sea coastline, and elsewhere (on which see Sourvinou-Inwood 2005, 47–58; Malkin 2011). The strongest evidence in support of this position is Naukratis, the pharaonic-regulated settlement in the Nile Delta where a sanctuary was built by several Greek-speaking communities that, according to Herodotos, was called the “Hellenion” (Malkin 2011, 87–95). Certainly by Herodotos’ day this name attests to a broader identity shared by Greek-speakers from several local and regional ethnic communities (Ionians, Dorians, etc.), but the question is when this name was attached to the sanctuary. The assumption is that the name dates to the foundation of the cult, but it is just as likely that the name emerged in later contexts when Greekness had a more pervasive influence (cf. the 5th-century date of inscriptions referring to common Greek identity from the sanctuary, on which, see Demetriou 2012, 142–151). At the same time, the name could have also been a response to Egyptian perceptions of the sameness of diverse Greek-speaking peoples, a sameness that mattered in Egypt but less so elsewhere. More generally, Sourvinou-Inwood’s efforts to promote the priority of Greekness in both importance and time (2005, 24–63) depend on teleological arguments.

²² Raaflaub 2004, 58–89

²³ Hall 2002, 182–205.

²⁴ On these concepts, see Vlassopoulos 2015.

loyalty based on kinship ties.²⁵ If this is the case, then the continued emphasis on Greekness as a historical category of analysis represents a choice to endorse those ancient voices who espoused an imperial vision of the Mediterranean world over other, more common, perspectives.

Take the classic definition of Greekness found in Herodotos (8.144.2). With the Persians seeking to detach Athens from the Greek alliance, an unnamed Athenian assuages these allies by pointing to the Persian destruction of his homeland, and secondarily, that “it would not be good for Athenians to betray Greekness—our common blood and language—nor our shared sanctuaries and sacrifices and similar customs.”²⁶ Hall is surely right to reject the tendency to see this as the definition of Greekness held by anyone claiming to be Greek; instead, Herodotos is attempting to influence what Greek identity should mean, in a way that promoted military cooperation under the aegis of single hegemonic *polis*—when he was writing Athens would have come most quickly to mind.²⁷ Nor should we assume that Herodotos determined subsequent views on this matter. Even if we can trace an intellectual genealogy from Herodotos to Thucydides, the Hippocratic authors, and the sophists, I am less convinced that we can bridge the chasm between intellectual discourse and common views, plus the behaviors they inspired at the communal level.²⁸ How did ideas of Greekness influence the behavior of “Greeks” toward each other and those perceived as Other? Regarding the former, the tendency for Greek states to act in their own interest and often against each other is well known, even when commemorating the “pan-Hellenic” struggle against the Persians.²⁹ This suggests significant resistant to the imperial discourse of Greekness. Yet this resistance is ignored when it comes to analyzing prejudicial statements about the uncivilized nature of “barbarians,” which are tacitly compared to similar bigoted language today that is a symptom of racialized practices of inequity. The assumption then follows that the ancient prejudices must also be a sign of ancient (proto-

²⁵ Hall 2015, 22f., using the definition of Connor 1994, 202

²⁶ Trans. Hall 2002, 189.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 189-194. Cf. Gruen 2020, 42-44. I am less confident in Hall’s assertion that this attempt was made against a consensus understanding of Greek identity as being primarily, or even exclusively, based on genealogy and kinship (common blood), and that Herodotos sought to demote kinship as a criterion of ethnicity. Hall’s case largely rests on several instances where Herodotos seems to privilege language or cultural criteria over kinship in discussing the distinct identities of neighboring peoples, but in the cases adduced by Hall, it is rather the *complementarity* of distinct origins and distinct customs that emerges. For instance, Herodotos argues that the Kaunians cannot have Kretan origins similar to Karians, because they do not have the same customs as Karians (1.172). These factors work in tandem rather than in competition. The evidence for the basis of Greek identity in the 6th century—poetic genealogies—does not preclude the accompaniment or inclusion of cultural criteria as well, nor does it guarantee a uniformity of viewpoints. Furthermore, Persian ethnographic conceptions of Greekness may have also had an important influence on “Greek” self-perception. Far earlier than Herodotos, the visual representations of tribute-bearers on the Apadana staircase at Persepolis demonstrate that cultural characteristics accompanied perceptions of ethnic difference in the imperial worldview (Briant 2002, 390-94). While the specific characteristics attached to *Yavana* (Greeks) may not have been accepted by those espousing Greek identity, it is unlikely that they would have also rejected the very tendency to link ethnic and cultural distinctiveness.

²⁸ Cf. Walbank 1951, 57: “our problem...is really one of a vital idea which appears to be at constant variance with practical politics—the idea of the Greek nation.”

²⁹ Yates 2019.

racism constructed against a standard of Greekness.³⁰ While some scholars have rejected this vision by emphasizing the many positive portrayals of non-Greeks in our Greek sources, the impact of this work on public and pedagogical understandings of Greek history remains minimal, and more importantly still assumes the importance of Greekness in many sources where the identity is not present.³¹

In a recent attempt to resuscitate the importance of the “barbarian” as a category in ancient discourse, Thomas Harrison diverges fruitfully from common approaches to the Greek/non-Greek question in attempting to connect discourse to practice. In a penultimate section, he examines the “human factor” that reveals, to his mind, the underlying influence of a barbarian discourse on how non-Greeks were treated. The point is equally applicable to the concept of Greekness itself: if “Greek” is valid, we should not look only to the words of our highly select (thanks to both privilege and time) literary evidence, but also to the impact of this literary framework on the treatment of non-Greeks. Yet contrary to what Harrison suggests, when we look for racist practice as the root of Classical racist statements, it either remains hidden or takes an unexpected form. In most of the “Greek” world, the easiest examples of racism do not involve Greekness at all: Spartan subordination and dehumanization of Messenians and other helots, along with similar master-servile population dynamics in places like Thessaly or Crete. While our sources invoke some parallels to the Spartan situation that involve a Greek-barbarian distinction, e.g., Herakleia Pontikê’s mastery over the Mariandynians, this is the author’s analytical terminology, which cannot necessarily be equated to the Herakleian ideological discourse of subjection, just as it is unlikely that Spartans thought helots were Greek. Examples beyond the scenario of mass enslavement are few and far between. Harrison appeals to a story from Xenophon in which a man is chased out of the Greek mercenary camp “when it is discovered that he has his ears pierced ‘like a Lydian.’”³² His interpretation of the anecdote ignores some inconvenient details, however. It is unclear, first of all, how these piercings could be a secret for the many months that the army had been together. More importantly, the real issue was the advice given (in Boiotian) by the “Lydian” man, which the leaders of the army found distasteful.³³ If the man was chased away on the pretext of the ear-piercings, that would still be noteworthy, but why trust Xenophon on this account, when it was in his interest to explain away the autocratic behavior of himself and his fellow “Greeks” in refusing to consider

³⁰ Isaac 2004, *passim*; Harrison 2020. Part of the issue here is an undertheorized understanding of race and racism. Isaac conceives of racism as a view of individuals as superior or inferior based on their belonging to a group (a people) whose traits are fixed through hereditary or environmental factors (23), while Harrison fails to define these concepts at all (cf. Tuplin 1999’s dependance on the *OED*). Isaac’s understanding is also the organizational principle behind the very useful anthology of sources on ancient race and ethnicity, which is divided between parts on “Theory” and ethnographic passages: Kennedy et al. 2013. Yet a major principle of critical race theory and other theoretical work on race is that the essence of racism is the creation or maintenance of unequal power relations between hierarchically defined groups (see, e.g., Omi and Winant 1994, 55; Sheth 2009, 21-39).

³¹ E.g., Gruen 2011. For a critique, see Harrison 2020, who also tends to conflate Athenian with Greek (e.g., 150), despite a few non-Athenian examples, mostly from Pindar, and Thracian/Persian/etc. with “barbarian”, when reading his evidence.

³² Harrison 2020, 154.

³³ My interpretation thus far follows that of Lee 2007, 73-74.

any opinion contrary to what they wanted to do?³⁴ At the end of the day, this anecdote demonstrates the existence of anti-barbarian sentiment—Xenophon expects that his explanation will make sense to at least some of his readers—but not its prevalence. Here, we can observe the modern preference for taking nationalist versions of imperialism or racism as more representative of ancient views than those that are more common in the evidence.

Within Athens itself, which was home to a number of non-Greek foreign residents (metics and many slaves) and, in the 5th-century, exercised imperial control over several non-Greek territories in Thrace and the western coast of Asia Minor, the pertinent categories defining privilege and oppression were not “Greek” and “non-Greek,” but “Athenian” and “non-Athenian.”³⁵ Metics and other foreigners were equally deprived of the privileges of citizenship whether they had been born in nearby Thebes or in distant Paphlagonia (northern Anatolia). Given this well-known reality, it is dangerous to automatically equate Theban with “Greek” and Paphlagonian with “barbarian” when both identities carried the same legal exclusion, an institutional mechanism that promoted a worldview centered on Athens and implicitly rejected Greekness as a meaningful identity.

The intersection of Greekness with the quite obvious classist derogation of slaves in Athenian sources is more muddled. The fact that more slaves in Athens seem to come from non-Greek regions like Anatolia and Thrace has led scholars to feel justified in connecting anti-barbarian rhetoric in literary sources to common perceptions of slaves.³⁶ This certainly has some merit, at least by the late 4th century, when New Comedy productions were playing on ethnic stereotypes of slave characters. But it is less clear that the antithesis of these ethno-classes was conceived of as “Greek” rather than Athenian for most citizens, or that such racism helped to perpetuate the high number of “non-Greek” slaves, rather than being a symptom of the reality of slave origins, or of the elite bias of our sources on slaves, who were exploited in greater numbers by wealthy Athenians.³⁷ The move from “Athenian” to “Greek,” and “Phrygian” (or the like) to “barbarian” is based more on assumption than fidelity to the terminology of our evidence.

If we shift our gaze to Athenian imperial holdings, we find a standard policy that places Athens in a superior position over a number of locally categorized subject communities, with no distinction made in terms of broader ethnic identities. The Athenian Tribute Lists at first glance appear to reflect ideas of Greekness, with collection under the direction of “Greek treasurers” (*hellenotamiai*) and certain tribute districts given “ethnic” names, such as “Ionian,” “Karian,” and

³⁴ Harrison, *op. cit.*, also adduces the janiform vases mocking “Ethiopian” and “Thracian/Scythian” facial features, but the phenomenon is too isolated to be generalizable, and by no means lends itself to positing “Greek” (as opposed Mediterranean and even West Asian) as the contrast to these othered figures.

³⁵ Lape 2010. Cf. Kennedy 2016.

³⁶ Rosivach 1999; Lewis 2015; Harrison 2020, 154-56.

³⁷ Robertson 2008, 85-87, 90-91; Hunt 2018, 35-40, 85-89, 175-180; Harrison 2019. These authors assume that Greek (rather than Athenian) ethno-centrism contributes to justifications of slavery, which colors their reading of Menander’s treatment of Phrygian and Thracian slaves, as well as their understanding of the famous line in Euripides’ *Iphigeneia in Tauris* that barbarians are “slavish” (line 1401) as referencing the institution of slavery rather than Athenian imperial fantasies. Granted, this is how Aristotle redeployed the line from Euripides (*Politics* 1252b7-9), but to *novel* effect in his natural slavery argument.

“Thracian.”³⁸ Yet tribute was determined by settlement and according to size of settlement, which meant larger tribute for the more urbanized “Greek” coastal cities than smaller non-Greek towns.³⁹ More importantly, settlements that modern scholarship would identify as “Greek” and “non-Greek” were grouped together within each tribute district.⁴⁰ The name of the treasurers in charge of the entire operation certainly reflects the imperial ideology espoused by Athens to gain acceptance to its rule from the majority of its subjects, whom the city identified as Greek in the context of “liberation” from the Persian Empire; yet this background did not define the purview of the “Greek treasurers”: they could collect tribute from any other communities conquered by the Athenian navy. Ideology did not determine practice, and in any case contrasted “Greeks” with the Persian imperial apparatus, not other non-Greek local communities. Indeed, slogans of Greek freedom served to justify Athenian subordination of its Greek allies, but no connection can be drawn between the conquest of non-Greek communities and ideas of “barbarian” inferiority.⁴¹

The same can be said for other aspects of Athenian imperial power. Most obviously, the Athenian settler-colonies established on subject territory did not discriminate between Greek and non-Greek. Modern textbooks and certain ancient authors might consider Lemnians and Thracians as *barbaroi*, and the cities of Lesbos, Naxos, Euboea, and Thasos as Greek, but Athens settled cleruchies at the expense of all these groups.⁴² Again, there is no discernible difference of treatment meted out according to the categories of Greek and barbarian.

The Athenians lost their empire at the end of the 5th century, but they continued to treat their metics and slaves similarly irrespective of origin. When aristocrats like Xenophon complained about the number of non-Greeks among Athens’ foreign residents, we should be wary of generalizing from his personal stance to a common Athenian view given the prescriptive nature of the text.⁴³ The fact that he takes pains to mention this suggests the need to point out what was not particularly obvious, or at least problematic, to his readers.⁴⁴ He may have even been appealing to a prejudice held by some of these readers, but as with our discussion of Herodotos this does not speak to the prevalence or influence of this prejudice. Other evidence suggests that it was far from a consensus view: the high number of non-Greek metics indicates a policy of accommodation, as do cultic developments in the harbor district of the city

³⁸ See, e.g., *IG I³* 270.

³⁹ Compare the 900 drachmas demanded from Kyme (*IG I³* 270, I.17) or the 1200 from Lampsakos (II.6) with less than 87 from Karian Mylasa (IV.33).

⁴⁰ Under the Karian tribute section is listed both ethnically Karian towns like Mylasa (see previous note) and “Greek” communities like Lindos on Rhodes (*IG I³* 270, IV.25).

⁴¹ Raaflaub 2004, 166–81. Isaac 2004, 257–298 points out that even hostile and pejorative expressions about non-Greeks only properly emerge in the 4th century.

⁴² Lemnos: *IG I³* 1164 & 1165, Thuc. 3.5.1, 4.28.4; Mytilene: *IG I³* 66, Thuc. 3.50.2; Naxos, Euboea, Thasos, Thrace: Plut. *Perikles* 11.5. Cf. Saloman 1997. 4th-century settler-colonies were established on Samos and in the Chalkidike as well, on which see Cargill 1995.

⁴³ *Ways and Means* 2.3

⁴⁴ Cf. Harrison’s circular discussion of this passage (2020, 154) as hypothetically pointing toward prejudicial behavior which it does not give any explicit indication of.

(Peiraeus), where several Anatolian, Thracian, and Semitic cults were maintained by foreign residents and citizens.⁴⁵

Athenian practice stands in stark contrast to the ethno-cultural chauvinism of authors like Xenophon who promoted imperialist rhetoric. A more notorious example is Isokrates, who advocated for a pan-Hellenic war against the Persians, characterizing them as weak, effeminate, and ruling over peoples trained to subservience.⁴⁶ The Athenians, he claims, “are naturally hostile” (*Paneg.*158: φύσει πολεμικῶς...ἔχομεν) toward the Persians, an attitude that, alongside their cultural supremacy even above other Greeks, makes them ideally suited to lead a campaign of conquest against the Persian Empire.⁴⁷ Isokrates’ views, however, fell on deaf ears. No Athenian (or other “Greek” state) seems to have found them either actionable or ideologically useful, except to further their ambitions against closer rivals. Foreign policy resulted in many wars against each other, and much diplomacy and alliance with Persia. This included the precedent-setting King’s Peace of 387, which employed the concept of Greekness to support the imperial claims of both Artaxerxes and Sparta: the king positions himself as the granter and protector of autonomy for the “Greek cities” outside Asia, and in practice endorsed Sparta’s right to enforce the arrangement in the southern Balkans.⁴⁸ If we judge the actions of those in power, one could argue that Greek identity lost significance in the 4th century, even as it became a rallying cry of outlier aristocrats like Isokrates, Xenophon, and Plato.

The dissonance between the written texts’ emphasis on Greekness and the political actions uninfluenced by this discourse bears directly on our understanding of the evolving nature of Greek identity during the 4th century. Texts like Isokrates’ *Panegyricus* have been read as proof that Greekness transformed from an ethnic to a cultural identity. In part, this argument stems from a mistranslation of the Greek. In Hall’s translation, Isokrates boasts that

The result [of Athens’ superior wisdom and expression] is that the name of the Hellenes (i.e., Greeks) no longer seems to indicate an ethnic affiliation (*genos*) but a disposition (*dianoia*). Indeed, those who are called “Hellenes” are those who share our culture (*paideia*) rather than a common biological inheritance (*physis*).⁴⁹

From this Hall concludes that Greekness “can be taught and learnt,” but in making this inference, he seems to have ignored the essentially rhetorical nature of Isokrates’ words.⁵⁰ The “redefinition” of Greeks is clearly a flourish aimed at leavening the already luxuriant praises he has lavished on the Athenians. Indeed, Isokrates’ language suggests that he is offering a metaphor rather than a definition. Verbs of creation and seeming (πεποίηκε...δοκεῖν) govern the entire rest of the sentence.⁵¹ With this in mind, we should amend Hall’s translation to read:

⁴⁵ Garland 1987, 105-35; Parker 1996, 188-94; Demetriou 2012, 217-227.

⁴⁶ *Paneg.*, esp. 150-152. Cf. Isaac 2004, 285-288.

⁴⁷ Cf. *Paneg.* 50.

⁴⁸ *Xen. Hell.* 5.1.30-33.

⁴⁹ Hall 2002, 209; italics in original.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* n.172 for previous scholarship.

⁵¹ A look at the whole sentence reveals that Athens (“our city”) is the subject of the verb compound governing both infinitives that follow. *Paneg.* 50 τοσοῦτον δ’ ἀπολέλοιπεν ἡ πόλις ἡμῶν περὶ τὸ φρονεῖν καὶ λέγειν τοὺς ἄλλους ἀνθρώπους, ὥσθ’ οἱ ταύτης μαθηταὶ τῶν ἄλλων διδάσκαλοι γεγόνاسι, καὶ τὸ τῶν Ἑλλήνων ὄνομα πεποίηκε μηκῆτι τοῦ γένους ἀλλὰ τῆς διανοίας δοκεῖν εἶναι, καὶ μᾶλλον Ἑλλήνας καλεῖσθαι τοὺς τῆς παιδείας

“The result is that Athens has made the name of the Greeks seem to indicate no longer an ethnic affiliation but a disposition, and (has made it seem) that those who share in our culture, rather than our common nature, are called Greeks.”⁵² Rather than appealing to a cultural understanding of Greekness, Isokrates’ opposition of disposition and culture to ethnic and natural criteria assumes that descent (*genos*) not only still held currency among his readership, but was the normal standard for evaluating Greek identity. Indeed, the rhetorical force of his assertion depends not on the usurpation of traditional notions of Hellenicity, but on their continuing validity as a locus for comparison with the image of an Athens-dominated culture. Athens is so great, the argument goes, and its cultural leadership so uncontested, that it is *as if* acting Athenian could make up for a lack of Greek heritage. The point is to aggrandize the magnificence of Athens’ cultural prowess, not to persuade the audience to rethink its concept of what made someone Greek. Cultural Greekness divorced from ethnicity is not a notion with practical meaning for Isokrates.

The bigger issue raised by Isokrates’ words is whether we can connect his promotion of Greek superiority and calls for violence against “barbarian” Persia to political action and behavior, as Michael Flower does.⁵³ The epigraphical evidence from 4th-century Athens suggests that we cannot. The famous Decree of Aristoteles informing us of the Second Athenian Confederacy shows a clear break with Isokrates’ sentiments in its usage of the term *Hellenes*.⁵⁴ The purpose of the alliance is to make the Spartans “allow the Athenians and Greeks to be free.” Whereas Isokrates summoned Greeks to unite against a common non-Greek enemy, Athens’ response was to unite some Greeks against another Greek state. The language of the alliance clearly alludes to the King’s Peace of a decade earlier, which granted autonomy to all Greek cities outside Asia and threatened war against anyone contravening this autonomy.⁵⁵ The usage of the term is not helpful for defining Greekness, but it does illuminate what Greekness implied, namely freedom *qua* sovereignty. Thus the term applied to the realm of foreign policy and entailed privileges to be defended (or exploited by hegemonic states like Athens) at the state level. There is, however, no interest in actively excluding non-Greek states from these privileges, and the cities under Persian rule are ignored, i.e., precisely those communities that Isokrates’ rhetoric of Greek superiority purports to liberate. In the realm of power relations, Greekness was employed to define and delimit power relations among Greek-identifying states, but not much else, and we might wonder how impactful this discourse was after Sparta was humbled six years later at Leuktra.⁵⁶

τῆς ἡμετέρας ἢ τοῦς τῆς κοινῆς φύσεως μετέχοντας. Most translations divorce *καλεῖσθαι* from this dependence. Cf. Said 2001, 282

⁵² Hall’s translation of *phusis* as “biological inheritance” is perhaps too conveniently narrow, since the term can also encompass what is conditioned by environmental/climatic factors, as is the case in, e.g., the Hippocratic Corpus, *On Airs, Waters, and Places* 12-24.

⁵³ Flower 2000, 97-107. For more recent arguments in the same vein, see below.

⁵⁴ IG II² 43, esp. lines 7-11.

⁵⁵ Xen. *Hell.* 5.1.31; Diod. 14.110.3. The peace also excluded three Athenian-owned islands in the Aegean.

⁵⁶ Cf. Cawkwell 1980, 47-48. Demosthenes’ later employment of Greek identity in exhorting Athenians to take action against Macedon might prove a clearer link between this discourse and political action (see Said 2001, 276-286) but here it seems impossible to distinguish pan-Hellenic motives from self-interest (economic access to the Northern Aegean or protection of Attica itself).

It is tempting to see Isokrates' ideas as influencing Philip II of Macedon's planned invasion against the Persian kings, but more difficult to detect whether this would have led to ethnic hostility rather than simply imperial rivalry. Philip framed the invasion as retribution for the Persian invasion in 480 BC as *hegemon* of the League of Corinth, made up of most southern Balkan states, which he set up in the wake of his military defeats of the Phokians, Thebans, and Athenians.⁵⁷ This framing aimed to create solidarity between the Macedonian monarch and his new allies, many of whose fellow citizens his armies had recently slaughtered. His call for vengeance against Persia promoted solidarity between his kingdom and these recent enemies, and promised them violence; what it did not promise was power. Philip's court, the primary stakeholders in Macedonian acts of imperial conquest, consisted of the Macedonian elite, and there is little indication that this elite would have been significantly broadened to include Greeks had Philip lived to carry out his invasion. The rules governing the League of Corinth all seem directed at governing relations among member states. This organization operated in the tradition of the King's Peace and the Second Athenian Confederacy in its understanding of Greekness.⁵⁸ Thus the connection between Isokrates' exhortations and the king's eastern plans for expansion lies in the aim to gain support, without an intention to include those the League discourse called "Greeks" as shareholders in Macedonian imperial power.⁵⁹

In this section I have argued that most of the texts espousing Greekness as a concept stem from elite, and above all intellectual, perspectives that sought to convey a broader ethnic consciousness for propagandistic reasons that most Athenians, and probably an even higher proportion of other Greek-speakers, did not share. These texts rarely addressed the majority, but even when they might have done so, foreign policy in Athens and elsewhere seems unmotivated by a Greek-barbarian hierarchy, while domestic policy did not find the concept of Greekness useful in managing and racializing foreign inhabitants, instead privileging a hierarchy with Athenians at the top. The obvious conclusion to draw from this is that the discourse of Greek identity as found in our written sources did not have significant purchase over the majority of "Greeks," including those with a share in the sovereignty of the many states that made up the ancient "Greek" world. Given this, and the rarity with which most "Greeks" would have as a result thought of themselves as such, to continue to refer to this world and its history as "Greek" seems a tacit endorsement of the arguments of Isokrates and his ilk, of Athens' and Philip's imperialistic aims, and a misrepresentation of how individuals were understood with respect to their origins and cultural differences.

Complicating Monarchy

The world of Hellenistic empires inaugurated by Alexander's conquests seems at first glance like one where Greek chauvinism became policy. Macedonian rulers claimed to have liberated the

⁵⁷ IG II² 236; Dem. 17.8 Cf. Flower 2000, 104.

⁵⁸ Cf. Perlman 1985.

⁵⁹ While certainly violence and plunder entail the power of one group over another, the presentation of the campaign as a pan-Hellenic act of revenge merely aimed to justify (and therefore motivate) the Greek states to send troops to serve under Philip. They did not dictate the nature of the violence itself, which likely would have been governed by traditional norms of warfare.

Greek cities of Asia from Persian oppressors, and then from rival Macedonian rulers as Alexander’s successors fought over his empire. While full independence was not the intent of such claims, they did typically lead to real privileges, such as tax relief or freedom from garrisoning, that were not extended to other subject communities.⁶⁰ Greek was an official language of every major kingdom, and settlers from the Greek-speaking Aegean arrived to populate dozens of new settlements in Africa and Asia, some of which became imperial capitals.⁶¹ In Egypt, a racially hierarchical state developed, with Macedonians and Greeks enjoying civic and fiscal privileges above and against the indigenous Egyptian population.⁶² One may well suspect that Isokrates was, post-mortem, finally having his day, along with Alexander’s tutor Aristotle, who endorsed the idea that non-Greeks possessed a slavish nature and is supposed to have counseled Alexander to treat his non-Greek subjects more harshly than the Greeks.⁶³ I imagine that few readers will be unfamiliar with this view of the Hellenistic world.⁶⁴

More recent scholarship, as we will see, has challenged aspects of this understanding, but again with little effect on grander narratives of the period, or on the scholarly commitment to the category of “Greek” itself within these narratives. To demonstrate how this picture of an all-too-familiar, ethnically driven set of colonial regimes is misleading in important ways, let us first return to the tale of Aristotle advising Alexander on imperial policy, and especially the story’s most important detail: Alexander’s rejection of his tutor’s advice. I am less interested in the factual status of this account—though a version goes back at least to the 3rd century BC—than in how it reflects what we know of the relationship between discourses of Greekness as found in Aristotle’s writings and the policies and behaviors of Alexander and later Hellenistic rulers.⁶⁵ The story nicely encapsulates the Hellenistic political response to the ideas about Greek superiority bristling in the works of Isokrates and Aristotle.⁶⁶

Alexander unquestionably declared freedom to the Greek cities of Asia Minor as part of his efforts to exploit Hellenic identity to garner support for his attempts to out the Persian forces from the region. What is often missed is that he made similar proclamations to communities whom ancient and modern sources do not consider Greek, such as Sardis in Lydia and Mallos in Kilikia.⁶⁷ His employment of a rhetoric of Greekness did not entail the refusal to grant similar privileges without such rhetoric. Alexander’s weak attachment to the concept of Greekness can also be seen in his dismissal of his “Greek” allied troops—and we should remember that the label here comes from our Roman-era sources—after taking the Persian homeland. With Spartan resistance in the Balkans crushed and the main forces of the Persian army defeated, the need for

⁶⁰ Ma 1999, 179-242.

⁶¹ On these settlements, see Cohen 1995, 2006 and 2013.

⁶² Thompson 2001 (with qualification); McCoskey 2012, 88-109.

⁶³ Plutarch, *Moralia* 329b-d. Cf. Flower 2000, 107-128; Harrison 2020, 154.

⁶⁴ Select examples include Will 1985; Burstein 2008; Stavrianopoulou 2013.

⁶⁵ Strabo 1.4.9, citing Eratosthenes.

⁶⁶ Cf. Stier 1970, 38-39; Isaac 2004, 301.

⁶⁷ Arrian, *Anab.* 1.17, 2.6. Similar is the appointment of local dynasts in cities like Sidon, since these positions were traditional institutions of local autonomy (Curtius 4.3.4).

these troops—as much hostages as auxiliaries—was gone.⁶⁸ He certainly favored his Macedonian elite with appointments to the majority of satrapies in his new empire, but the rest were assigned to non-Macedonians without any clear preference for those we might identify as Greek. Examples include Ada in Karia, Mazaios in Mesopotamia, and several men with Iranian names in the eastern portion of the empire.⁶⁹ In the later years of his reign, he famously sought to incorporate Persian practices and individuals into his court, much to the chagrin of many Macedonian elite and soldiers. Thus, while Macedonian privilege is easy to identify, a Greek counterpart is less striking than we might expect.

The distinction between Macedonian and Greek is an important one. The former, as inhabitants of the original kingdom of Philip II, certainly represented a dominant “ethno-class,” at least in the initial generation of empire following Alexander’s death. Macedonians held the most important positions of political and military power, including in the newly forming royal courts, and were given substantial land holdings in Asia and Africa at the expense of the local population.⁷⁰ These early settler-colonists recognized the link between identity and privilege, since they took pains to display imagery on their coinage and grave goods that bore clear Macedonian overtones.⁷¹ Yet over time these symbols and even overt claims to Macedonian identity came from an ethnically diverse set of soldiers, suggesting that what was once an ethnic privilege had become a strictly military one.⁷² More importantly, there is nothing in all this evidence to justify the common scholarly assumption that “Greeks” were included in this initial flurry of Macedonian favoritism.⁷³

It is true that Seleukos Nikator, Ptolemy Soter, and other self-made kings promoted a Greco-centric slogan of *polis* freedom. This phenomenon has been well studied as a key ideological position for empires that sought to gain the submission and support of cities who might otherwise see these empires as a threat to their cherished autonomy and freedom.⁷⁴ Just as for the Athenians in the 5th century and the Philip II of Macedon in the 4th, Greek identity was a useful conceptual tool of empire, because it created buy-in by vaguely promising preferential treatment. Yet if we take a longer view than the first generation of dynasties, the words and policies of the Hellenistic empires betray no clear intention to establish a privileged class of “Greeks.” Subsequently, imperial appeals to Greek favoritism become quite rare in the epigraphic record. We find almost no uses of the term “Greek” by Hellenistic rulers outside of the southern Balkans.⁷⁵ The major exception is Antiochos III, the first Seleukid king since the

⁶⁸ Faraguna 2003, 107-115, noting the clear “tension” between ideological pronouncements and imperial treatment of Greeks. This tension culminates in the complete violation of the League of Corinth system that the infamous Exiles’ Decree represented (cf. *ibid.* 124-130).

⁶⁹ Hyland 2013.

⁷⁰ Borza 1992 and 1996. Less definitively, Badian 1982.

⁷¹ Billows 1995, 28-33.

⁷² *Ibid.* 155-57.

⁷³ Briant 1982, 263-92; Ma 2003, 187-88.

⁷⁴ E.g., Billows 1995, 187-236; Ma 1999, 177-242; *idem* 2003. However, these studies often conflate civic (*polis*) and Greek status, assuming that a city that *can* be identified as Greek was always conceived as Greek by the Hellenistic kings.

⁷⁵ This of course excludes the literary evidence, which I find unhelpful for accessing the terms of discourse used by the Hellenistic kings, since Greekness was also a central historiographical category for those writing in the

dynasty’s founder to record good will toward Greeks specifically.⁷⁶ He was, perhaps, one inspiration for the few other imperial uses of Greekness that we find before the 1st century BC, all by Roman generals.⁷⁷ After the 180s, imperial invocation of Greekness again ceased until the 1st century, even after the creation of the Roman province of Asia, which encompassed most Ionian and Aiolian cities on the peninsula.

Instead, the granting of privileges and even freedom to civic communities largely followed a less ethnocentric practice for most of the 3rd and 2nd centuries: not only were Greek and non-Greek cities able to negotiate similar privileges, but the very language of Greekness was absent.⁷⁸ Both Miletos and Mylasa won their freedom at some point after the middle of the 3rd century.⁷⁹ Mylasa of the 5th century was the heart of the Karian ethnic community.⁸⁰ Yet its ability to win and make use of independence was indistinguishable from Miletos, whose Ionian heritage make it unquestionably Greek (if not necessarily “pure”) for ancient and modern authors.⁸¹ Both cities embarked on aggressive campaigns of expansion at the expense of local neighboring communities.⁸² The suggestion that these similarities show that Mylasa had “become Greek” not only employs circular reasoning in assuming a valence of Greekness that finds no expression in the evidence until the first century, but also relies on a concept of “Hellenization” that would have been meaningless to most ancient minds.⁸³ Even Greek status in Egypt came to be more inclusive over time of Egyptians and other non-Greeks.⁸⁴

The treatment of cities like Miletos and Mylasa contrasts not with non-Greek cities, but rather with the status of the Greco-Macedonian settler-colonies. Until the 2nd century, these cities universally—and ironically, given their perception as sites of Greek domination—faced a much more restricted level of autonomy, even if they were not designated as royal capitals. While enjoying civic institutions tied to local administration and cult maintenance, these communities were not granted exemptions from imperial control or resource extraction, and

tradition of Herodotos and Thucydides, and under the influence of Roman hegemony or direct rule in the Eastern Mediterranean. It is also clear that Greek identity on the Greek mainland continued to serve its 4th-century function of fostering solidarity against some hegemonic forces (Macedonia, Aitolia) in support of other hegemonic forces (Athens & Sparta, the Achaian and Aitolian federations); yet in the context of the larger Hellenistic world, this discourse proves rather exceptional.

⁷⁶ *Ilias* 4, lines 41–43 (195–190 BC).

⁷⁷ These include the famous declaration of Flamininus at the Isthmian Games in 196 BC (Plb. 18.44–46; cf. Livy 33.33, who interestingly recasts Polybios’ words on the “freedom of the Greeks” into non-ethnic language (“all the cities in Greece and Asia recover their liberty”)) and Scipio Africanus’ letter espousing Greek privilege in his dealings with Herakleia on the Latmos in the wake of Rome’s successful eviction of Seleukid power from all of Anatolia except for Kilikia (Ma 1999, #45). The fact that the official proclamations in both cases do not mention “Greeks” but only cities or other ethnic names strongly suggests the propagandistic valence and limited context of this term.

⁷⁸ See Ma 2003, 179–83, 185f., for the similar role of royal negotiation among Greek and non-Greek subject communities. Cf. Stavrianopoulou 2013.

⁷⁹ For Mylasa, see Isager and Karlsson 2008, 39–52 and Reger 2010, 49–50; for Miletos, see Welles 1934, #22.

⁸⁰ Hdt. 1.171.

⁸¹ E.g., Hdt. 1.146.

⁸² LaBuff 2016, 46–49 (with references), 87–117.

⁸³ For critiques of the concept of Hellenization, see Hodos 2006, 11–16; Dietler 2010, 43–53.

⁸⁴ Thompson 2001.

could even be gifted *in toto* to another state, as happened to the Seleukid foundation of Stratonikeia, which was transferred to the Rhodians.⁸⁵ It was only in the course of the 2nd century that major foundations like Alexandria and Syrian Antioch won greater political agency, exploiting dynastic and other internal disputes.⁸⁶ Even then, these cases did not reflect a generalizable pattern: in Mesopotamia, Antiochos IV founded a settler community at Babylon, which coexisted with the Babylonian population as a politically distinct but equally subject autonomous group.⁸⁷

It is indeed the lack of relevance of Greekness to imperial policy for most of the Hellenistic period that illuminates how Romans could employ the term much more expansively than had been the case in the 4th century. The reappearance of “Greeks” in our 1st-century evidence is likely tied to the Mithridatic wars, when the Pontic king furthered his imperial ambitions by renewing the practice of claiming to bring liberation to Greek cities, who he claimed were now oppressed by the Romans.⁸⁸ After Mithridates’ defeat, we find many Roman generals advertising their favor to Greeks, along with numerous epigraphical references to a League (*koinon*) of Greeks, including several decrees from the league itself.⁸⁹ Here we have clear institutional support for a notion of Greek identity that intentionally incorporated civic identities into the larger ethnically defined body.⁹⁰ This institutionalization of Greekness was not merely a response to Mithridates’ propaganda, but also an act of imperial ordering. The Romans, as non-Greeks, would have been more prone to organize this part of their empire in terms of simpler ethnic categories, but this could have only found acceptance if the boundaries of Greekness were not intensely and frequently policed in the preceding centuries.

The Roman conceptualization of their empire also explains how the League of Greeks in Anatolia differed from earlier diplomatic institutions such as the League of Corinth and the late 4th-century “Hellenic League.”⁹¹ Beyond the fact that the Roman-era league was limited to Anatolia, excluding the Balkans and most of the Aegean islands, we can affirm that membership was not based on a pre-Hellenistic idea of what a Greek city was. Several “non-Greek” cities are listed alongside traditionally “Greek” cities like Smyrna and Miletos, including “Karian” Mylasa and Alabanda, “Lydian” Sardis, and “Thracian” Tralles.⁹² The application of Hellenic gloss on

⁸⁵ Plb. 30.31.6. Cf. Ma 1999, Appendix 5. This is not to say that older cities could not also be gifted, as happened when the Ptolemies sold Kaunos to Rhodes for 200 talents. The point here is that this form of control was not generalized across all “non-colonies,” whereas it was for colonies. The few counterexamples either involve a renamed older city (Sikyon as Demetrias) or a colony founded by a different dynasty than the one granting it civic privileges (Lysimacheia under the Seleukids), for which see Cohen 1995, 26.

⁸⁶ Chrubasik 2016.

⁸⁷ Van der Spek 2009, who assumes that the Greek “*politai*,” as our cuneiform evidence calls them, enjoyed a privileged position in Babylon, but none of the evidence adduced supports this assumption.

⁸⁸ McGing 1986, 89-108.

⁸⁹ Greek favoritism, *IPriene* 244, *SEG* 37.958, *ISmyrna* 576 (possibly); League of Greeks (1st c. BC only): *A&R* #5, *IDidyra* 201, *Milet* I 2.3, *Milet* I 9.369, *IPriene* 105, *IGRR* 4.307 & 1756.

⁹⁰ See especially Ferrary 2001, 20-29. Although Ferrary is convinced that the Greekness of the league emanated from the Anatolians themselves, the precedence of externally driven royal or Roman propaganda suggests the opposite. Cf. *idem* 2011, 3-9, and the contributions in Huet and Valette-Cagnac 2005.

⁹¹ On these earlier leagues, see Smarczyk 2015.

⁹² *Milet* I.2.3, lines 43-46.

communities we tend to think of as non-Greek illustrates how Romans influenced the use of simple ethnic categories for imperial institutions.⁹³ These communities had truly “become Greek,” but as a result of the particular imperial conditions of the 1st century, not because ancient minds shared the set of linguistic and cultural criteria employed by modern scholars to determine levels of “Hellenization,” and simply forgot to mention this in their many interactions across regional ethnic lines.

Turning back to the imperial centers of the Hellenistic East, scholarship comfortably asserts “the perceived centrality of Greekness in Hellenistic kingship,” but the basis for this conclusion comes either from more specifically Macedonian military symbols, which as we have seen often mask greater ethnic diversity, or from cultural “facts”—city-planning, festivals, coinage, language—whose ethnic valence is assumed to have been universally perceived across many different contexts.⁹⁴ This is ultimately an argument from silence. Were such phenomena perceived similarly from Egypt to Asia Minor to Mesopotamia, whose differing urban histories, for example, variously impacted their inhabitants’ ability to relate to and participate in the importation of *polis* settlements? What was “foreign” in the 4th century may have felt commonplace a century or two later, particularly as many Hellenistic foundations developed an identity as much embedded in the local landscape and its traditions as in imported cultural elements.⁹⁵ Even cases in which resistance was framed in explicitly ethnic terms, such as the Jewish rebellion against the Seleukids, highlight that this discourse was merely one alternative among several, given the embrace of *polis* institutions by many self-ascribed Jews, against whom the Maccabean partisans pitted themselves.⁹⁶

The point can be extended to a consideration of the primary stakeholders of imperial power in the Hellenistic empires, i.e., the courtiers around the kings and the commanders of armies and provinces. It was once commonplace to assert a clear preference for Greeks in these positions.⁹⁷ More recent scholarship has pointed out the selection bias of our sources, most of which come from the Aegean, and the possibility that linguistically Greek names do not necessarily speak to the identity of their bearers, while Near Eastern evidence highlights how the Seleukids and even the Ptolemies were much more inclusive of elites coming from Iranian, Egyptian, and other cultural backgrounds in delegating authority than had been acknowledged.⁹⁸ Complementary to this inclusiveness were the institutions of ethnic integration practiced by both empires in local communities and in the military, suggesting the importance of class distinctions over ethnic difference in determining the powerful and the exploited.⁹⁹

⁹³ Two other fundamental factors, which I lack the space to explore here, are the agency of indigenous communities to efface ethnic difference and the relative *unimportance* of regional ethnic labels in the daily self-perception of Anatolians.

⁹⁴ Quote from Ma 2003, 187-88, following Billows 1995, 170-172.

⁹⁵ See, e.g., Strootman 2021.

⁹⁶ Ma 2012, 71-84.

⁹⁷ Savalli-Lestrade 1998, 216-234; Habicht 1958, 5-7 (relying largely on Polybios and Diogenes Laertius). Cf. Ma 2003, 187f.

⁹⁸ Engels 2017, 74-78; Strootman 2017. I use the phrase “cultural background” here to avoid presuming that these elites identified by the ethnic identity we expect them to have claimed.

⁹⁹ Fischer-Bovet 2015. Cf. many of the contributions in Fischer-Bovet and von Reden 2021.

Nevertheless, there are actual exceptions to my portrayal of the Hellenistic East. Ptolemaic Egypt represents the most obvious context in which Greekness functioned to define and delineate privilege and its lack. Denise McCoskey has made a strong case for seeing this Macedonian kingdom as, at least initially, a racially hierarchical state. At the heart of this hierarchy was the correlation between land appropriation and Greek legal status: not only urban spaces like Alexandria but significant arable land was apportioned to Greek-speaking settlers, the majority of whom were most likely Macedonian and Greek civic and military veterans.¹⁰⁰ However, not only is this situation complicated by the intersection of class and race, as just suggested, but it is also dangerous to generalize from the Egyptian case, even for regions outside of Egypt ruled by the Ptolemies. Certainly in Anatolia we find little indication that Greekness determined how the dynasty treated individuals and communities. Elites such as Zenon of Kaunos, a city identified by Herodotos as ethnically distinct not only from Greeks but Karians (1.172), were able to rise high in the ranks of the imperial bureaucracy, and in appropriating land from Nagidos in Kilikia to found the colony of Arsinoe, the Ptolemies allowed Nagidos to retain primary status.¹⁰¹

The case of Nagidos and Arsinoe largely conforms to the general pattern of Hellenistic colonisation, where pre-existing settlements either maintained their autonomy or became an integral part of the new settlement. The incontrovertible fact that the founding of colonies involved land appropriation and an influx of Greek-speaking settlers should not mislead us to the common conclusion that, as a result, the new settlers represented a privileged population who even ruled over local indigenous populations.¹⁰² In fact, these settlements merely represent an extension of land restructuring practices that had been practiced in the Balkans by the Argead dynasty well before Alexander, and involved the relocation and merging of diverse ethnic groups where hierarchies were established based on class, rather than ethnic, privilege.¹⁰³ A typical example that challenges scholarly consensus is the Seleukid colony of Stratonikeia, founded with Macedonian settlers at some point in the middle of the 3rd century. Here we are fortunate to know the names of the major civic subdivisions of the community, which show us that formerly independent indigenous towns had been incorporated into both the territory and the citizen body of Stratonikeia.¹⁰⁴ The city's major state cults were not Macedonian deities but the major local pre-settlement gods, including Hekate of Lagina and Zeus Chrysaoros.¹⁰⁵ The distinction between Macedonian settler and indigenous "Karian" seems to have become fairly irrelevant soon after the foundation, both in terms of local power dynamics and in relation to the imperial center. The same seems true of foundations elsewhere in Asia Minor, as well as in

¹⁰⁰ McCoskey 2012. Cf. *idem* 2002.

¹⁰¹ On Zenon, see Orrieux 1985, despite the Hellenizing title; for Nagidos, see Jones and Habicht 1989; Chaniotis 1993. The ethnic identity of Nagidos is unknown for the Hellenistic period--only in Roman imperial times do we hear of origin stories that link the city to an original Greek foundation. In the 3rd century BC (the date of the inscription regarding Arsinoe), both Nagidos and Arsinoe are contrasted with a third group identified only as "barbarians," who threatened the territory of the two cities. This group is either a local band of (probably) mountain-dwelling raiders or an offshoot of the Gallic migrations into Anatolia. In either case, this group lay outside the control of the Ptolemies.

¹⁰² Billows 1995, 111-172; Briant 1982, 252-62.

¹⁰³ Boehm 2018, 105-120.

¹⁰⁴ Van Bremen 2000, 389-402. Cf. Şahin 1976.

¹⁰⁵ Mileta 2014.

Seleukid Syria and even Ptolemaic Egypt.¹⁰⁶ Local “Syrians” helped populate the Tetrapolis founded by the Seleukids in the northern Levant.¹⁰⁷ And while Alexandria may have maintained a strict distinction between its citizens and the suburban Egyptian population, the more general pattern of Ptolemaic settlement was ethnically inclusive.¹⁰⁸

Another context where we expect to find Greek identity defining power relations is among pre-Hellenistic “Greek” cities that neighbored pre-existing populations in regions like Anatolia or the Black Sea coast. And again, these expectations are disappointed. Border disputes are no more common between “Greek” and “non-Greek” communities than between two “Greek” or two “non-Greek” communities. For example, Miletos’ war with nearby Herakleia (a renaming of Latmos in Karia) parallels its conflict with “Greek” Magnesia or the centuries-long land dispute between Priene and Samos.¹⁰⁹ More positive diplomatic exchanges were also common across supposed ethnic lines, as when Miletos and Mylasa entered into an *isopoliteia* treaty, permitting each other’s citizens to potentially gain citizenship in the other community.¹¹⁰

Even in those cases in which “Greek” cities dominated a local non-citizen population, it was not Greekness that justified inequality but civic privileged status, just as with metic-citizen relations in classical Athens. Our evidence in the Hellenistic period comes once more from Anatolian cities like Priene, Pergamon, and Aphrodisias, where less privileged groups dubbed *paroikoi* are occasionally mentioned in the sources.¹¹¹ These groups clearly lacked civic political “rights” while still paying taxes and possibly also lacking the ability to relocate. While scholars have tended to assume that these groups were “indigenous” in contrast to an implicit or explicitly labeled “Greek” citizenry,¹¹² the evidence itself places little emphasis on ethnic terminology and never links citizenship to Greek identity.¹¹³ Just as with studies of the dynamics between Greco-Macedonians and local populations in royal colonies, conclusions are based more on assumption than evidence.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁶ Mileta 2009. See also the discussions of Laodikeia on the Lykos and Apameia-Kelainai in Boehm 2018, 115-16, 135f., 169-170.

¹⁰⁷ Haddad 1951; Cohen 2006, 86; cf. Strootman 2021.

¹⁰⁸ Mueller 2006, 165-174.

¹⁰⁹ For Miletos’ wars, see Herrmann 2001. For the Samos-Priene dispute, see *IPriene* 500 and *Syll.*³ 688.

¹¹⁰ *Milet* I.3.146.

¹¹¹ Corsaro 1984, 473-77; *idem* 2001; Bertrand 2005, 39-50; Gagliardi 2009-2010; Kah 2012.

¹¹² E.g. Gauthier 1988, 31-35.

¹¹³ Cf. Thonemann 2013, 33-36.

¹¹⁴ Cohen 1978; Briant 1982, 227-279; Billows 1995, 111-132. The evidence for this position amounts to (1) royal donations or “sales” of land to prominent individuals (members of the royal family or court), where it is clear that dependent populations inhabited these lands and owed revenues to the beneficiaries of the grant/sale; (2) the incorporation or pre-existing village settlements into the territory of newly founded cities; and (3) the presence of ethnically segregated districts in a few colonies. First, the land grants/sales clearly do not reflect the position of the ordinary soldier given land by his king, and Billows’ attempt (*ibid.* 170.), to see the servants (*therapontes*) of the Jewish settlers Asia Minor under Antiochos III as indigenous serfs remains unconvincing. Second, many villages were incorporated into newly founded cities, but only assumption can lead to the conclusion that the villagers became dependents of the settlers. The incorporation of village cults into civic ritual in fact suggests the opposite. Finally, as suggested earlier in the case of Babylon, ethnically distinct districts do not speak to the status of each district’s inhabitants, nor to the impermeability of district boundaries.

There are two exceptions to this picture of the minor relevance of Greekness that require discussion. First, the city of Miletos, in the process of absorbing the neighboring city of Pidasa, granted citizenship to all Pidasean men but demanded that Pidasean wives would only become citizens if born in Pidasa or a Greek city.¹¹⁵ It is unclear whether the Milesians considered Pidasa to be a Greek city (I suspect not), but clearly they thought that some Pidasean men had married women whom they did not consider to be Greek, and wished to exclude these women from civic privileges (ritual and possibly reproductive) afforded to Milesian women. The gendered nature of this exclusion probably reflects the intersection of patriarchal and ethnocentric notions of purity, unequally imposed on women and foreigners in religious contexts. Yet it is also important to stress that in spite of this desire to limit the number of non-Greeks gaining citizenship, the city had and continued to grant individual citizenship to several persons from non-Greek cities.¹¹⁶

A second exception occurred north of Miletos, where Smyrna was also concerned with preventing non-Greeks from becoming citizens in the context of absorbing a neighbor, and in similarly complex ways. Nearby Magnesia on the Sipylus had not remained loyal to the Seleukid kings during a war against the Ptolemies, and Smyrna took this opportunity to propose that Magnesia become part of Smyrna. The proposal stipulated that only those Magnesians who were free and Greek should become Smyrnan citizens—Magnesia was a military settlement on land that also included slaves and non-Greeks.¹¹⁷ Interestingly, an addendum to the original arrangement allowed for a group of Persians to become citizens as well, implying that only indigenous non-Greeks were being targeted for exclusion.¹¹⁸

I mention these exceptions for two reasons. First, these invocations of Greek identity stand out for their rarity. Their impact would have been quite minor on most individuals, who were institutionally conditioned to think of themselves in more local terms. Most people outside of Egypt would not have heard or told themselves that they were Greek very often over the course of a lifetime. While our evidence surely does not encompass all instances of Greek identity being mentioned by or to urban communities, it is also unlikely that a significant number of inscriptions with this term remain unknown to us. From these considerations it seems that in most of the Hellenistic world, being Greek was something one recognized as relevant when it came up (usually externally), but because it did not come up often, only a few cities were motivated at the communal level to stress this identity on their own initiative. In this light, it would be a mistake to assume that Greek identity lay behind the more prevalent binary that divided citizen and subordinate population groups (including not only Athenian metics and Hellenistic *paroikoi*, but also slaves, women, and additional foreign-born groups).

¹¹⁵ *Milet* I.3.149, lines 10-12: ὅσαι ἄν ὤσιν φύσει Πιδασίδες ἢ πόλεως Ἑλληνίδος πολίτιδες.

¹¹⁶ LaBuff 2016, 45-48, 87-103.

¹¹⁷ *OGIS* 229. The phrase “free and Greek” occurs at several places in the inscription, lines 45, 52, 75. Cf. Ihnken 1978, 35-60.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Fingerson 2007. We might also include the more ideological than juridical case of Priene, just north of Miletos, during the Gallic migration into Anatolia in the 270s. In the Prienian version of this event (*IPriene* 17), the city portrayed the Gauls’ behavior as crimes “against Greeks.” Here Greek identity serves the Prienians aim to depict their sufferings in solidarity with other regional communities and to create a mental border between “victim” and “aggressor” through ethnic language.

Second, it is vital to highlight cases where Greekness was employed in racializing discourse, given that ancient historians are wont to deny the existence of race and racism in antiquity. At the same time, contextualizing these cases as exceptions points to the need to go beyond the categories of “Greek” and “barbarian” in looking for other instances of racialized societies. While the Ptolemies, Milesians, and Smyrnans represent important cases where Greekness served to explicitly define privileged and oppressed groups, similar power relations existed in a number of other contexts in which different categories were employed to define these power relations. By insisting on the primacy of Greek identity and its opposite, by favoring only nationalized versions of imperial and racial rhetoric, we risk misunderstanding these other contexts or ignoring them as important sites of racialization.

Conclusion: the Greek Allure

What is the impact of centering “Greeks” in our narratives of political, social, and cultural history of the ancient Mediterranean and beyond? I hope to have shown that this is more than a simple label of convenience to refer to “Greek-speakers,” and instead consistently refers to a posited ethnic group that emerges from ancient imperial rhetoric and stands in contrast to other groups even when they spoke Greek, although in the Hellenistic period the addition of other aspects of “Greek” culture might lead to the full “Hellenization” of formerly non-Greek communities. This ethnic group is assumed to correspond not only to the discourse of Greekness we find occasionally in our sources, but to an underlying unity that represents an imperialistic standard by and against which more locally driven political action and cultural production is measured. Applying the term “Greek” to these phenomena is not merely Hellenocentric; it also endorses the imperial aims of its ancient proponents and conveys the false (and often unintended) impression of a normalized nation that existed in spite of constant disunity, diversity, and considerable cultural overlap within and beyond the supposed boundaries of that nation.¹¹⁹

These arguments have a variety of consequences for how we talk about what is currently defined as the ancient Greek world. If even those spheres of life in which we most expect to see Greekness matter are limited in time and scope, and seek (often unsuccessfully) to create rather than describe a reality, then it follows that the concept had even weaker purchase in other spheres. We do not (and likely cannot) know how similarities and differences in consumptive practices, settlement patterns, burial customs, etc., were perceived by the vast majority of those traveling and encountering the diversity of the ancient Mediterranean, but the assumption that they articulated these perceptions in terms of Greekness flies in the face of the identity discourse that we find in the epigraphic evidence, which even if still weighted toward elite perspectives is far more representative than our literary evidence. More importantly, to disregard these perceptions in favor of an imperialized and nationalized representation of their commonalities is to lose sight of the intensity and breadth of the modern scholarly gaze, whose hindsight assists

¹¹⁹ The idea that the term *Hellene* refers to a cultural identity, while popular among scholars, does not typically exclude the implicit association with Greek ethnicity/nationality, except in Stier 1955 and 1970, whose views have not, as far as I am aware, won general acceptance.

in the organization of material culture into coherent groupings. Even ancient intellectuals, and certainly most other people at the time, were uninterested or incapable of this level of analysis.

If Greek identity was so rarely articulated and conceptualized in most of the Greek-speaking world during the Classical and Hellenistic periods, then why does this identity continue to anchor our histories of this world? In closing, I would like to briefly suggest three important factors. The first we have already explored in the first section. Greekness was a prominent category within the intellectual and imperial worldview of many ancient writers of histories, a selection of philosophical writings, theatrical works, and certain pieces of rhetoric. Compositions from these latter two genres in particular meant that ideas of Greekness were familiar to a broader set of Athenians and perhaps others, though not impactful enough to shape their behavior in detectable ways. In any case, the status of Greekness as an intellectual category established a precedent for subsequent writers and audiences in these and other genres, such as epigrammatic poetry, across the Hellenistic and Imperial Periods, in both Greek and Latin. For modern historians whose methodology relies on these texts and interprets them as speaking for the silent majority, or at least dictating to that majority the dominant ways of seeing the world, a focus on Greekness made good sense. But the assumptions behind this methodology cannot be maintained.

I have also alluded to the second factor, which is influenced by the first: Roman imperial discourse, and more specifically how Roman political elites defined their subjects through ethnic categories. The overlap between intellectual and political elites during the Late Republic, mostly famously in the person of Cicero, is well known. Yet rather than simply inheriting ethnic categories from Greek intellectuals, Roman politicians at times redefined them to better suit their administrative aims and practices. The province of Asia as it evolved in the 1st century is a case in point, with the establishment of a “League of Greeks” that included all the major cities of the province regardless of earlier ethnic conceptions. While others have seen the name of this league as arising from the member communities themselves, the relative rarity of “Greek” discourse in the preceding century suggests that we should instead view the league’s name through the lens of a Roman perspective that saw enough similarities among the various Anatolian communities in its province to call everyone “Greek,” especially since this mindset finds parallels in Cicero’s contemporary way of talking about the region.¹²⁰ Eventually, this discourse, alongside the older literary discourse discussed in the preceding paragraph, then came to shape how Greeks “talked back” to the empire in what we call the Second Sophistic.¹²¹

Finally, the modern tendency to take seriously Greek and Roman authors, and Roman imperial structures, is not the result of arbitrary methodological preference. The coincidence of ancient history’s birth as a discipline and the rise of nationalism in imperialistic Europe and the Americas meant that what can be called a “nation-state epistemology” played a fundamental role in shaping the categories of analysis that have defined the study of the ancient Mediterranean since the nineteenth century. The implicit and explicit comparisons that run through the work of early 19th-century scholars always take “the Greeks” as the unquestioned counterpart of “us,” defined variously through national categories such as “German,” “French,”

¹²⁰Ferrary 2011, 6–7. See *idem* 2001, 24–29 for the view that Anatolians wanted the league to be called Greek.

¹²¹E.g. the contributions in Goldhill 2001. Yet even at this time Greek identity was not always dominant or a unified concept, on which see Whitmarsh 2013; Dench 2018.

or “British.”¹²² The implication was that “Greeks” too had been a nation in the modern sense, even if they failed to achieve the ideal of political nationhood. Such assumptions were (and are) intricately interwoven with ideologies of colonialism and racism, insofar as the “Greeks” *qua* nation were always imagined as a metropole in relation to peoples from the rest of the Mediterranean, West Asia, and Egypt, dominating them culturally, and eventually politically, due to their superiority. While historians of the late 20th and early 21st centuries have done away with many of the assumptions and conclusions of these intellectual ancestors, the basic core of nation-state epistemology persists. Even if we know that there never was a Greek nation-state in antiquity, we cannot seem to get away from assuming that national identity, that is, “being Greek,” was central to how ancient Athenians, Milesians, Spartans and, eventually, Mylaseans thought of themselves and their relationship to the wider world of neighboring communities and material culture. As a result, our histories still convey the idea, intentionally or not, that a white European nation stood at the center of Mediterranean history, with other “nations” peripheral and/or subordinate. The inescapable conclusion is that our inability to move past this idea is intimately bound up with how we are all engrained to think of ourselves and our relationship to current state-imposed group identities and allegiances.

What are the alternatives to this centuries-old preoccupation with the Greeks? How can we de-nationalize and decolonize our conceptions of this history?¹²³ It is my firm belief that answering these questions must involve a collective effort that can only come when more ancient historians turn away from older preoccupations, which the current article cannot presume as a goal achieved. I here but briefly note several options. Least satisfactory is the more explicit use of “Greek-speaking” when talking specifically about historical agents. This phrase certainly can work at the level of generalization, but often shades into simple euphemism that lands us back where we started.¹²⁴ Another avenue has been advanced by Paul Cartledge: collate local histories as a demonstration of “the complex, diverse, and challenging...history of ancient Greek civilization.”¹²⁵ To this I would add histories of non-*polis* settlements and replace the “Greek” qualifier with a more inclusive adjective: what determines our selection should be based on politically, socially, or culturally coherent geographic units, such as the Mediterranean or a broadly defined Hellenistic *oikoumenê*—West Afro-Eurasia is clunky but carries less baggage.¹²⁶ Indeed, surveys of the “Ancient Mediterranean” represent a third alternative, but existing textbooks still follow an ethnic organization that normalizes the nation as a transhistorical

¹²² E.g., Stier 1970; Vlassopoulos 2007, 36–38, 45–47, 55–56; Díaz-Andreu 2007; Fögen and Warren 2016.

¹²³ On the challenges of decolonizing the academy more generally, see Gopal 2021.

¹²⁴ One issue is that “Greek-speaking” relies on the largely modern construct of a unified Greek language. While there clearly was some recognition of a Greek language in antiquity (cf. the passage from Herodotos discussed in section 1), there is also ample evidence attesting to an emphasis on difference among what we call the various Greek “dialects”—and here it is relevant that *glōssa* refers to both languages and dialects—while peoples whose language was most similar to Greek, the Thracians and Phrygians—were intensely othered in literary texts and slave practice (see Harrison 2019). I also wonder whether those who use and hear “Greek-speaking” are ever thinking about second-language learners whose first language was Phoenician, Etruscan, Sikel, Karian, etc.

¹²⁵ Cartledge 2011.

¹²⁶ While the term “Hellenistic” is still Greco-centric, it is also more openly descriptive rather than necessarily bound up with claims about identity and agency.

category, and typically weight coverage in favor of Greeks and Romans.¹²⁷ While there has been helpful scholarly discussion on the question of what a history of the Mediterranean should look like (and even whether it is possible), this has not yet translated into an accepted narrative replacement for “Greek history.”¹²⁸ The emphasis on local communal identity in the political, social, and even private discourse of the epigraphic and archaeological records—despite interpretive attempts to nationalize the latter—encourages us to move toward “decentering” histories that are also alert to global developments.¹²⁹ What was global was almost always broader than “Greek” (identified from a modern vantage point), and certainly more expansive than those who felt it important to be considered Greek or to conceptualize products and ideas as Greek. *Greek and Barbarians*, despite its title, is an important step in this direction. Vlassopoulos’ inclusive history of the many communities of the Mediterranean, Black Sea, and beyond, explores the complex range of interactions, exchanges, and conflicts that led to a globalized cultural milieu. Where I suggest we can go further is in dispensing with the categories of Greek and non-Greek/Barbarian (and in many cases other group identifiers analogous to modern nations) as central to this exploration—minimizing their narrative and explanatory role—which will help us avoid such contradictory statements as “Greek culture is not just Greek” or “Greek culture was already [at the start of the Classical Period] the culture of an international world.”¹³⁰ If a culture is constituted and consumed by multiple “cultures” (a euphemism for a diverse range of peoples), then the privileging of one constructed group as the unique producer and possessor of that culture counteracts the efforts to present a more complex picture.

It is my hope that an awareness of the untenable assumptions underlying our commitment to Greekness in narratives of the ancient Mediterranean will challenge the histories we come to tell. The remaining advantage of clinging to this commitment—the simplicity and familiarity of national categories—does not, in my opinion, outweigh the sizable disadvantages. The category of Greekness promotes false notions of motivation, agency, and credit, wherein we claim that “the Greeks” did/felt/thought a certain way, claims that usually mask either a significantly smaller subset (adult male Athenians or individual philosophers) or refer to a widespread material output like pottery style that probably was not perceived as a defining commonality. Sticking with “the Greeks” also entails the subtle endorsement of imperialism and jingoism. To speak of Greeks is to assume the legitimacy of Isokrates’ arguments and to judge the policies and decisions of Greek-speaking city-states against the dream of pan-Hellenism, as many have done. Given the positionality of most scholars of the ancient Mediterranean within states with a considerable history of empire and colonialism, this endorsement is hardly coincidental, if not always intended. Third, giving “Greeks” center stage can blaze a false trail for those seeking to explore issues of ancient racism as a phenomenon that is fundamentally about power relations, or even support the continued insistence of some that racism did not exist in the ancient

¹²⁷ Examples include of Mathisen 2020 and Abulafia 2011, 63–211. An exception is the collection of essays in Abulafia 2003, though with mixed success (on which, see Balot 2004).

¹²⁸ E.g., the contributions in Harris 2005, Malkin 2005, and Wittke 2019. In particular a coherent narrative, or series of connected narratives, remains elusive, due to an understandable desire to avoid false portrayals of continuity, unity, homogeneity

¹²⁹ Beck 2020. The concept of “decentering” is that of Zemon Davis 2011, 190. Beck unfortunately takes for granted the natural coherence of “Ancient Greece” without defending the assumption, which the very tenets of localism call into question. This is essentially the approach taken in Wittke 2019.

¹³⁰ Vlassopoulos 2013, 329 and 276.

world.¹³¹ In short, the unwillingness to admit to the weakness of Greekness is holding us back from a proper understanding of who, how, and why things happened in much of the 1st millennium BC Mediterranean world.

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¹³¹ E.g. Gruen 2020, 11-41.

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Commodus' Court: Conspiracy and Consequences*

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Abstract: Many scholarly and popular studies of the reign of Commodus (180-192 CE) focus on his crimes and character. In the present article it is my intention to argue that Commodus' reign can instead be productively evaluated by using the concept of political culture. Using this concept, it is possible to reframe questions about Commodus' ability and success as an emperor along sociological lines and, via analyses of his succession and the conspiracy against him early in his reign (180-3), describe the structural features of Roman imperial society that were inimical to him as a young emperor. To accomplish this, I first highlight the differing historiographical treatment of the reigns of Marcus and Commodus. I next examine Commodus' succession and the conspiracy against him, using accounts of these inflection points to investigate the underlying Antonine political culture. Prosopography is used to nuance the literary evidence and demonstrate the real and lasting break by Commodus with his father's networks of supporters and the aristocracy more generally. My intention throughout is to show, with reference to previous work on the concept of political culture in imperial Rome, how the relationship between the emperor and the aristocracy in the Antonine period was characterised by mutual obligations and expectations which Commodus' youth left him unable to fulfil. The consequences for emperor and aristocracy alike was a violent conflict of interests with socio-political origins.

Keywords: Political culture, Antonine Rome, Commodus, conspiracies, prosopography

Introduction

During the early years of Commodus' reign (180-3 CE), many of his father Marcus Aurelius' *amici* — the most powerful part of the senatorial and equestrian aristocracy — were suppressed following an apparent conspiracy against the new emperor. Crises such as this conspiracy (real or manufactured) and its consequences are useful for the analysis and description of underlying socio-political phenomena. Accordingly, the goal of this article is to use accounts of this conspiracy to explore some structural features of imperial society that led to the rupture between emperor and aristocracy.

To accomplish this, I begin by tracing the real and imagined contrasts — historical and historiographical — between the reigns of Marcus and Commodus (I). I next discuss the concept of political culture as it relates to Commodus' succession and with reference to aristocratic expectations of an emperor in this period (II), and then examine the literary accounts of the conspiracy (III). Finally, I turn to prosopography to provide a framework for an historical analysis of the conspiracy and its aftermath in the years 180-3 (IV), and the literary significance of Saoterus, a favourite attendant of Commodus (V). I conclude with

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consideration of the parallel themes found in Winterling's analysis of Caligula's attempt to break free of the structural paradoxes of imperial society.

I. Contrast with Marcus

It is worth emphasising first the historiographical problems associated with accounts of Marcus and Commodus. Their reigns and characters are often portrayed in contrast: black and white, or, famously, gold and rust.¹ There is space between such literary constructions, the illumination of which requires a wider viewpoint than that of the senatorial or equestrian aristocracy.² It is helpful to glance at the wider circumstances of Marcus' reign, which began with famines and floods and ended in war and plague. It encompassed, in its 19 years:

- 1) The defeat of legions in the East, including the loss of commanders.
- 2) An invasion of Italy, in which commanders were killed in the field.
- 3) A plague of apparently unprecedented seriousness, which in particular affected the army and the city of Rome.
- 4) The beginning of a period of economic decline.³
- 5) A rebellion centred in the provinces of Syria and Egypt, which ended with the summary murder of the pretender, Avidius Cassius.⁴
- 6) Intermittent trouble along the Rhine frontier, including incursions into Roman provinces.
- 7) The long Marcomannic wars along the Danubian frontier, unfinished at the time of Marcus' death in March 180.

The point of such a stark and staccato measure of Marcus' reign (including the period of his co-rule with Lucius until 169) is unabashedly to emphasise its numerous crises and wars. An iteration of them serves as a makeshift counter to the sunshine-tinted historiography of the earlier Antonine period, detectable still in modern scholarship.⁵

Still, it is true that the list offered above is deliberately selective and emphasises the crises of the reign. It does not include outcomes, and these were mostly positive. The Parthian War was won by 165, the invaders were expelled from Italy by 171-2, and the Rhine

¹ Dio 72.36.4.

² Hekster 2011, 317-28 discusses the history of the perceived contrast between Marcus and Commodus and how their portrayals continue to influence evaluations of their reigns and deeds.

³ Harris' survey on trade in the *CAH* posits a probable decline in trade, possibly due to the Antonine plague and Marcomannic Wars, or beginning earlier under Antoninus. Harris *CAH*² 11.24 710-40; cf. Mattingly 2009, 283-97. Howgego 1992, 1-31 provides a useful survey of the economic conditions in the second century, noting the increasing problems with the supply of raw metals (7-8).

⁴ Cf. Michels 2017, 23-48 on Cassius' rebellion with modern citations.

⁵ E.g. Birley 1987², 23: "There is an air of the eighteenth century about the Antonine Empire. The aristocracy which had been ennobled in the struggles of the previous century wanted now to relax and enjoy their dignity and wealth." In contrast Kemezis 2010, 288 argues that for mid-century authors such as Fronto and Lucian, this sense of stability does not tell the full story, and derives from a concept of historiography in which "...the present constitutes a static world that is no longer involved in an ongoing historical narrative. Such a state of mind can be seen as a result of the relative tranquillity of the time but is also part of an ideological apparatus that emphasized and exaggerated that peace and ultimately created our stereotype of the Antonine period as one of stability and harmony."

and Danube frontiers held firm for the most part. For the internal crises, the extent and nature of the Antonine plague is still debated, though there is enough evidence to suggest that it made a considerable impact on the city of Rome at least.⁶ The most serious internal crisis Marcus faced, Avidius Cassius' rebellion in 175, was quickly put down and quietly played down. Whatever cracks it did reveal, it was swiftly and decisively suppressed. At the very least it was a sign that the universal admiration of contemporary historians for Marcus was not shared by all his socio-political peers — or else that only the person of Marcus stood between stability and civil war.

In the end, though, it seems that the numerous crises during Marcus' reign were successfully endured. But this is then the point: his reign might be defined — or defended — as the competent management of successive crises. Amidst these crises, for the aristocracy under Marcus life apparently continued in the emperor's orbit with all its usual intrigues and manoeuvring. Judgements were passed with the advice of his assembled *consilia*, philosophers were kept at court, and order was generally maintained in the cities and towns. The emperor himself, late in his life, reflected on the transient but ceaseless cycle of past courts and emperors as a way to remind himself to focus on the present.⁷ The Marcus that comes to posterity through his *Meditations*, his correspondence with Fronto, the works of Dio and Herodian, and the biographies of the *HA*, is almost universally moderate, compassionate, thoughtful and serious, competent in peace and war.⁸ The author of the *HA*, alert as always to rumour and scandal, does transmit whispers of another tradition — hints of resentment darkly expressed through gossip.⁹ Their provenance would be worth knowing. The same author also criticises Marcus for keeping his court above the usual society of the aristocracy, which increased its arrogance (*adrogantia*), but, as with other criticisms, this is not presented as a systemic problem or expanded upon.¹⁰

The point for now is that in the second century a capable and careful emperor could, in difficult internal and external circumstances, maintain the necessary balance in aristocratic society between two overlapping and competing hierarchies of proximity and tradition. Winterling's description of their interaction through the first century is instructive too for the Antonine period:

[B]oth hierarchies began to converge, in that the emperor arranged for those he trusted, mostly knights, to become members of the senate and holders of magisterial offices. Yet these hierarchies could not merge in any lasting manner since, first, the traditional stratification was reinforced again and again and, second, since by their promotion within the old hierarchy, the former favorites of the emperor turned into potential rivals for him and so tended to lose their status in the new hierarchy.¹¹

⁶ See e.g. Duncan-Jones 1996, 108-36; Ehmig 1998, 206-8; Bagnall 2000, 288-292; Greenberg 2003, 413-425; contra Duncan-Jones cf. Bruun 2003, 426-34 and 2007, 201-17.

⁷ *Med.* 8.5; on Marcus' *Meditations* as a source more generally, cf. Brunt 1974, 1-20.

⁸ Praise for Marcus' character and rule is frequent and wide-ranging, e.g. *Marc.* 6.10, 10.2, 11.1-3, 12.1-2, 13.6, 15.3, 17.1-18.8, 19.11-2, 24.1-3, 29.9; Dio 72.24-25.6; *Hdn.* 1.2.3-5.

⁹ E.g. *Marc.* 15.5, 20.3-5, 24.6-7.

¹⁰ *Marc.* 24.7.

¹¹ Winterling 2009, 32-3.

Under Commodus, however, the consensus between emperor and aristocracy ruptured. He was unable to maintain this balance. Why and how did this occur? Even though we may dispel the golden shimmer of Marcus' reign, the initial temptation might still be to consider the two reigns together, acknowledge that both had their share of difficult circumstances, and conclude that the crucial variable is the person of the emperor. Commodus' deficiencies are, by this logic, largely responsible for the conflict with the aristocracy that came to define his reign and legacy. But such a judgement would merely follow the well-trodden historiographical trail from the Roman sources themselves.¹² Even if the literary evidence for Commodus' deeds and disposition is taken at face value, the deeds themselves as reported take place in the main after his decisive break with his father's generals and advisers.

The trail thus leads back to the events of Commodus' early years as sole emperor. We return to the question of why and how the same individuals who formed the core of Marcus' advisers — the most powerful subset of the equestrian and senatorial aristocracy — found themselves, within a few short years of Commodus' undisputed accession, allegedly plotting against the young emperor and fearing for their lives and property. An explanation based entirely on the "policies" of Commodus does not completely convince; Millar forty years ago pierced the mirage of the purposeful, policy-making emperor.¹³ Indeed, quite apart from 180-3, for the entirety of Commodus' reign, internal and external crises were encountered and dealt with (or endured) in the same reactive manner as they were in previous reigns: enemies were paid off or defeated, restive legions were quieted, pretenders and rivals (real or apparent) were suppressed, petitions were answered.¹⁴ It is worth noting in this context that by the end of Commodus' reign tremors of unrest did ripple out from the imperial court. They affected first the grain supply of Rome,¹⁵ and eventually led to the deaths of three emperors in 192-3 and a consequent and consequential civil war. But to reach this point took almost thirteen years. Since the external pressures during the reign of Commodus were broadly similar or less serious than during the reign of Marcus, it was not these pressures alone that were the primary cause of the initial conflict between emperor and aristocracy.

II. Imperial political culture and the problem of Commodus' youth

If not external circumstances, nor the defective personality or policies of Commodus, what factors can be drawn upon to explain the events of 180-3, from Commodus' sole accession through to the aftermath of the apparent conspiracy of Lucilla? They must be predominantly socio-political in nature. It was systems of interaction, formal and informal, that defined how different interests and conflicts in imperial society might be expressed. It is my contention that the chief explanation for the events of 180-3 lies therefore in the socio-political milieu in which the emperor and the aristocracy acted and reacted: the political culture. This concept incorporates the way in which imperial decisions were mediated and enacted, as well as the importance of the day-to-day interactions that comprised aristocratic life in

¹² Witschel 2006, 94-5.

¹³ Millar 1992², 6, but cf. also Lendon 1998, 87-93 for the influence of this conception upon modern scholarship.

¹⁴ Commodus made a lasting peace in the Danubian region: *Comm.* 3.5; *Marc.* 27.11-28.1; *Hdn.* 1.5.3-8; *Dio* 73.1.1-4. Commodus seemingly continued the pattern of 'petition and response' (e.g. *CIL* 8.14464), though he was apparently criticised for his lazy formulations, cf. *Comm.* 13.7.

¹⁵ The riots instigated by Papirius Dionysius in 190, in opposition to Cleander, cf. Whittaker 1964, 348-69.

Rome and near the emperor, wherever he was based. Additionally, it includes in a wider sense how the relationship and obligations between the emperor and aristocracy were conceived of by both parties. A recent definition with reference to ancient Rome is useful: political culture may be understood as the form and aesthetics of the institutions and political processes in imperial Rome, essentially “...the form of the participants’ behaviour, in contrast to the contents of their decisions.”¹⁶ If the senate and the aristocracy had vastly reduced political power in real terms compared to the republic, the institutions, rituals, and forms of their power persisted and had acquired a socio-political primacy as ways of competing, negotiating, and reinforcing status and relationships.¹⁷

For the application of this concept to the late second century, it is necessary to recognise first that the Antonine emperors themselves were drawn from the senatorial aristocracy. Their status before and after their accessions was essentially a function of their age and experience as well as their connections. For Commodus, even allowing his incompetence or disinterest regarding the minutiae of rule, this system was still the context in which he began his reign. To explore the problem of the transformation of political culture under Commodus and its consequences for emperor and aristocracy, then, the apparent contrast between Marcus and Commodus set out above is the starting point. But, as noted, their reigns were not dissimilar in terms of external pressures, and it would be simplistic to place the blame on Commodus’ character. To be clear, the point here is not to disregard entirely the role that Commodus’ character or nature may have played — though the literary sources may well exaggerate such factors — but rather to explore why the conflicts between aristocracy and emperor manifested themselves in such a mutually destructive fashion. The source of the rupture lies in the political culture of Marcus’ reign, and the manner in which this culture defined aristocratic interaction and judgements regarding Commodus in his early years as sole ruler.

The best place, then, to begin the investigation into the rupture between Commodus’ and his father’s advisers is the obvious structural change in imperial society: the transition of the imperial power, nominally shared by Marcus and Commodus, to Commodus alone. His accession took place in Sirmium, where his father died, in the spring of 180.¹⁸ For the first emperor born to the purple, all seemed to augur well. Given that he already possessed the *tribunicia potestas*, his accession was effectively automatic in a legal context; he had been named Augustus when he was fifteen, in December 176, ruling from that date jointly with his father.¹⁹ This was the culmination of a policy of promotion which Marcus pursued after the revolt of Avidius Cassius in 175. It is hardly necessary to reiterate that Marcus intended Commodus to be his heir, but it is worth emphasising that Cassius’ revolt catalysed Marcus’ plans. Commodus was, in the years immediately after it, granted the title of *pater patriae* — a title not granted to Lucius in 161 — and the *tribunicia potestas*. Marcus alone held the title *pontifex maximus*, as he had when he ruled alongside Lucius. In every legal and traditional sense, then, Commodus was co-emperor with his father from December 176 or January 177.

But in 180 Commodus, at eighteen, was still young. Three years previously he had been the youngest ever consul in Roman history. The young Caesar L. Aelius Aurelius Commodus

¹⁶ Tacoma 2020, 14.

¹⁷ Tacoma 2020, 14–17.

¹⁸ Following Tertullian for the location of Marcus’ death, cf. Tert. *Apol.* 25.5.

¹⁹ *Comm.* 2.4; but cf. *Marc.* 27.5. Commodus’ assumption of the tribunician power may date to January 177, when he was made consul. For epigraphic confirmation of Commodus’ nomenclature and titles under Marcus after January 177, cf. IAM 2.94, l. 30, from July 177; RMD 3.185.

Augustus, as he was then newly styled, shared the *fasces* with his brother-in-law, M. Peducaeus Plautius Quintillus.²⁰ A consulship held very young, together with a member of the imperial family: this resembles Marcus' first consulship, held when he was eighteen in 140, with Antoninus as his colleague.²¹ Explaining a simile to Marcus in a letter, Fronto gives an account of Marcus' role and position: as the younger partner in the empire, he was to be guided and protected, sheltered from the annoyances (*molestiae*) and difficulties (*difficultates*) of imperial power.²² For Marcus, this initial consulship was only the beginning of his long tenure as Caesar.²³ But circumstances did not align so favourably for Commodus, and the difference is crucial. He did not have the advantages of previous second-century emperors, who came to the throne as mature and established senators, generals, or both. Before him, the last emperor under forty at the time of his accession was Domitian. The accession of Commodus thus represented a set of circumstances outside the contemporary experience or living memory of the aristocracy.²⁴ The nearest precedent was not encouraging — and indeed the principate never really produced a successful young imperial heir. The political culture, the shared set of values that defined interaction and expectation among and between the emperor and the aristocracy, offered no contemporary paradigm or guide for either party.

A connected problem for Commodus was that he lacked a clear heir. This was not unprecedented, but, again, there had not been a precisely analogous situation in living memory. Trajan, Hadrian, and Antoninus in their final years regulated their successions from positions of relative strength, though Trajan's ambivalence to his cousin caused its own complications, as did Hadrian's own machinations in his final days. In each case, however, these emperors had no surviving sons or close male relatives, and hence eventually chose relatively mature heirs.²⁵ Had they had sons they may have had little choice in the matter; the hereditary principle remained strong even though the prevailing political culture guaranteed that a young ruler would encounter difficulties.²⁶ In each case a young successor whose possible heirs would be coeval family members was avoided, indicating that the risk of conflict or insecurity was understood. This was not an option available to Marcus unless he was willing to remove Commodus.²⁷ For Commodus as a young emperor, the alternative succession arrangements used by older emperors before him were not available: he could not adopt an heir at such a young age. Apart from the traditional barriers to this, and the fact of his marriage and presumable expectation of children, it would represent a concession of

²⁰ On Peducaeus and his importance, cf. Jarvis 2017, 1-20.

²¹ This was after 139, in which year his public promotion began as Caesar, cf. Harvey 2004, 46-60.

²² *Ad M. Caes.* 3.8.1 = 40 VdH.

²³ Michels 2017, 38-9 suggests that Antoninus Pius' and Marcus' long terms as Caesars and their deep socialisation in the senatorial class is linked to their conscience embodiment of the role of *civilis princeps* and lenient treatment of rebels.

²⁴ von Saldern 2003, 41.

²⁵ One obvious cause of contention between emperor and élite did not apply to Commodus: his accession to sole emperor was not the result of some coup or plot, but the culmination of his promotion by Marcus. This might be contrasted with the accession of Hadrian, promoted though never officially named Caesar. During the first year of his reign four consulars were killed. Cf. Bennett 1997, 205-7; Birley 1997, 87-9; Syme 1984, 31-60 = RP 4 295-324. For the literary perspective on Hadrian's arrangements in his final years see for Davenport and Mallan 2014, 637-68.

²⁶ Hekster 2001, 35-49 argues for the strength of the dynastic principle in the second century, regardless of its 'success' or not in selecting appropriate emperors, setting out (42-9) the possible dynastic considerations behind Hadrian's choices of Aelius and subsequently Antoninus Pius.

²⁷ This was presumably not considered by Marcus. Dio (77.14.7) records that Severus condemned Marcus for lacking the ruthlessness to do so, though Severus could not bring himself to remove Caracalla.

power. The corollary is of course that the lack of a clear heir to Commodus presented an opportunity to ambitious relatives. High-status relatives of Commodus were abundant in 180, not least in the persons of his brothers-in-law: Marcus had constructed a powerful familial nexus by marrying his five daughters to senators of prominent provincial families, one of whom, Pompeianus, was a prominent general.²⁸ An additional problem, thrown into relief by the achievements and experience of individuals like Pompeianus, was that Commodus was too young to have acquired military accomplishments of his own.

The combination of these problems meant essentially that Commodus from the outset could not fulfil aristocratic assumptions or expectations of the role of an emperor.²⁹ One consequence of this manifested almost immediately: he was unable to select his own advisers. Being eighteen, he had no real circle of *amici* of his own among his socio-political peers. He had in fact no real peers in the sense of previous emperors who had benefited from long tenures as Caesar, or long and prominent senatorial careers before their elevation. In the initial years of his sole reign, Commodus' advisers and his court were thus, by default, drawn mainly from Marcus' advisers and court-on-the-frontier. In contrast, as Caesar to Antoninus Pius for two decades, Marcus had enjoyed the advantage of receiving prominent members of imperial society into his *salutatio*, cultivating personal relationships he later relied on while emperor.³⁰ His closest circle included the highest aristocracy, as had been customary since Hadrian, but many of his confidants also fell slightly outside that definition. Claudius Pompeianus and Claudius Severus, the husbands of his two eldest daughters, are two contrasting examples of the breadth of Marcus' provincial connections.³¹ Pompeianus was promoted to the status of imperial son-in-law based on his military acumen and was drawn into a more prominent role after his marriage in late 169 to Lucilla, Marcus' daughter and Lucius' widow. Claudius Severus, the son of a friend of Hadrian, was an intellectual from a consular family who attended the demonstrations of Galen.³²

Importantly, Marcus' immediate circle, in Rome or on campaign, comprised many colleagues and peers he had known virtually his entire adult life — and even Marcus was to suffer one serious rebellion during his rule, led by a man whom he had advanced and promoted. The same pattern of experience largely holds for the other emperors of the second century. Trajan, when he assumed the imperial power in a kind of bloodless coup, was a seasoned commander of 44.³³ Hadrian, whatever his level of responsibility concerning the executions of consulars that occurred upon his accession — which even Marguerite Yourcenar left ambiguous — was 41 and similarly experienced. Antoninus Pius was 52, a senator of some standing, and adopted two male heirs on Hadrian's instruction.

Commodus in 180, however, possessed none of the advantages that a mature age and past career could bring. His security and rule depended almost entirely on his status as the son of Marcus, and the notionally consequent support of his father's *amici*. Given Marcus' reputation in the sources, at first glance this might appear sufficient. But not for a century had the dynastic principle been tested, removed from the supporting socio-political

²⁸ On Marcus' sons-in-law and their importance and connections see Pflaum 1961, 28–41; Jarvis 2017, 1–20.

²⁹ Witschel 2006, 92–4; cf. Suet. *Aug.* 99.1.

³⁰ Winterling 2009, 92–3.

³¹ Birley 1987², 247 nos. 4–5, on Lucilla's primacy as the elder daughter.

³² Claudius Pompeianus: PIR² C 973. Claudius Severus: PIR² C 1024. On Severus' intellectual pursuits see Gal. *Praen.* 2.24–7, 5.17; cf. Nutton 1979, 166–7.

³³ Grainger 2003, 95–102; Bennett 1997, 205–7.

foundation of the emperor's status and record as a prominent participant in aristocratic society. Commodus was essentially unable to participate credibly in the forms and rituals of imperial society, with the consequence that he lacked a network of connections whom he had known for decades. This placed him outside the expectations and norms for an emperor, and in turn meant that from the start of his reign he was at least informally subordinated to the networks and status of his deceased father. The dynastic principle, always important in the construction of legitimacy — as would become clear when alternatives to Commodus were explored — proved inadequate against the power of the interlocking set of expectations, norms, and obligations between emperor and aristocracy.

III. The literary accounts of Commodus' accession

Before the conspiracy itself is discussed, the literary accounts which concern Commodus' succession must be considered. Several anecdotes of Commodus' relationships with his father's *amici* are of interest. They are presented with the hindsight of an aristocracy unable or unwilling to explain Commodus' actions and reign beyond assigning blame to an evil or foolish nature. What Marcus may have actually said or done to commend Commodus on his deathbed is at this point less important than the manner in which the sources have depicted the succession, and attempted to reconcile the image of Marcus with the notion that such an ideal emperor left the empire to Commodus.

Cassius Dio

Dio (via Xiphilinus) states that he has heard (ὥς ἐγὼ σαφῶς ἤκουσα) that Marcus' doctors poisoned him to gain favour with Commodus. Marcus himself while still living tried to absolve his son of this suspicion, and commended him to the soldiers.³⁴ Dio reports also that Marcus wanted to continue the war for punitive rather than expansionist reasons.³⁵ Commodus' nature is described as foolish rather than evil, and Dio mentions that Marcus was disappointed that Commodus' education did not rectify his flaws.³⁶ Commodus rejects the advice of his father's friends, who are composed of the best men of the senate.³⁷ Concerning the return to Rome from the frontier, a familiar story is told about Commodus' indolence and desire for luxury.³⁸ According to Dio, his settlement with the Quadi and Marcomanni imposed more conditions upon them than Marcus had, though the forts in their territory were abandoned.³⁹ Harsh terms were also imposed on the Buri, with whom Commodus negotiated from a position of strength.⁴⁰

Herodian

³⁴ Dio 72.34.1

³⁵ Dio 72.20.1-2.

³⁶ Dio 72.36.4. Cf. 73.6.4-5; Pertinax's good character was ennobled by education but Commodus' poor character, despite his high birth, could not be helped by education; likewise Caracalla, cf. 78.11.2-3.

³⁷ Dio 73.1.2.

³⁸ Dio 73.2.2; cf. Hdn. 1.6.1-3.

³⁹ Dio 73.1.1-4.

⁴⁰ Dio 73.3.1-2.

Herodian's work contains a similar account of Marcus' anxiety about Commodus. It is part of Herodian's literary programme to portray Marcus as the near-perfect emperor, while Commodus and other young emperors are fickle and corruptible.⁴¹ The peoples across the frontier will also be tempted by what they see as a young, and therefore weak, emperor.⁴² In Herodian, Marcus' commendation of Commodus is sincere, unspoilt by the whiff of poison. He asks his friends to guide and protect the young emperor.⁴³ It is the one mistake that Marcus makes, and it foreshadows the chaos and danger to come. This is perhaps the first hint of what Kemezis has articulated about the methods and approach of Herodian:

[Herodian's] characters are familiar emperors, and the sequence of events is as it ought to be, but the portrayal of those events is bizarre. Nothing happens in the way one would logically suppose, and characters are constantly making wrong decisions based on faulty reasoning. They do this not because they are stupid or ignorant, but because they rely on assumptions and rational expectations carried over from the Antonine age that are now defunct.⁴⁴

This includes Marcus, planning in vain for a post-Marcus world. That is, Herodian's Marcus bases his commendation of Commodus on the apparently rational basis of the political culture of his own reign. Herodian has, through his confected account of the succession, nevertheless arguably captured something of the real contrast between the socio-political circumstances of the reigns of Marcus and Commodus. Marcus during his reign was able to maintain the required balance at the imperial court between the hierarchies of proximity to the emperor and traditional rank. This was something that Commodus, perhaps partly due to his nature but certainly due to socio-political realities, was conspicuously unable to do.⁴⁵

There are some further scenes of interest in Herodian's account of the first years of Commodus. The new emperor received initial advice from Pompeianus, the most prominent of his brothers-in-law, and Marcus' chief general. Pompeianus, from an equestrian background, was likely in his mid-fifties. His speech to Commodus takes place in the narrative after Commodus has addressed the assembled soldiers, emphasised his own royal birth and right to rule, and confirmed their loyalty with a donative.⁴⁶ Previously, according to Herodian, Commodus had followed the advice of his father's friends for a time. These friends were at his side almost constantly: a detail from which more than one interpretation could be drawn.⁴⁷ Despite this good counsel, Commodus began to be corrupted by members

⁴¹ Hdn. 1.1.6, 1.3.2, cf. 2.10.3. Galimberti 2013, 43-5 discusses the vocabulary Herodian uses regarding Commodus' youth and inexperience.

⁴² Hdn. 1.3.5.

⁴³ Hdn 1.4.2-8.

⁴⁴ Kemezis 2014, 229.

⁴⁵ Winterling 2009, 92-3.

⁴⁶ Commodus addressed the soldiers (Hdn. 1.5.3-8, at the urging of his advisors), authorised military expeditions, issued a donative (cf. CIL 5.1968, 5.2112) and held a triumph (Hdn 1.6-8-9; cf. *Comm.* 3.5-6), and emphasises his right to rule by birth (1.5.5-6), emphasising his birth (rather than selection by adoption) directly to the soldiers; cf. Galimberti 2013, 64-6.

⁴⁷ Hdn. 1.6.1.

of the imperial household, who reminded him of the luxuries of Rome.⁴⁸ At this point Pompeianus, to counter Commodus' desire to return to Rome, urges on him the importance of the war. He informs the young emperor not to fear a conspiracy at Rome since the senatorial nobility⁴⁹ were campaigning with him on the frontier.

The scene and sentiment, apocryphal or not, serve Herodian's objectives. But contemporaries of Commodus were also surely aware of the unprecedented nature of the situation. Pompeianus was the father of at least one grandson of Marcus and had therefore at least nominally a personal interest in ensuring Commodus' smooth accession and rule. A point worth emphasising is that variables which might work to the advantage of a mature successor — such as the support of subaltern members of the imperial family — could not do so for Commodus; indeed, in his case the presence of credible and legitimate alternatives made his position more precarious. The only situation in which Pompeianus' interests diverged from Commodus' was one in which Commodus could be replaced by a legitimate relative of Marcus whom Pompeianus supported. To return to Herodian's account: he alludes, through the advice Commodus receives, to the implicit fact that Pompeianus, in effect, was ideally situated to provide assurances to Commodus that there was no plot against him. According to Herodian such a plot was in fact afoot, but Lucilla did not inform her husband Pompeianus due to his initial devotion to Marcus' son.⁵⁰ Whatever the truth of Pompeianus' involvement in the plot of 182, it seems certain that he was central to the assassination of Commodus in December 192.⁵¹

Herodian also sets up a distinction between the noble advisers of Marcus and the corrupt members of the imperial household. This is related to his objectives in displaying young emperors as foolish and easily corrupted.⁵² But his narrative nevertheless captures something of an aristocratic society in an uneasy state of transition. Along with the literary accounts, the compositions of two imperial *consilia*, almost a decade apart, do indeed suggest that Commodus' court and inner circle were less senatorial and aristocratic than those of Marcus,⁵³ and hence less traditional in the sense of aristocratic expectations. Even if the nature of the advice delivered by Pompeianus was not accurate — it is not clear whether Marcus planned to create new provinces, or desired to continue the war, though these sentiments are consistent with the account of the *HA* — Herodian has highlighted the developing tensions between the senatorial and equestrian aristocracy on the one hand, and the household of Commodus on the other.

⁴⁸ Hdn. 1.6.1-2. A topos, but perhaps not entirely devoid of truth in this case. Neither Sirmium nor Carnuntum could have offered anything like the lifestyle available to an emperor in Rome. Imperial confidants such as Saoterus are presumably meant (on whom more below), cf. Galmiberti 2013, 69-71.

⁴⁹ Hdn. 1.6.5-6: ἄριστοι τῆς βουλῆς, surely to be understood as the senior advisers and generals of Marcus; Galimberti 2013, 73: 'I senatori più eminenti'.

⁵⁰ Hdn. 1.8.4.

⁵¹ Champlin 1979, 296.

⁵² Kemezis 2014, 239.

⁵³ Hekster 2002, 55-60; on the *tabula Banasitana* and the *consilium* of 177: Oliver 1972, 336-40; on the *consilium* of 186/7: Oliver 1950, 177-79 on IG II² 1109, 2771, 3412; Oliver 1989 no. 209. The difference in the type of advisers employed by Marcus and Commodus can be seen in the contrasting composition of imperial *consilia*. Compared to Marcus' and Commodus' carefully balanced *consilium* of 177, Commodus' own *consilium* in 186/7 contained a freedman. Hekster suggests there were in fact no senators in the later *consilium*, but cf. the objections of Witschel 2004, 257-8. The decisive point should be Oliver's 1989 reading, which restores the eminent Acilius Glabrio to participation in the *consilium* of 186/7, and very possibly also Aufidius Victorinus (II. 13-14). Both were pillars of the senatorial establishment.

The Historia Augusta

In the *Historia Augusta*, the manner of Marcus' commendations of his son — or lack thereof — are instructive in an historical and historiographical sense. The biographer records that two days before his death Marcus summoned his *amici* and expressed his pain at leaving such a son behind.⁵⁴ When he spoke to Commodus, he warned him to continue the war lest he seem to betray the republic (*ne videretur rem publicam prodere*).⁵⁵ Commodus' reply did him no credit: he wished first for his own good health.⁵⁶ On another occasion, closer to his death, Marcus once again summoned his *amici*, who asked him to whom he commended his son. Marcus replied *vobis, si dignus fuerit, et dis immortalibus* (to you all, if he will be worthy, and to the immortal gods).⁵⁷ Marcus is also said — in a device characteristic of the biographer — to have foreseen what his son would become and hoped that Commodus would die rather than become another Caligula, Nero, or Domitian.⁵⁸ When read together — and these anecdotes are proximate in the text — it is easy to spot an antipathy to Commodus, deriving from the biographer or his source. Perhaps it also reflects some awareness on the part of Marcus that Commodus was unprepared. In the *HA* Marcus, the beloved philosopher-emperor, leaves an unworthy son as his heir despite his own high character and almost against his better judgement. But the attitude attributed to Marcus by the *HA* and its various sources is not consistent with his clear policy in the final five years of his reign, during which Commodus was aggressively promoted as the only possible heir via titles, coins, tours, shared triumphs, and presentations to the military.⁵⁹

For the present context, however, the last anecdote is the most interesting, particularly considering the events of the first years of Commodus' reign. Commodus was commended to his father's *amici*, after they — performatively, or perhaps ceremonially — asked Marcus to whom he commended his son. Marcus imposes the condition that Commodus prove himself worthy (*si dignus fuerit*). The phrase and occasion seem formulaic in nature, but the exchange, true or not — performative ritual or not — hints at the notion that historians, also usually senators or members of the aristocracy, could pass judgement on emperors.

The ritualistic nature or reception of this exchange might be best considered relative to other similar occasions. If the scene were shifted to 161, and the emperor on his deathbed were Antoninus, such a phrase would be *prima facie* performative or ritualistic, the assent of the emperor's advisers to the accession of Marcus a given: Marcus had had twenty years to prove his worth to his peers as Caesar, and neither his legal status nor his socio-political standing could be in any doubt.⁶⁰ Together with Marcus' warning to Commodus about not

⁵⁴ Marc. 27.11.

⁵⁵ Marc. 28.1.

⁵⁶ Marc. 28.2.

⁵⁷ Marc. 28.7.

⁵⁸ Marc. 28.10.

⁵⁹ Hekster 2002, 38-9.

⁶⁰ The biographer's account of Antoninus' last moments contains no exchange between the emperor and his prefects (Ant. 12.5-6): *tertia die, cum se gravari videret, Marco Antonino rem publicam et filiam praesentibus praefectis commendavit Fortunamque auream, quae in cubiculo principum poni solebat, transferri ad eum iussit*. Antoninus commends the empire and his daughter to Marcus, and orders that he receive a golden statue of Fortuna, which seemingly had some personal value to the emperor, having often been placed in his bedchamber. A personal statue of a goddess, who in her guise as Fortuna Redux was associated with the

abandoning the war, it is clear that, for the biographer of the *HA* and his sources, Commodus' merit depended on following the policy of his father, and deferring to the prominent aristocratic members of his father's court, who in fact were implicitly required to endorse his succession. The explicit comparison to Caligula, Nero, and Domitian alludes not only to the nature, but also to the fate — literal and literary — of emperors judged unworthy of their position. The persons passing judgement were usually members of the aristocracy, contemporaries or historians, wielding the dagger or the pen.

The literary accounts together

Commodus' rejection of his father's advisers is consistent across the three literary sources. The types of tensions that Herodian constructs between the traditional aristocracy and Commodus' personal household and favourites are likewise present in Dio's account. The *HA* too offers hints of these tensions, casting them as resulting from Commodus' unsuitable character.⁶¹ This difference between Marcus and Commodus in character is usually depicted as extreme in the sources. Indeed, the effect of this difference in character goes beyond a lack of deference to the senatorial and equestrian aristocracy. It in fact encroaches on their physical safety. Commodus' reign and conduct seem to have provoked in Dio an existential dread about the very essence of aristocratic status: when the norms of aristocratic society were so wantonly transgressed by the emperor, it meant less to be of high status, to the point where imposters might credibly lay claim to aristocratic pedigree.⁶² Such anxiety pervaded the reign of Commodus, and was a symptom of an unmoored political culture affecting imperial society.⁶³

Taken together, these three sources, as well as amply demonstrating the hostility of the historical tradition to Commodus, offer a glimpse of an aristocracy unprepared for a youthful emperor at the point of transition. Commodus' evil or foolish nature did not matter as much as the structural features of an imperial society that could not accommodate him. In the present context, the rupture between Commodus and his father's advisers represents an initial breakdown of the norms and political culture nurtured by Marcus. It is possible to argue that this occurred precisely because of Marcus' success in maintaining the balance of imperial society: the emperor's authority rested on abstract ideas of socio-political and cultural status, mutually supported by legal status, precedent, and the cultivation and participation of the senatorial and equestrian aristocracy. The success of this system, personified by Marcus in difficult and changing circumstances, indirectly created a situation where Commodus' lack of the abstract aspects of imperial authority weakened the whole

emperor's safe return to Rome, was bequeathed to Marcus simultaneously with the empire and Faustina (to whom he was already married). Its inclusion in this scene lends a ritual aspect and demonstrates the blend of the public and private spheres of the emperor, a key characteristic of the imperial system. The coins of Marcus' reign invoked *Fortuna Redux* numerous times: cf. RIC 3.229 nos. 204-5, 220; 240, nos. 343-4 (343 with *Fortuna Duci*, referring to Marcus' tour of the East following Cassius' rebellion); 241, no. 360 (depicting an altar inscribed with *Fort. Reduci*); 263 no. 618 (again an altar inscribed *Fort. Reduci*, text around *principi iuventutis*). On the dedication of the altar of *Fortuna Redux* under Augustus and the connection with the protection of the emperor, RG 11; cf. Coarelli LTUR 2.1, 275-6.

⁶¹ *Comm.* 3.9.

⁶² Gleason 2011, 33-51.

⁶³ This might be highlighted by contrast: later Christian sources such as John Malalas and Jordanes depict Commodus in a more positive light, and lack the socio-political concerns present in contemporary Roman elite sources. Hekster 2002, 185 nn. 120-3.

edifice. The ideological space between aristocratic expectations of an emperor and the reality of Commodus' youth is where the source of the rupture might be found. Both parties were forced to confront the paradoxes of the imperial system, which previously could be passed over discreetly by successful emperors: an emperor both needed the confirmation of the senate, and transcended it.⁶⁴

IV. The court in 180, and Lucilla's conspiracy and aftermath, 182-3

On the present argument, the underlying cause of the rupture between Commodus and his father's advisers is the inability of the political culture to incorporate a young emperor. But more immediate causes must also have played some role. The men around Commodus when he became sole emperor had served his father for twenty years, through war, plague, and rebellion. Commodus soon cast them away. Some division between Commodus and his father's friends, then, perhaps combined with the allegedly malign influence of Commodus' personal household, must form the initial impulse for the dramatic break which Commodus made from his father's supporters. As far as the immediate causes for any conspiracy go, the logical speculation, in the absence of sufficient evidence, is that an unwillingness to accept Commodus on the part of some members of the aristocracy was combined with imperial ambitions by other members of the dynasty.⁶⁵ An alternative possibility is that there was not really a conspiracy at all: only the suspicion by Commodus that there was a plot afoot.⁶⁶ Perhaps aristocratic discontent was exaggerated, then utilised by Commodus as an excuse to break the influence of his father's advisers. A variation on this is the possibility that there was some plot, but Commodus' reprisals, driven by paranoia or opportunism, caught up more persons than were actually involved. The theatrical nature of the abortive assassination attempt recorded in the *HA* may lend credence to the suggestion that the plot was poorly planned, at the very least. However, the confluence of names connected to the Antonine dynasty who appear to have suffered as a result of the alleged conspiracy is striking.

The list of victims does not of course speak to the veracity of the conspiracy itself; there is a risk here of being diverted by a circular argument. But this knot may be cut: whether real or confected, both Commodus and the aristocracy could ascertain from where any potential conspiracy might come. It would require the participation of members of the imperial family, support from within the aristocracy, and the co-operation of the praetorian guard or the palace household. Lucilla, whose political inclinations the *HA* has recorded elsewhere, was either the prime suspect or the best scapegoat. After the accession and marriage of Commodus, her status had been somewhat reduced and her son stood farther from the imperial power, though she maintained her imperial title.⁶⁷ She, along with her husband and her son, was a natural focus for aristocratic discontent with Commodus. The intention of any actual conspiracy in the first years of Commodus' reign, judging from the victims of its

⁶⁴ Winterling 2009, 26-7.

⁶⁵ Càssola 1965, 452. Cf. also Galimberti 2010, 510-17. He suggests that Pompeianus was concealing the existence of a conspiracy in Rome, that Commodus was conscious of how much support Avidius Cassius had for his rebellion in 175, and that war and peace factions existed in the senate. This places the return of Commodus to Rome in October 180, and the trial and execution of 'the Cassians' in 181 before the conspiracy. It is an attractive hypothesis, but for now inadequately supported by evidence, cf. Jarvis 2015, 666-76.

⁶⁶ Cf. *Comm.* 8.2. The biographer indeed alleges that Commodus later invented a conspiracy in order to purge the aristocracy of his enemies, though when this might have occurred is unclear.

⁶⁷ *Hdn.* 1.8.3, cf. Varner 2001, 73-5.

repression, can only have been to replace him with a more suitable Antonine emperor. In a dynastic sense then Commodus' legitimacy was unquestioned, or rather Marcus' legitimacy and that of the dynasty was still acknowledged. A suitable alternative to Commodus was the young son of Lucilla and Pompeianus, who was aged around ten in 180, and later carried the names L. Aurelius Commodus Pompeianus.⁶⁸ He survived Commodus' reign only to be executed by Caracalla after the murder of Geta.⁶⁹ A potential placeholder emperor would be a necessary part of any transition involving a child-emperor, and the elder Pompeianus was surely the natural choice.⁷⁰ The dowry of his wife Lucilla would be the empire, as Marcus is reported to have remarked concerning Faustina.⁷¹

But the details of Lucilla's involvement in any plot are unclear. Her status and connections alone provided a threat to Commodus if he were inclined to fear a conspiracy — or to manufacture one. The type of dynastic claim embodied by Lucilla was, thanks to the prestige of Marcus, probably an important element of any conspiracy. Lucilla may in fact have been politically active; she is subjected in all three sources to the usual calumnies that in Roman history attach themselves to women who participated publicly in politics and fell afoul of the reigning emperor.⁷² Whether or not there was a real conspiracy, she represented, through her son with Pompeianus and previous status as Augusta, at least a potential counter-claim of legitimacy. Pompeianus, the foremost general and adviser of Marcus, twice consul and imperial son-in-law, could provide credibility and influence in the aristocracy and with the legions.

The fact that Commodus exiled Pompeianus and Lucilla, and subsequently had only Lucilla executed, is significant. Dio records the distance between Lucilla and Pompeianus, whom Dio himself saw in the senate on the occasion of Pertinax's accession in 193.⁷³ This suggestion, and their different fates, indicate that the sources may be correct to describe the couple as estranged, but it also implies that Commodus felt he could mount reprisals against his immediate family (later in his reign he executed his wife, Bruttia Crispina, and two of his brothers-in-law) but not against Pompeianus. Other commanders who had been prominent under Marcus were executed, demonstrating that the status of Pompeianus, who was clearly implicated by the alleged involvement of his wife and a son or nephew, must have been exceptional for him to survive. His status was then of a different nature to Lucilla's, and he may well have benefited from his long association with the legions.

Any differences over policy which were a factor in creating an atmosphere of suspicion or conflict probably involved the conclusion of the Marcomannic wars. Marcus' intentions along the frontier are unclear. Commodus' policy, however, of making peace on the northern frontier is condemned by the *HA* and Herodian, though Dio, while questioning Commodus'

⁶⁸ PIR² P 568. On his nomenclature, cf. Oates 1976, 282-7.

⁶⁹ *M. Ant.* 3.8.

⁷⁰ Molinier Arbo 2007, 127 makes the salient point that the successions from Trajan to Commodus were driven and defined by maternal connections. In this case, though Pompeianus was estranged from Lucilla, it was the fact of his marriage to Marcus' daughter which confirmed and enhanced his own status as the pre-eminent military advisor to Marcus. He was on two occasions after Commodus' death actually offered the imperial power, by Pertinax and then Didius Julianus, cf. *Pert.* 4.11; *Did. Iul.* 8.3; *Hdn.* 1.8.3.

⁷¹ *Marc.* 19.8-9.

⁷² Varner 2001, 72-78 on the political nature of Lucilla's *damnatio*.

⁷³ Dio 73.4.1-7.

motives, is more neutral.⁷⁴ Other evidence indicates its relative success.⁷⁵ Under Marcus differences concerning priorities between the emperor and the aristocracy are difficult to discern: but when they did occur, Marcus dealt with them from a position of strength.⁷⁶ Here the concept of political culture again offers a way in which to understand the difficulty of Commodus' situation as a function of socio-political factors, not character. The success of any decisions he made is not the point, nor is the fact that he had the power to make such decisions. Rather it is their reception by aristocratic society that is important: not the content, but the form and mode of expression mattered. Commodus went against his father's advisors, overturning the careful and normative precedents of the past. The calumnies against his character recorded after his death are a logical result of alienating the most powerful members of the aristocracy.

In this sense, Commodus' conduct in an aristocratic socio-political sphere cannot be wholly divorced from any political differences with the aristocracy and court.⁷⁷ His personal conduct and his political decision-making are two sides of the same coin: it is impossible to separate them in a second-century aristocratic context from consideration of the political culture of the aristocracy. A judgement on a decision of Commodus— or on the act or manner of his deciding — was not made in isolation from a judgement on his character or age. Rather, what followed from the judgement depended entirely upon the status of the emperor in a sense that was not defined by dynastically conferred powers and titles, but rather an assessment of something like his *auctoritas*.⁷⁸ For any imperial action or decision the possible socio-political consequences and range of responses were greater in the case of a young ruler. There was, for Commodus, an impossibly large gap between legitimacy and credibility: his rule was legal and proper by all the aristocratic traditions of Roman imperial society, but he was nonetheless unable to perform credibly as the emperor according to aristocratic expectations.

The consequence of dynastic ambition, perhaps mixed with discontent at the form if not the content of Commodus' decisions, was that in 181/2, either the *amici* of Marcus conspired against Commodus, or that Commodus came to consider them as a bloc immediately inimical to his prospects for survival. The result of this was the exile and execution of many connections and advisers of Marcus. The extent of the break that the crisis represented with Marcus' *amici*, including members of Commodus' own family and his wife, may be understood succinctly from a list of individuals who were executed or exiled, immediately after the conspiracy or in the second wave of reprisals, spanning the years 182-3:

⁷⁴ *Comm.* 3.5; *Marc.* 27.11-28.1; *Hdn.* 1.5.3-8; *Dio* 73.1.1-4.

⁷⁵ For the success of the settlement, see Galimberti 2010, 503-17, who contrasts the opinions of Dio, the *HA*, and Herodian with the actual success of the policy, the timing of Commodus' return to Rome (later in 180, after some campaigns), and the judgements of other authors such as Aurelius Victor; and Wilkes *CAH*² 11.585, esp. the epigraphic evidence cited for the fortification of the border, e.g. RIU 5.1127 from Intercisa (Dunaújváros).

⁷⁶ E.g. when sending troops to Rome upon learning of Cassius' rebellion, and promptly concluding a treaty that freed him for the looming civil war. *Dio* 72.17.1, cf. *ILAFr* 281.

⁷⁷ Cf. Meyer-Zwiffelhofer 2006, 203-4, who discusses the connection between Commodus' personal behaviour early in his reign and its political aspects.

⁷⁸ Moran 1999, 31, argues that for Severus, following the reign of Commodus, the political environment was such that no one person or group possessed enough *auctoritas* to retain power "in the fashion that was customary in the principate."

- 1) Lucilla, exiled and later executed. Commodus' sister, the widow of Lucius Verus and wife of Ti. Claudius Pompeianus. *Augusta* since 164.⁷⁹
- 2) the four Quintilii, at least three executed, one disappeared. They were two aged brothers, consuls together in 151, and their two consular sons, noted commanders under Marcus.⁸⁰
- 3) P. Salvius Julianus, executed. He was *cos. suff.* 175 and the legate of a province in 181-2, perhaps Germania Superior or Pannonia Superior.⁸¹ His daughter was betrothed to Paternus (4), below.
- 4) P. Tarrutienus Paternus, executed. Praetorian prefect since 177. He was at first responsible for investigating the apparent conspiracy, but was soon a victim of Commodus' reprisals for the death of Saoterus.⁸²
- 5) Vitruvius Secundus, executed. A friend of Paternus and *ab epistulis*.⁸³
- 6) Claudius Pompeianus Quintianus, executed. The would-be assassin. A close relation of Ti. Claudius Pompeianus, married to a daughter of Lucilla and Lucius.⁸⁴
- 7) Ti. Claudius Pompeianus, exiled. The experienced general and son-in-law of Marcus. His prestige and his estrangement from Lucilla probably saved his life.⁸⁵
- 8) Quadratus, executed. This *cognomen* implies connection to the Ummidii, and thus likely kinship with the imperial family.⁸⁶
- 9) Pertinax, recalled from Syria and exiled until 185.
- 10) Vitrasia Faustina, executed. She was the daughter of Marcus' cousin Annia Fundania Faustina, who was herself executed by Commodus ten years later.⁸⁷
- 11) D. Velius Rufus, executed. *Cos. ord.* 178.⁸⁸
- 12) Egnatius Capito, executed. A senator of consular rank.⁸⁹

⁷⁹ Dio 73.4.4-5; Hdn. 1.8.4-8; *Comm.* 4.1-4, 5.7, 8.3. PIR² A 757; Raepsaet-Charlier, no. 54.

⁸⁰ Dio 73.5.3. The two consular brothers: Sex. Q. Valerius Maximus, *cos. ord.* 151 (PIR² Q 27), and Sex. Q. Condianus, *cos. ord.* 151 (PIR² Q 21). Their respective sons: (Sex.) Q. Maximus, *cos. ord.* 172 (PIR² Q 24), and Sex. Q. Condianus *cos. ord.* (PIR² Q 22, cf. esp CIL 14.2393 = CIL 6.1991 where his name is erased but the name of his fellow consul, Crispina's father C. Bruttius Praesens, is retained, perhaps a further point suggesting Crispina's exile and execution did not occur as early as 182-3). The younger Condianus perhaps escaped; the account is doubtful but has great historiographical significance, cf. Gleason 2011, 39-42.

⁸¹ PIR² S 135.

⁸² *Comm.* 4.7; PIR² T 35.

⁸³ *Comm.* 4.8. On his possible origins see Daguet 1988, 3-13.

⁸⁴ Dio 73.4.4; *Comm.* 4.2, cf. 5.12; Hdn. 1.8.1-6; cf. *Amm. Marc.* 29.1.17; PIR² C 975. Herodian gives his name only as Κωντιανός and notes his youth; Ammianus (via Herodian) as Quintianus, and the *HA* as Claudius Pompeianus, the son of a certain Claudius (not the husband of Lucilla). Some connection to the Claudii Pompeiani is confirmed by the confluence of the literary record, and by the nomenclature of an individual who might be his son, Ti. Claudius Quintianus, *cos. ord.* 235 (PIR² C 992).

⁸⁵ PIR² C 973. For his survival and career under Commodus, see Kemezis 2012, 387-414.

⁸⁶ *Comm.* 4.1-4; Dio 73.4.3; Hdn. 1.8.4. Presumably an Ummidius Quadratus, and therefore descended from Marcus' sister who had married into that family. Syme 1968, 102-3 identifies him as the son of Cn. Claudius Severus from his first marriage — that is, before his marriage to Marcus' daughter Annia Faustina — who was adopted by Marcus' nephew (his sister's son) Ummidius Quadratus, *cos. ord.* 167. The name 'Quadratus' in the context of the conspiracy of 182-3 is striking, and indicates again the extent to which Commodus' own family, biological and adopted, was swept up in the events and aftermath.

⁸⁷ Vitrasia Faustina: *Comm.* 4.10; Dio 73.5.1; Raepsaet-Charlier, no. 820. Annia Fundania Faustina: *Comm.* 5.8, 7.7; Raepsaet-Charlier, no. 60; PIR² A 714.

⁸⁸ *Comm.* 4.10; PIR² V 349.

⁸⁹ PIR² E 17.

- 13) Aemilius Juncus, exiled. *Cos. suff.* 179. On the basis of a restored inscription he returned to Athens, where he had family connections, in 183.⁹⁰
- 14) Atilius Severus, exiled. A senator of praetorian rank, perhaps *consul designatus* for 183.⁹¹

The above list — which omits individuals who are attested only in the *HA*⁹² — comprises a trusted core of Marcus' senior military commanders and family connections, with a scattering of consular senators. The rupture and break from the reign of Marcus was on the surface one of personnel: a prominent group within the aristocracy was removed. But the socio-political causes and implications are deeper. Each side, emperor and aristocracy, posed existential questions to the other beyond a merely political power struggle. The Quintilii are an excellent example of this. Dio suggests that Commodus was envious of them "for they had a great reputation for learning, military skill, brotherly accord, and wealth, and their notable talents led to the suspicion that, even if they were not planning any rebellion, they were nevertheless displeased with existing conditions."⁹³ These qualities are precisely the aristocratic virtues that the young emperor is said to have lacked, or did not have the opportunity to acquire and display. Whether or not they possessed such qualities is immaterial; the point for Commodus — and for Dio, one might suspect — is that such contrasts could be identified and articulated by contemporaries. Such powerful and well-connected individuals as the Quintilii were capable of presenting a real threat to Commodus; if not by action, then by existential rebuke. Their socio-political status, unlike his, was legitimised by the traditional senatorial markers of rank and service. This is utterly distinct from Commodus' reliance on his name and birth alone. Dio's silence on the involvement of the Quintilii in any conspiracy is not entirely credible; he also absolves Pertinax, another of his favourites, of participation in Commodus' eventual assassination.⁹⁴

More immediately, in the context of the political culture under Commodus, the conspiracy, real or justification for a purge, marked a point of no return. Among the other victims of the two waves of executions were Paternus, the praetorian prefect and highest-ranking equestrian official, entrusted with the emperor's personal safety, and Vitruvius Secundus, one of the imperial secretaries, responsible for the emperor's correspondence. They would have had frequent and close contact with Commodus on a day-to-day basis, together with knowledge of his movements and correspondence. The consequence of overcoming an actual conspiracy, or transmuting aristocratic discontent into a reason to

⁹⁰ *Comm.* 4.11; Oliver 1967, 42-56, cf. above 104-5. It seems that the family was originally from Tripolis in Phoenicia, but in the generation before the exile of 183 became citizens of Athens. Aemilius Juncus eventually returned to favour at the latest under Pertinax: the consul of 179 was probably the same individual who was proconsul of Asia in 193/4, whose actions are recorded following Pertinax's response to a petition by the citizens of Tabala, cf. Malay 1988, 47-52 = SEG 38.1244.

⁹¹ *Comm.* 4.11; *PIR*² A 1309.

⁹² The list excludes on evidentiary grounds the otherwise unknown Norbana, Norbanus, Paralius, and Paralius' mother, all mentioned in the *HA* at *Comm.* 4.4. The last well-known Norbanus was perhaps complicit in the murder of Domitian, cf. *PIR*² N 162. Another important exclusion from the list is Crispina, Commodus' wife (*PIR*² B 170; Raepsaet-Charlier, no. 149). Though she was eventually exiled and executed, and the biographer implies this occurred around the same time as the second wave of executions following Lucilla's apparent conspiracy, it seems to have been because of adultery (*Comm.* 5.2; Dio 73.4.5-6; cf. Hekster 2002, 72 n. 181, for her survival until at least 185). However, her status and that of her family place her in the same social category of many of the victims of Commodus' reprisals, cf. Varner 2001, 72-80.

⁹³ Dio 73.5.3-4.

⁹⁴ It is difficult to believe that Pertinax could know nothing of the planned plot. See e.g. Appelbaum 2007, 198-207; Potter 2014², 93-4, esp. n. 61; Hekster 2002, 80-3; Birley 1988², 84-8; Champlin 1979, 288-306.

purge his father's advisers, was that Commodus exiled or executed his secretary, protector, his father's closest generals and advisers, as well as his sister. His relationship with the aristocracy never recovered. It is little wonder that he relied thereafter entirely on personal favourites.

Suetonius uses Domitian to give voice to a very real dilemma for a ruling Roman emperor: no one believed in conspiracies against the emperor unless one succeeded and he was killed.⁹⁵ Perhaps it has the wrong sense here for Commodus' circumstances: having grown to maturity in the shadow of Cassius' rebellion, Commodus knew full well that conspiracies could be real; so, too, did the aristocracy. Some of them were probably involved in some way with Cassius' rebellion, though there is little to link the two events causally.⁹⁶ In the wake of the purges it was entirely reasonable for Commodus to surround himself with personal favourites whom he felt he could trust, some of whom came from the usual sources of evil influence upon an emperor in Roman historiography: women, freedmen, and slaves. But in ensuring his immediate security by choosing his favourites and ignoring the existing socio-political hierarchies of imperial society, Commodus openly upset the delicate balance between emperor and aristocracy, carefully maintained by his father. The understandable favouritism Commodus displayed confirmed retrospectively the judgement of Rome's aristocracy. Rank and socio-political status no longer dictated the identities of persons with access to the emperor, who could thereby gain status and become power-brokers themselves. The web of interlocking obligations and expectations between the aristocracy and the emperor, and how these were expressed and negotiated — the political culture — fractured. The aristocracy were forced to confront the reality of an autocracy not on their terms, and collectively comprehended their own loss of status, disempowerment, and physical danger.

It was this contradiction at the core of the relationship between the aristocracy and the emperor — the emperor's need for social, political, and legal legitimacy via the aristocracy, and his subsequent transcendence of that very requirement — that Commodus' accession at the age of 18, and the apparent conspiracy of Lucilla in the early years of his reign, dragged into the open. Previously the contradiction was concealed by a political culture that emphasised the shared origins, overlapping interests, and separate spheres of the emperor and aristocracy. But it was a near impossible task for an emperor who could not also pass as a *princeps senatus* or *imperator*. If, in another time, Caligula had broken the illusion of the imperial settlement "communicatively" with his reaction to a conspiracy, and was eventually called mad by historians,⁹⁷ Commodus after the apparent conspiracy responded savagely and materially, in several stages. Again, a contrast with Hadrian is relevant, this time rather to his accession. In 118, Hadrian was either directly or indirectly responsible for the executions of four consuls. His distance from the events in question perhaps allowed

⁹⁵ Suet. *Dom.* 21.1.

⁹⁶ Avid. *Cass.* 13.7. Even if the motivation for Cassius' rebellion is accepted — that he mistakenly believed Marcus to be dead — he presumably could count on some senatorial support. Cf. Galimberti 2010, 510-7, who is more bullish on the existence of a Cassian faction which remained relevant into Commodus' reign.

⁹⁷ Winterling 2009, 113-9, cf. 104-6. Winterling draws on the accounts of madness given by Celsus, Galen, and legally in the *Digest* to define what was meant by ancient sources, and how it led to an exclusion from society (106): "a construct of reality by an individual diverging from that which is universally accepted as valid by society around them." He cites the various ancient authors who called Caligula mad, the first two themselves senators: Seneca (*furor, de Ira* 3.21.5, 1.20.9); Tacitus (*turbata mens, Ann.* 13.3.2); Suetonius (*valitudo ei neque corporis neque animi constitit, Cal.* 50.2); Philo (μαρία, *Leg.* 76.93); Josephus (μαρία, *AJ* 18.277, 19.1, 19.193); Pliny the Elder (*insania, HN* 36.113).

his disavowal of the executions, and he was able to repair somewhat his relations with the wider aristocracy.⁹⁸ This was despite the doubtful circumstances of his accession.⁹⁹ The clear differences to Commodus are Hadrian's age and status on the one hand, and Commodus' position as the previously acknowledged and legitimate successor on the other. The legality and legitimacy of Commodus' accession was revealed to be nothing more than an illusion: desirable for the parvenu general or military adventurer to gild a violent transition,¹⁰⁰ but insufficient alone to guarantee credibility as an emperor.

A further underlying problem for Commodus, once his impossible position was identified, was that the senatorial and equestrian aristocracy formed a large class which could not practically be replaced in terms of their roles in the governance of the empire. There was no other system or group with which to replace them, and nor could their cultural, economic, social, and political capital be disregarded.¹⁰¹ After 183 this meant, essentially, a divergence of objectives without the possibility of resolution between aristocracy and emperor. Such a division had not occurred under Antoninus or Marcus. Under Hadrian it was at least minimised: despite the difficult start to his reign, Hadrian was to some extent able to avoid the appearance of dependency on the senatorial aristocracy by removing himself from Rome for long periods through his peregrinations, and by locating his villa at Tivoli. But again, the emperor-as-outsider model was an option available to Hadrian because he in the first place fitted, as a mature commander and senator, many of the criteria required of a successful emperor.

For Commodus his paranoia, however justified, became a self-fulfilling prophecy. The consequence was a deepening gulf between emperor and aristocracy. It is here that Winterling's analysis of the reign of Caligula may offer tools for our current analysis.¹⁰² Commodus' early reign and the rupture with his father's advisers exposes, as Winterling noted of Caligula's reign, the manner in which the "structural paradoxes" inherent in imperial politics and society "caused unintentional consequences for the protagonists when the results of their actions ran counter to their aims."¹⁰³ He highlights a speech, according to Dio given by Caligula in early 39, which exposed these paradoxes, and the senate's hypocritical honouring of Tiberius, in a "metacommunication about the ambiguous communication."¹⁰⁴ But this only revealed the senate's powerlessness without allowing them to respond. Caligula's stated intention to designate his horse consul was their final

⁹⁸ Von Saldern 2003, 41, sees Hadrian's situation as not dissimilar ('nicht unähnlich') to Commodus' in the sense that both were opposed by the marshals of the previous dynasty. The point here however is that Hadrian's actions did not lead immediately to a permanent and violent break with the aristocracy.

⁹⁹ Freisenbruch 2010, 194-7.

¹⁰⁰ And gilding was all it was; Severus' acquisition of Antonine nomenclature was viewed cynically by the aristocracy. For Dio's hostility to Severus' adoption as Marcus' son, cf. Madsen 2016, 154-8.

¹⁰¹ Winterling 2009, 110-1.

¹⁰² Winterling 2018, 61-80; cf. Witschel 2006, 98-103. The historic parallels to Commodus align also with a figure such as Nero, but the point here is to examine the analytical tools employed. Both Winterling's and Witschel's accounts of Caligula, Nero, and Domitian present relevant points concerning their interactions with the senatorial establishment and traditional expectations of the emperor, each evincing different programmes: Caligula to destroy, Nero to subvert, and Domitian to dominate.

¹⁰³ Winterling 2009, 115, cf. 107-119; cf. Winterling 2011, 90-6. He suggests Caligula's speech to the senate, criticising their hypocrisy under Tiberius, and reinstatement of the *maiestas* trials, indicate the existence of a conspiracy in early 39, passed over in silence by Dio in book 59. Though this initial conspiracy cannot be established, Caligula's message is the point here.

¹⁰⁴ Winterling 2009, 115; cf. Jones 1992, 196-8 on Domitian.

humiliation, the supreme mockery of the traditional socio-political order, which was defined by degrees of honour derived from offices held.¹⁰⁵ In Winterling's analysis, Caligula's open contempt for the existing norms and expectations led to a serious conspiracy later in 39, suppressed with numerous executions, after which he refused to accept any honours from the senate, as accepting them would reduce rather than enhance his prestige. He further attempted to circumvent their political and administrative functions with freedmen and procurators.¹⁰⁶ Following his assassination, the senate eventually took their ultimate revenge: "Similar to how he had put them on a par with horses, they, in turn, posthumously excluded him from human society. Soon it was said that he had been mad."¹⁰⁷ Allowing for the different circumstances of their reigns, a similar pattern may yet be observed in Commodus' case: a young emperor, initially conforming to aristocratic expectations, breaks with the senate due to a conspiracy or the suspicion of one. The response to the real or apparent conspiracy damages the relationship between the emperor and aristocracy beyond repair, and produces further conspiracies which culminate in assassination.

To assign the blame for Commodus' eventual assassination to his paranoia or incompetence, just as to blame the madness of Caligula for his own assassination, is to mistake the identification of the problem for its solution. Commodus' incompetence and paranoia — or the aristocratic perception of these deficiencies — derived directly from his inability as emperor to rely on the existing socio-political norms and mutual expectations of emperor and aristocracy. That he attempted to define himself as emperor in a new way is clear from the time of the initial apparent conspiracy and subsequent purges. Commodus' actions as an emperor fall in a similar category to those of Caligula, in that he was attempting to present himself as an emperor in a different way, at the cost of the delicate balance with the aristocracy.¹⁰⁸ It is simplistic to blame Commodus' apparent character defects for his failure as an emperor, or to explain his fate without considering the full context of the politically integrated imperial society ruled over by Marcus.

V. Saoterus and his significance, 180-2

An analysis of the portrayal in the sources of Commodus' *cubicularius* Saoterus offers a case-study of some of the specific socio-political factors in the breakdown of the accord between emperor and aristocratic society.¹⁰⁹ Saoterus is best understood as a literary stand-in for those members of Commodus' household to whom the young emperor's ear was inclined. An expression of the tension between reality and expectation is Commodus' early behaviour towards Saoterus, and the aristocratic response. The elevation of his private attendant to a perceived position of influence (and to the formal status of senator; Saoterus may almost certainly be identified with an Aelius Saoterus found on a contemporary inscription) is an act that Marcus' advisers probably found disturbing.¹¹⁰ In addition, Commodus is reported to

¹⁰⁵ Winterling 2009, 115; Winterling 2011, 96-107. But cf. Woods 2014, 772-777, who argues that Winterling's explanation is too complex, and suggests a play on words between the names of Incitatus (the horse in question), and a suffect consul of 38, Asinius Celer.

¹⁰⁶ Winterling 2009, 117, esp. nn. 39-41.

¹⁰⁷ Winterling 2009, 118, cf. above, n. 429.

¹⁰⁸ Hekster 2002, 137-167.

¹⁰⁹ *Comm.* 3.6, 4.5-8, 10.1; Dio 73.12.1-2.

¹¹⁰ CIL 6.2010 = AE 2000 159; cf. *Comm.* 4.5. The inscription lists members of the *ordo sacerdotum domus Aug. Palat*; Aelius Saoterus is listed as a *clarissimus vir*, col. a, l. 24.

have shown his favourite great public affection, kissing him openly as he rode behind the emperor in his chariot during his triumph.¹¹¹ Apart from leading to standard accusations of licentiousness, such conduct could damagingly be perceived as the elevation of a freedman to the social status of a senator.¹¹² This is worth emphasising: such a public display of intimacy and affection with an inferior directly and immediately threatened aristocratic status on an ideological level.

The portrayal of Commodus' relationship with Saoterus reflects anxiety in the senatorial sources about the privileged nature of the relationship between an emperor and his attendant. There are two distinct lines of senatorial tradition preserved in Dio and the *HA* (in this text perhaps via Marius Maximus), but both are inimical to the elevation of a personal slave. Dio's portrayal of the senate and senators is based on the autonomy of the senate as an institution from the emperor, and looks back toward an idealised reign of Marcus, when senators could realise their ambitions through "recognition mechanisms that are either controlled by the Senate or part of its well-regulated relationship with good emperors."¹¹³ For the *HA* — and through the *HA*, Kemezis argues, for Marius Maximus — the civil wars after 193, horrifying for Dio, represented opportunity for advancement for Maximus' generation in a similar manner to the previous (foreign) wars of Marcus.¹¹⁴ Both these historiographical traditions laud the achievements of men of relatively humble origins such as Pertinax and Pompeianus, and, though their interests and outlook differ, the primacy of the role of the senate and aristocracy is not in question. Both are aristocratic traditions, and abhor the intrusion into the aristocratic sphere of foreigners, slaves, freedmen, and women.

The relationship between Commodus and Saoterus fell beyond the bounds of what the members of the aristocracy prominent under Marcus were prepared to accept: neither equestrian general nor senatorial aristocrat could countenance a slave or freedman with the ear of the emperor through proximity and favour alone.¹¹⁵ Such closeness to freedmen was tolerated in an emperor like Lucius, but then, Marcus was the senior partner and chose in that case to indulge his adoptive brother, though he disapproved.¹¹⁶ Commodus was by the accounts of the sources more blatant in his behaviour than Lucius, of whom accounts of scandalous behaviour in Antioch came to Rome with news of the Parthian war.¹¹⁷ But the crucial difference was that the range of possible aristocratic responses was larger due to Commodus' youth and lack of socio-political prestige. In this case, the *HA* suggests that Paternus is responsible for ordering the *frumentarii* to deceive and assassinate Saoterus, apparently because the people (not defined beyond *populus Romanus*) despised the influence

¹¹¹ *Comm.* 3.6. The position of Saoterus in the chariot was traditional enough, but Commodus' actions were not — an example of Commodus retaining traditional forms and rituals, but altering their expression and purpose.

¹¹² Kissing on the mouth was a greeting between equals in both Roman and Greek elite contexts, cf. Paterson 2007, 147–8. Emperors who did not kiss senators, or who held out their hand to be kissed, could be seen as tyrants (Dio 59.27.1; Suet. *Gaius* 56.2). Pliny's praise of Trajan (*Pan.* 24.2) includes a reference to his respectful treatment of his former senatorial peers, since as emperor he continued to greet them as social equals with a kiss.

¹¹³ Kemezis 2012, 406.

¹¹⁴ Kemezis 2012, 406–13.

¹¹⁵ There were of course always individuals willing to flatter and profit by association with the emperor's favourites, as with Martial's cultivation of Parthenius under Domitian, cf. Jones 1992, 61–2. The prevailing elite attitude remained negative, however, particularly in the context of Marcus' reign.

¹¹⁶ *Verus* 8.6–9.

¹¹⁷ *Verus* 7.1–4.

he had with Commodus.¹¹⁸ The anecdotes concerning Commodus' conduct towards his attendant may be partly apocryphal, but there is little reason to doubt the basic outline of Saoterus' career offered in the *HA*: he was promoted by Commodus, and sometime in late 182 killed against the emperor's wishes.

The death of Saoterus precipitated the second wave of executions after Lucilla's apparent conspiracy, as Commodus responded to the murder of his favourite by executing and banishing individuals whom he suspected of involvement. The series of reprisals now included the execution of Paternus himself. As Hekster has outlined, the murder of Saoterus should be viewed as a power-play — or statement — on the part of the aristocracy, with Commodus' reaction motivated by self-preservation, political considerations, and grief.¹¹⁹ The notion that the *populus Romanus* did not accept Saoterus' influence over Commodus is easily unmasked for what it is: aristocratic justification for an extra-judicial murder, organised and carried out through deception by agents of the praetorian prefect, a proxy in this case for the political interests of a section of the aristocracy.

Saoterus' fate demonstrates that the aristocracy knew they had much to lose from an emperor who privileged the slaves and personal companions around him. In doing so, such an emperor defied long-accepted socio-political hierarchies and norms, which, cast and stamped in the names and titles of Republican office, had remained the major currency of influence and favour under previous Antonine emperors.¹²⁰ Under Marcus and before him Antoninus, freedmen and slaves had played their part but known their place.¹²¹ A rare exception demonstrates Marcus' attitude: Lucius permitted the marriage of Marcus' widowed cousin Annia Fundania to L. Aelius Agaclytus, one of his favourite freedmen. Marcus refused publicly to sanction the marriage and did not attend.¹²² In contrast to Marcus' measured approach, Commodus' brazenly preferential treatment of Saoterus implied too clearly an abrupt break from Marcus' careful and apparently deferential treatment of the senate and the aristocracy.¹²³

Commodus' treatment of Saoterus is perhaps best understood as an act of defiance against the conventions of the political culture that defined aristocratic society. Despite the attrition among members of the aristocracy under Marcus due to external circumstances, a political culture was nurtured and maintained that was in the interests of emperor and aristocracy alike. Commodus may not have understood or cared how his treatment of Saoterus struck at its foundations. An alternative explanation is that Commodus understood his position only too well, and his conduct towards Saoterus is an example which indicated that he did not intend to be bound by the contradictions of the role he had inherited. If Caligula showed his contempt for the senate by refusing to receive honours from it and openly planning to designate his horse a consul, Commodus demonstrated his own disdain by kissing his favourite during a sacred public spectacle, making him the social equal of a

¹¹⁸ *Comm.* 4.5.

¹¹⁹ Hekster 2002, 53-4.

¹²⁰ Winterling 2009, 29-33.

¹²¹ *Ant. Pius* 11.1-2.

¹²² *Marc.* 15.2; *Verus* 9.3-4, 19.5; *PIR*² A 452. On Lucius' death Marcus cashiered his freedmen (*Verus* 9.6), and later made marriages between women of senatorial status and freedmen illegal, cf. *Dig.* 23.2.16.

¹²³ For Marcus' respectful treatment of the senate: *Med.* 8.30; *Marc.* 10.1-9; *Av. Cass.* 12.3-4. As Caesar he was careful and thoughtful about how he was perceived, cf. *ad M. Caes.* 3.17 = 50 Van den Hout = Haines 1.107-8; *Marc.* 29.4-5. On the connection between Marcus' stoicism and the legal and political history of his acts, cf. Stanton 1969, 570-87; 1968, 183-95, and, in opposition, Hendrickx 1974, 254-6.

member of the high-status elite, and thereby undermining the values of aristocratic society. He had already made efforts to cultivate the army and the people, which were the only possible counter-balance to aristocratic socio-political influence. Given his efforts in this direction, it follows that he was aware of the high stakes of his public behaviour and private decisions. The public nature of his conduct recorded on this occasion was an important factor in the history and the historiography: the handsome young triumphator, by lavishing such attention on an attendant, publicly derided the socio-political values of the senatorial aristocracy. He signalled thereby his open defiance— or ignorance, on a more sympathetic reading — of a system which rendered his own position as a young emperor untenable.

Conclusion

It is possible that Commodus had a vicious nature, or that he was foolish and in the thrall of his favourites. It is a fact that he became sole emperor at the age of 18. In his early twenties he either suppressed a conspiracy or manufactured one to justify the removal of his father's cadre of advisers. This experience surely affected how he saw himself as a ruler in relation to his immediate advisers and personal security. The immediate outcome of his conflict with Marcus' advisers was the purge of powerful and well-connected members of the aristocracy. His sister was eventually executed as a result. Those generals not executed — Pompeianus and Pertinax among them — were exiled from public life, the former only to return once Commodus had been assassinated (and suspiciously present in Rome when the assassination occurred); the latter, though eventually allowed to resume his career by Commodus, was to become an agent of his eventual murder and then his successor.

The immediate reasons for the initial apparent conspiracy and purges of 180-183 must remain unclear. A dynastic struggle is the most reasonable argument. A legitimate imperial alternative was at hand, in the persons of Lucilla and her son. Any specific political differences may lie in Commodus' decision to return to Rome, and the apparently unfavourable peace he made along the Danube, undermining Marcus' efforts.¹²⁴ Yet a strategic case can also be made for ending the costly and lengthy war.¹²⁵ Again, attention should be drawn to the manner in which the decisions were made, issued by ukase by an untried emperor in defiance of his notional advisers who represented a bloc of class interests. If the resulting conspiracy was some construct of Commodus, or derived from existing discontent exaggerated by him, he had in any case correctly identified from where threats to his authority and life might come. More importantly, the two waves of executions represented the rupture of the balance of aristocratic imperial society, and the initial and crucial break from the political culture fostered by Marcus. It was the violent, public, and irreversible expression of the problem of a young emperor, or any emperor, who did not conform to aristocratic expectations for a ruler. Any defects Commodus showed were compounded fatally by his youth and the consequent lack of his own credibility as emperor. In an aristocratic setting, he had little socio-political standing independent of his legal status or ancestry. The other qualities required — a network of powerful and proven *amici*, military experience, a reputation for learning, a history of apparently deferential acknowledgement of the senate — he simply had not had time to acquire. Too much rested on his status as Marcus' son, and his status with the soldiers. He was missing, crucially, the tacit approval and consensus of a powerful enough group within the aristocracy, and he was missing it on

¹²⁴ *Comm.* 3.5; *Marc.* 27.11-28.1; *Hdn.* 1.5.3-8; *Dio* 72.1.1-4.

¹²⁵ Hekster 2002, 48-9.

personal but also structural terms: concerns about his character aside, there was little capacity for the political culture to absorb and integrate a young ruler who could fulfil none of the aristocratic expectations of an emperor.

Considering such socio-political factors, we may see the fundamental weakness of the carefully mediated socio-political imperial system through the troubles of 180-3, the way the sources report them, and Commodus' treatment of Saoterus. Political and military power resided in one man, but was of necessity modulated, communicated, and interpreted through an existing structure of aristocratic power-brokers. This system was the result of an uneasy and, at best, invisible compromise between the positions of the emperor and the aristocracy. It could not function without trust on both sides, or at least a tacit understanding sufficient to prevent the break-down of the political culture in aristocratic society. It had succeeded under mature emperors who were grounded by cultural upbringing in the senatorial aristocracy. The system also functioned more effectively in periods when there was a clear external enemy, when the emperor — and therefore the most important members of imperial society, along with the emperor's household — was removed from Rome. This allowed the emperor to be conspicuously active and in close contact with the legions, as well as providing opportunities for commanders of senatorial and equestrian rank to earn military renown. Their achievements were naturally funnelled through the person of the emperor, who took the titles of the conquered peoples and rewarded his generals with consulships and promotions. As a young emperor, Commodus did not have the background or time to build his own circle of *amici* from his socio-political peers, and thus relate on genuinely equal terms with his generals and advisers.

Dynastic claims as the sole foundation for rule had been untested for a century and were revealed as too weak. The conspiracy and purges of 180-3, whatever their provenance, meant that it was essential for Commodus to find a new way to ensure his own security. The only way he could do so was by actively subverting the carefully tended political culture of the Antonine system, essentially exacerbating the rupture of the abrupt change of personnel with a deeper break from the accepted norms and obligation between emperor and aristocracy. His dynastic and legal status did not, in the end, prevent his assassination, which might be read as a dramatic and final kind of delegitimization: a personal and political rejection that confirmed his socio-political failures as an emperor and a member of the aristocracy. These failures were almost inevitable, guaranteed by the nature of the political culture and the circumstances of his accession. It was a lesson and a model not lost on Severus, in many ways the perfect subject for Herodian's history: he framed his actions and words in Antonine norms, and seemed on the surface to possess the correct qualities and experience for an emperor. His deeds, on the other hand, conformed to a new political culture which had developed during the reign of Commodus.

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When was Aeolis?

The Fluctuating Boundaries of Aeolis, Mysia, and the Troad

Stefanos Apostolou

Abstract: This paper discusses the fluctuating boundaries of Aeolis in the preserved geographical accounts from the Classical to the Roman periods. Instead of confusion and inaccuracy on the part of ancient authors, it argues that the changing size of Aeolis in our sources reflects political and conceptual changes of the times of authorship. Those changing circumstances caused an oscillation of the size of Aeolis: from a Herodotean Small Aeolis to a Larger Aeolis in the 1st century BCE, and back to the Herodotean rule after the 3rd century CE. The paper explains the oscillation on the basis of two significant changes in ancient Asia Minor. First, the consolidation of Ilion firmly at the northwest corner of Asia Minor created new possibilities for communities on the southern coast of the Troad, as they could combine claims of Trojan and Aeolian affiliation. Then, those opportunities were enhanced after the forging of a special relationship between Rome and Troy, exalted by Iulian and imperial propaganda. The growth of Aeolis left little room for Mysia, which disappeared from geographical accounts between the 1st century BCE and 1st CE. After the imperial propaganda subsided, Mysia resurfaced and the size of Aeolis returned to its classical boundaries.

Keywords: Aeolis, Ancient Geography, Mysia, Troad, Ancient Asia Minor, Strabo, Ilion, Roman Propaganda

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the perceptions of Aeolis as a geographical entity in ancient textual sources. The aim is to discern patterns and offer explanations for the use of the term “Aeolis” to signify an area of different sizes and foci in Asia Minor. Discrepancies do not necessarily constitute misunderstandings, but rather reveal attempts to construct worldviews in accordance with the interests and goals of certain groups of people. Rather than assuming error on the part of ancient authors,¹ or downplaying the role of divergence,

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¹ A trend already traced in the beginning of modern research in the area, as early as Leake, the first scholar who organized a systematic classical topography of ancient Asia Minor. In his attempt to identify ancient toponyms in ancient ruins, Leake was confident and indignant enough to accuse ancient scholars of “demonstrable ignorance” regarding the area in question (Wagstaff (1987) 30). Leaf (1923) xxxviii-xli was equally adamant on his attack against Strabo and the absurdity of his inclusion of the Elaiatic gulf in the Gulf of Adramyttion (a mistake repeated in Str. 13.1.51 and 13.1.68). Yet, when juxtaposed to other passages of Strabo and in light of his knowledge of the area apparent elsewhere, we are probably facing a copyist's error than a gross geographical mistake. Contrary to a long tradition of ascribing carelessness and confusion to ancient

a thorough evaluation of those different accounts, contextualised in time and space, offers a different vantage point over the ways changing political conditions influenced perceptions of space in antiquity. This is an opportunity not to be missed by assuming randomness, indifference, negligence, inaccuracy, inconsistency or other flaws typically ascribed to ancient authors. Language is never innocent, and neither is geography.²

The contradictory ancient accounts of Aeolis brought Strabo to the brink of despair when composing his description of the region (13.1.4):³

τῶν Αἰολέων τοίνυν καθ' ὅλην σκεδασθέντων τὴν χώραν, ἣν ἔφαμεν ὑπὸ τοῦ ποιητοῦ λέγεσθαι Τρωικὴν, οἱ ὕστερον οἱ μὲν πᾶσαν Αἰολίδα προσ-
αγορεύουσιν οἱ δὲ μέρος, καὶ Τροίαν οἱ μὲν ὅλην οἱ δὲ μέρος αὐτῆς, οὐδὲν ὅλως ἀλλήλοις ὁμολογοῦντες.

As the Aeolians had scattered within the area, for which we said that it is named “the Troad” by the poet [Homer], but some later authors name the entire land “Aeolis” and others only a part of it, while others name the entire area “the Troad” and others only a part of it, by no means agreeing with one another in the very least.

All scholars discussing Aeolis must engage with the question of its size and boundaries. Bérard discusses the Aeolian settlements between Kyme and Pitane, on a narrow coastal strip following the list of *poleis* in Hdt. 1.151;⁴ Labarre focuses on the *poleis* of Lesbos;⁵ Rubinstein rightly and consciously chooses to err on the generous side and include all *poleis* with attested Aeolian populations in her account of the settlements of the region;⁶ Heinle studies in detail the area between the Hermos and Kanae peninsula (following Herodotos) and occasionally discusses Lesbos and the Troad.⁷ Some argue that the relative insignificance of the region subsumed Aeolis either to its much more glorified southern neighbor, Ionia, or to the all-embracing term “Asia”.⁸ Others note the attestation of two Aeoliae in our sources and

geographers, Safrai (2005) meticulously examines discrepancies and flaws in Strabo’s description of Judaea, Nabataea, Phoenicia, and Coele Syria and detects the different literary layers of Strabo’s sources.

² For scholarly geographical constructs in antiquity, Pliny’s Italy (Bispham (2007)), perceptions and allusions to the Athenian Empire in Aeschylus’ *Eumenidae* (Futo Kennedy (2006)), and Caesar’s Germania (Krebs (2006)).

³ Note that Strabo was not alone in despair. Cicero considered composing a geographical treatise, but his will waned in anticipation of severe criticism, as geographers and geographical sources could not agree with one another (Cic. *Ad. Att.* 2.6.1). All translations are my own. I aimed at a fine line between consistency and common sense in the transliteration of Greek toponyms and names: I avoid Latinizations unless the use of the term is widespread (e.g., Aeolis instead of Aiolis or Aiolida; Aeneas rather than Aineias; Achaemenid, but Achaian), I hope to good taste and to the reader’s liking.

⁴ Bérard (1959).

⁵ Labarre (1996).

⁶ Rubinstein (2004) 1033-1034.

⁷ Heinle (2015).

⁸ A tendency to omit Aeolis in favor of Ionia or other appellations appears already in Herodotos (e.g., 1.141-151, 1.162, 3.39, 5.37-38, 6.31, 6.42-43, 7.97, 8.19, 8.109, 8.130-8.132) and Thucydides (who uses “Ionia” and “the Hellespont” to refer to the broader region, following administrative arrangements of the Athenian Empire, as in 2.9). Xenophon often applies a short-hand term to refer to Aeolis, Ionia, and the Hellespont: “Asia” (e.g., *Hell.* 2.1.18; 3.1.5; 3.2.6; 3.2.21; 4.3.15), or reduces nearby regions to “Ionia” (e.g., *Anab.* 1.1.6-9, 1.4.13, 2.1.3, *Hell.* 3.2.11). Thereafter, the term “Greeks of Asia” had been generally accepted as a way to define Greeks of that area as an entity (e.g., D.S. 16.44.4; Plut. *Artax.* 20.2-3; 21.5; “Asia”, following Roman administration patterns, in *Luc.*

assign them as the reason for the confusion.⁹ All converge in raising concerns over the accuracy and insightfulness of ancient accounts of Aeolis that reflect and perpetuate confusion.



Figure 1: Map of Aeolis, Lesbos, and the Troad © Resource: Antiquity À-la-carte/Ancient World Mapping Centre; author's creation

The divergence in ancient accounts notwithstanding, all seem to agree on at least the two geographical extremities:

- A) They fix a southern boundary of Aeolis: the river Hermos and the *polis* of Phokaia, where Ionia began. The problem lay to the north, where...
- B) ... Cape Lekton constitutes the northernmost boundary of Aeolis. The northern boundary fluctuates between the cape and the area between Pitane and Adramyttion, thus causing Aeolis' area to fluctuate accordingly.¹⁰

33.5; *Them.* 8.5, *Sul.* 11.2; 22.5; *Ages.* 6.1-2; 7.2; 14.2; 15.1); for the long history of that term in ancient sources, Seager and Tuplin (1980).

⁹ Rubinstein (2004) 1034-1035; Shipley (2011) 163; Heinle (2015) 173-174.

¹⁰ Rubinstein (2004) 1034 suggests that *Aen. Tac.* 24.3-13 places Ilium in Aeolis. My reading of the phrase *Χαριδῆμω Ὠρεΐτῃ περὶ τὴν Αἰολίδα συνέβη, καταλαβόντι Ἴλιον τρόπῳ τοιῷδε* suggests that Aeneas aims to locate Charidemos, not Ilium, in Aeolis.

To begin with, is the size and location of Aeolis a problem demanding an explanation? After all, names might have been interchangeable in antiquity. Even if this were the case, interchangeability itself would still reveal perceptions of regions throughout antiquity. However, the analysis of the ancient geographical accounts of Aeolis preserved to us reveal aspects other than arbitrary interchangeability of terms. It would perhaps be too much to expect from our sources a fixed, stable perception of Aeolis throughout time. After all, what is a region? How can it be defined as a conceptual and analytical term?

Regional geography, perhaps the most suitable discipline to offer insight into the concept of “region”, defines it as “the basis for social action”.¹¹ While an interactive approach is assumed between landscape and people, the study of any given region is typically conducted in certain stages: a descriptive starting point; an examination of the organization of production; class formation and division of labor; and then an analysis of political system and authorities.¹² Increased human mobility after the 19th century undermined the traditional methodology of examining the world as a jigsaw of fixed territories. The last two generations of geographers have defined “region” in terms of self-ascribed collective identities with a sense of co-belonging, “collective action in relation to the environment”, acknowledging at the same time social dynamics and social differences.¹³ These are points easily missed by scholars of other disciplines. Classicists, in particular, have relatively recently realised that while (some) environmental factors may be inelastic, their relation to the human-made environment, human actions, and perceptions of the natural environment is actually dynamic. We now perceive regions as social, human-made constructs.¹⁴ A region, like geography itself, is a malleable time-space continuum wherein the past and narratives of the past are embedded in the fabric of any geographical entity or landscape.¹⁵ In light of the galloping advance of world-system theories and the concept of interconnectivity, we see interwoven networks, interactions, exchanges, and transformation instead of entities fixed in time and place.¹⁶

Accordingly, this paper investigates perceptions of Aeolis and the underlying logic and circumstances that precipitated changes in those perceptions. It explores what those changes reveal about the causes of fluidity we view as inherent in geography and regions. Essentially, the purpose is to anchor and describe that fluidity. Tracing and following the fluctuating boundaries of Aeolis cannot provide an answer to the question “What and where was Aeolis?”, but can modify the question itself to the more relative “What did people *think* Aeolis was?” – and why, but more intriguingly, when.

All in all, the problem we need to address is illustrated in Figure 2 below.

¹¹ Peet (1998) 147-150, summarizing previous bibliography. For alternative approaches to space, Murdoch (2006) 1-25; Thrift (2008). Post-structuralist geography emphasizes the perceptual space tied to alternative modes of identity. Accordingly, space has no determining structure, but is conceived on the basis of social norms and relations, “made not of structures but of relations. Space is not simply a container” (Murdoch (2006) 23).

¹² Peet (1998) 149-150.

¹³ Entrikin (2008) xvii.

¹⁴ Cf. an excellent discussion in Constantakopoulou (2017) 13-18, with criticism over the value and limitations of Regionalism and New Regionalism.

¹⁵ E.g., Clarke (2017).

¹⁶ E.g., Ellis-Evans (2019).

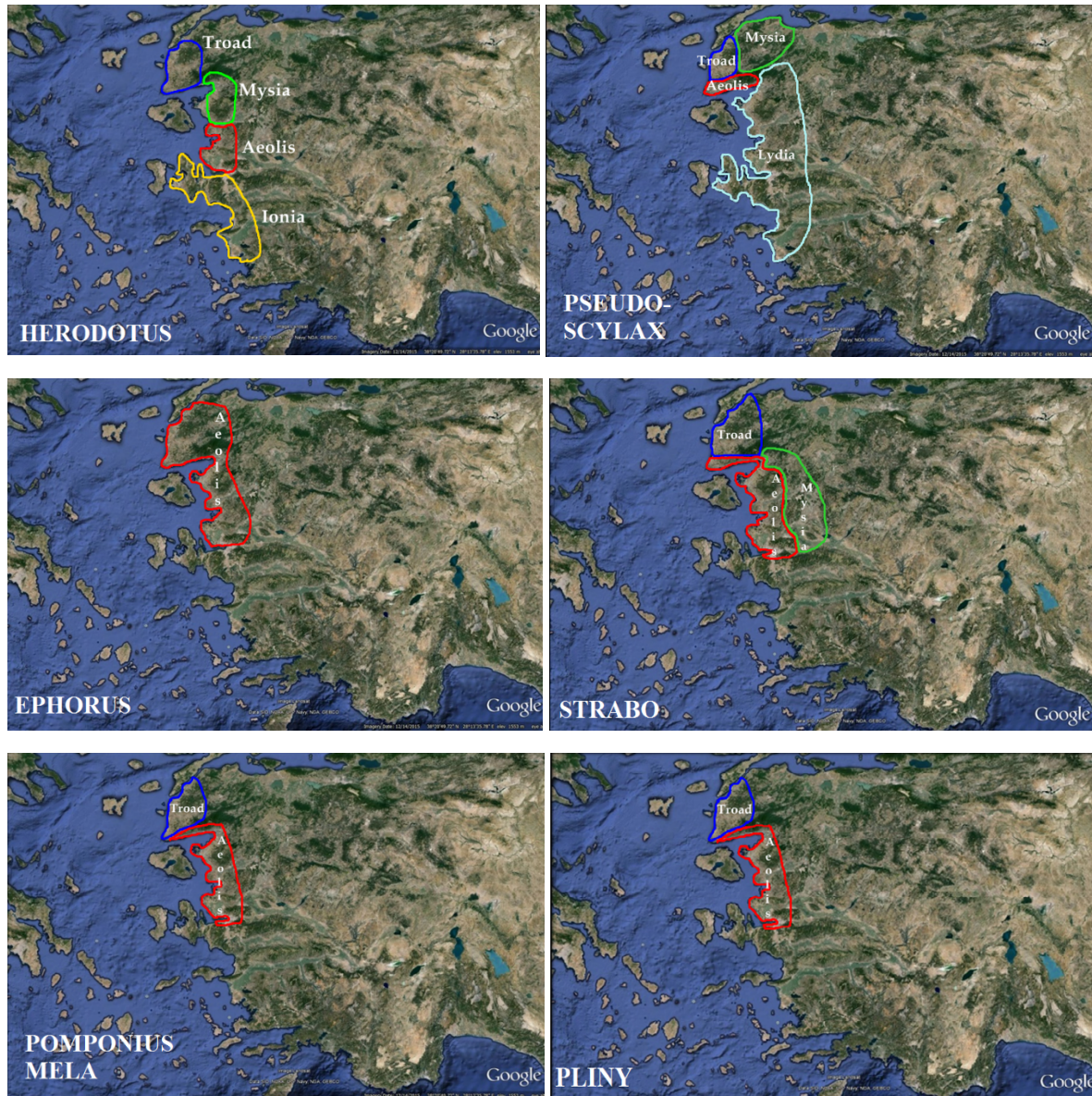


Figure 2: Ionia, Aeolis, Mysia, Lydia, and the Troad in ancient geographical accounts

Strabo's passage above exhibits the problem but also sets the context for a plausible explanation based on a chronological arrangement of available sources, as I suggest, supplemented by an examination of the size of geographical entities around Aeolis (Mysia and the Troad). In this paper, I examine in detail the thorough ancient geographical accounts of Aeolis available to modern scholarship, namely the relevant discussions in the works of Herodotos, Xenophon, Pseudo-Scylax, Ephoros, Strabo, Pomponius Mela, and Pliny the Elder. A pattern clearly emerges and I distinguish between Herodotos' Small Aeolis and a Large Aeolis in later authors (between the middle of the 1st century BCE and the middle of the 1st century CE), occupying a larger area including the southern coast of the Troad. I argue that the oscillation of the size of Aeolis is a result of the consolidation of Ilion at the northwest corner of Asia Minor after the 4th century BCE and of early imperial propaganda which

endorsed the Trojan foundation of Rome by Aeneas, the forefather of the Iulii.¹⁷ When the propaganda of the family of the Iulii subsided, the relative sizes and boundaries of the regions returned back to “normal”, i.e., their size and location in the Classical period.

The 5th and 4th Centuries: a Small Aeolis

In his list of Aeolian *poleis* in Asia Minor, Herodotos applies a human-focused, civic approach (Hdt. 1.149-151); his basic entity is not region, but people. As a consequence, firm or general boundaries are lacking, yet he distinguishes firmly between what in his view was the core of Aeolian habitation, the narrow coastal strip between the river Hermos and Pitane, and other areas with Aeolian populations:

These are the Ionian *poleis*. The Aeolian ones are the following: Kyme (the so-called Phrikonian), Larisa, Neon Teichos, Temnos, Kilia, Notion, Aigiroessa, Pitane, Aigai, Myrina, Gryneia, eleven in total, the ancient *poleis* of the Aeolians; for one, Smyrna, was taken over by the Ionians... These then are the Aeolian cities on the mainland, excluding those situated in Mt. Ida, for they are separate. On the islands, five *poleis* allot Lesbos among them (a sixth one on Lesbos, Arisba, had its people enslaved by the Methymnians, despite their blood ties); there is one on Tenedos, and one again in the so-called Hekatonnesos.

His Small Aeolis allowed for a clearly separate “Mysian land”, which extended along the coast from Atarneus (Hdt. 8.106) to Antandros and the Troad to the north, on the left-hand

¹⁷ In light of an old, fruitless, fragmentary, and not always well-informed debate on the applicability of the term *propaganda* in ancient studies, this author feels obligated to justify their choice of analytical terms. The term *ideological programme* has been popular in the early-21st century as a descriptor of the mass communication strategies employed by ancient political authorities. This euphemism draws a line between propaganda and ideology and pushes propaganda to the extremes of mass communication precipitated only by the advent of mass, and now social, media. However, propaganda is a social phenomenon, much more potent than the neutral and neutered term *ideological programme*, or ideology itself, as the latter is an element, the canvas on which propaganda's power of persuasion relies. Sociologists and psychologists do not agree on a definition of propaganda (Țuțui (2017) for a full account of the issue) and scholarly views differ on the basis of individual responses to the simple question “Is propaganda inherently negative?”. A positive answer has been firmly established in Anglophone literature since the days of Bertrand Russell, and this stance led to a critical revision of the use of the term in reference to ancient societies. The relative lack of theoretical work on the term notwithstanding, ever since the oft referenced (albeit its liberal English translation), seminal work of Jacques Ellul *Propagandes*, social scientists have dissociated propaganda from mass media and noted the ability of political authorities in pre-modern times to produce and communicate widely complex messages to crystallize or aptly reconfigure ideology. *Grosso modo*, propaganda is the strategy, whereas ideology is the canvas. When one, Hornblower (OCD⁴, s.v. *Propaganda*) and this author included, reads the two fundamental characteristics of integration propaganda (Ellul (1962): 85-94), one cannot help but think of Augustus and the copious effort to nudge people to bypass reflective thinking (“Why do we have one man with so much power?”) and land on the imposition of conformity and the legitimization of the outcome (“He is divine and capable of the impossible and, therefore, deserves a special place among and above us”). Recent, concise, and clear discussions in Șutiu (2012); Shieber (2021); Quaranto and Stanley (2021); full discussion in Stanley (2015); Jowett and O' Donnell (2019); for a succinct revisit to the use of the term in ancient studies, Baynham (2021). Sceptic readers are welcome to substitute *propaganda* with *ideological programme* as they make their way through the text; it will change absolutely nothing.

side of Xerxes' itinerary through Mt. Ida towards Ilion (Hdt. 7.42; Mysians in the plains of the river Kaikos in 6.28).

Xenophon refers to Aeolis only in his discussion of the campaign of Derkylidas in 399 against Pharnabazos, satrap of Hellespontine Phrygia, which took place in "Pharnabazos' Aeolis". Derkylidas was warmly received in Larisa, Hamaxitos, and Kolonai on the western coast of the Troad (*Hell.* 3.1.10-16). At this point, Xenophon complicates the geographical order by saying that Derkylidas "also sent word to the Aeolian *poleis*" (3.1.16: πέμπων δὲ καὶ πρὸς τὰς Αἰολίδας πόλεις). The text is as follows:

καὶ εὐθὺς μὲν ἐν μιᾷ ἡμέρᾳ Λάρισαν καὶ Ἀμαξιτὸν καὶ Κολωνὰς τὰς ἐπιθαλαττίους πόλεις ἐκούσας παρέλαβε· πέμπων δὲ καὶ πρὸς τὰς Αἰολίδας πόλεις ἡξίου ... οἱ μὲν οὖν Νεανδρεῖς καὶ Ἰλιεῖς καὶ Κοκυλίται ἐπέειθοντο·

...and straightaway in a single day he took control of the coastal *poleis* (Larisa, Hamaxitos, and Kolonae) with their own volition; then he also sent word to the **Aeolian *poleis*** requesting... The **Neandreians, Ilians, and Kokylitai** obeyed.

His "Aeolian" *poleis* were all settlements well outside any other conceptions of Aeolis: Neandreia was located on a hill to the south of the Scamandrian plain in the Troad, Ilion to the northwest edge of the plain of the rivers Simoeis and Scamander, and Kokylion remains elusive. The Spartan commander encountered difficulties at Kebren and was duly agitated as he intended to place "the whole of Aeolis" under his control before the satrap could react (3.1.17). Kebren is an equally unlikely settlement to fall within Aeolis, as it lay on the north slope of Mt. Ida overlooking the Scamandrian plain.¹⁸ Derkylidas eventually secured Kebren, Skepsis, and Gergis (3.1.18ff); Pharnabazos requested a truce, seeing that "Aeolis" had become a stronghold against him (3.2.1).¹⁹ After the explicit references to Pharnabazos' Aeolis, Xenophon returns to more general terms: Derkylidas dispatched Chersonesian envoys to Ephesos via "the Greek *poleis*" (3.2.9). Here the reference must be to the *poleis* in Mysia, the Troad, and Aeolis, since Derkylidas had camped at Lampsakos on the northern entrance to the Hellespont.

Xenophon's Aeolis in the Troad seems to align with the account of Aeolis in the work of Pseudo-Scylax, composed around 338 BCE in Athens.²⁰ In his account, Aeolis coincides with the southern coast of the Troad; it begins in Hamaxitos and extends as far as Antandros (96). The author must probably have listed some coastal *poleis*, as in the manuscript tradition an introductory clause, "Those are the Aeolian *poleis* by this sea", is followed only by inland settlements: Kebren, Skepsis, Neandreia, and Pityeia (the latter being the only settlement of this group not located by Xenophon within "Pharnabazos' Aeolis"). After a brief list of the Lesbian *poleis* and Pordoselene (97), the author proceeds with Lydia, "the area south of Aeolis, once called Mysia...now Lydia; for the Mysians migrated inland" (98). In the entry for this large "Lydia" all the Aeolian and some Ionian *poleis* are listed (Adramyttion, Atarneus, Pitane,

¹⁸ Ephoros (*FGrHist* 70 F 10) labels Kebren as a colony of the Kymaians. The information is transmitted by Harpokration, who references Ephoros' Book 1. Fragments linked to that book discuss the prehistory/mythical age of Greece, such as Carian settlements in the Aegean islands, the fifty daughters of Thespios mating with Hercules, the Dorian invasion, and so on. I think that Ephoros had a mythical context in mind, similar to his Large Aeolis, which I discuss below.

¹⁹ More in Krentz (1995) 167.

²⁰ Shipley (2012), who links the work to philosophical trends in 4th-century Athens and suggests a date around 338 BCE. Other datings of the *Periplus* still have some followers, span up to the Byzantine area, and regard the text as a compilation of earlier accounts available to the late compiler (Peretti (1979); Garzón Díaz (1998-1999)).

Elaia, Gryneion, Achaiōn Limen, Myrina, Kyme, Leukai, and so on, as far south as Miletos, where Caria began). This oddly-placed Aeolis, included within a large “Lydia” which contains both Aeolis and Ionia, allows not for one, but two regions with the name “Mysia”, to the north and south of the Troad, which in turn is placed between Sestos and Hamaxitos. The first Mysia, listed as ΜΥΣΙΑ, is located on the Hellespont, after Thrace (93), the second to the south-east of Antandros, where Herodotos had placed Aeolis.

It has been suggested that the geographer followed the pattern of Xenophon and Herodotos, who knew two regions called Aeolis; in his entry, Pseudo-Scylax described the northern part. The southern part is omitted, supposedly due to the author’s reliance on patterns of Persian administration, evident in his definition of Lydia (which included the Herodotean Aeolis and the northern part of Ionia).²¹

However, Herodotos presents a list of *poleis* on the narrow coastal strip (1.149), vaguely notes the presence of Aeolians in the Troad (whose area may or may not have coincided with what Pseudo-Scylax had in mind), and on the islands (1.151). This makes for three Aeoliae, not just two, if one follows a divisive reading. According to my reading, Herodotos arranged the Aeolian *poleis* in three clusters but knew of only one Aeolis. The wording in 5.26 seems to refute the conception of two Aeoliae: “[Otanes] razed Antandros in the land of the Troad”. The southern coast of the Troad was not Aeolis, even according to Herodotos’ human-focused approach to *polis* affiliation. Moreover, if Xenophon or Pseudo-Scylax had followed Persian administration patterns of the classical period in their definition of Aeolis, I cannot see how this practice would not have included at any point the term Phrygia, the satrapy of Pharnabazos, who controlled the area of Mt. Ida through local overlords.

Furthermore, although an Athenian viewpoint has been argued for by Shipley, the over-reliance of Pseudo-Scylax on Persian patterns when describing the west coast of Asia Minor necessitates a change of balance, as at that point the view is strictly Asiatic. Even if we accept a strong reliance on Persian administration patterns to the composer of this work only in this instance,²² then the outcome of his reliance is truly remarkable. Besides missing the universally accepted Aeolian and Ionian character of what he termed “Lydia”, he also carelessly incorporates Samos and Chios into the satrapy of Lydia. Interestingly, this links him to Attalid administration patterns (a *strategos* of “Caria and Lydia around Ephesos” in SEG 46.1434),²³ for whatever that means for the dating of his treatise to the 4th century.

To return to Xenophon, instead of presuming a serious geographical confusion, I would suggest that Xenophon was unwilling to define that mountainous area as “the Troad” because the exodus of Ilion from obscurity after the mid-5th century had gradually led to a fixed location for Troy and the Troad to the northwest (discussed below), close to the Hellespont. Only in the largest perception of Aeolis in antiquity, that of Ephoros in a mythical context (*FGrHist* 70 F 163b), could “Pharnabazos’ Aeolis” fall within “Aeolis”. It is unlikely that Xenophon had a mythical context in mind when narrating the campaign of Derkylidas. It is equally unlikely that he applied “Aeolis” as a cultural term to distinguish between Greeks and non-Greeks: the exclusion of the three coastal settlements, as well as the inclusion of Greeks and non-Greeks in “Pharnabazos’ Aeolis” is sufficient testimony. If Xenophon intended to be vague, then he had a usual term in reserve: “Asia”. Perhaps some new geographical, political, and perceptual conditions in the making lie behind Xenophon’s

²¹ Rubinstein (2004); Shipley (2011) 163-165; Heinle (2015) 173-174.

²² Also suggested by Debord (1999) 74.

²³ Discussion and other readings in Thonemann (2013) 10. The district does not seem to rely on previous, Seleucid arrangements.

wording (“Pharnabazos’ Aeolis”), and for the first time a Large Aeolis was conceived as a consequence of the consolidation of Ilion and the Troad to the north.

The 1st Century BCE – 1st CE: a Large Aeolis

Ephoros and Strabo

Ephoros of Kyme, as cited by Strabo, offers the widest conception of Aeolis in antiquity (*FGrHist* 70 F 163b = Str. 13.1.39):

τὸ δὲ παλαιὸν ὑπὸ τοῖς Αἰολεῦσιν ἦν τὰ πλεῖστα, ὥστε Ἐφορος οὐκ ὀκνεῖ πᾶσαν τὴν ἀπὸ Ἀβύδου μέχρι Κύμης καλεῖν Αἰολίδα.

In the old days most of the lands were controlled by the Aeolians, thus Ephoros hurries to name Aeolis the entire area from Abydos to Kyme.

What is at play here is not a historically or geographically sound account. The context is rather mythical, an aspect abundant in the work of Strabo in general and particularly in his discussion of northwest Asia Minor, the land of the Trojans. In this passage, Strabo presents territorial claims over Sigeion on the Hellespont, proceeds with Achilleion, resorts to his favorite authority, Homer (13.1.40ff), and summarily lists previous occupants of the land.²⁴ His starting point, the clash between Athenians and Mytilenians, is already blurry amid the mist of ancient tradition undergone extensive forging by political authorities for centuries after the archaic tyrants’ clash for Sigeion. That Sigeion of old, Strabo notes in a quasi-archaeological manner, is also irrevocably lost, its remains long gone or put into second use for the needs of more recent layers and later phases in the urban history of a settlement tarnished by pillaging and sackings (13.1.38). The phrase τὸ δὲ παλαιὸν employs an adjective that in the context of a historical narrative commonly signifies “ancient” (e.g., Hdt. 1.171, 9.26; Th. 1.3). In this case, it refers to a neat succession of migrations that placed the Aeolians as the earliest newcomers from mainland Greece to Asia Minor, followed by the Ionians, and lastly by the Dorians (cf. Str. 12.4.6, 14.1.3, following on a long tradition traceable back to the archaic period and Minn. fr 9 Allen).

Strabo himself describes a Large Aeolis, from Cape Lekton (where the two coasts of the Troad converge) to Phokaia and the Hermos (13.1.4-8). In his general overview of Asia Minor at the beginning of Book 13, Strabo is cautious. He places a boundary at Cape Lekton, yet the area between this cape and Abydos is defined with a periphrasis (13.1.2: “...the areas around Ilion, Tenedos, and Alexandreia Troas”). All coastal areas between Lekton and the Elaiatic Gulf are defined similarly (13.1.3: “from Lekton to the Kaikos and Kanae...the areas around Assos, Adramyttion, Atarneus, Pitane, and the Gulf of Elaia...Lesbos...then Kyme, down to the Hermos and Phokaia”). The reader must wait until the end of this procession to be informed that the last two landmarks signify “the beginning of Ionia and the end of Aeolis”.

To resolve the problem, Strabo admits that he applied an opportunistic approach, using blurred regions in one cohesive narrative, dividing and uniting as he deemed appropriate.²⁵ In his discussion of Ionia, in contrast, he seems certain of Aeolis’ southern limit, confident

²⁴ Biraschi (2005); Patterson (2013) 212-214 on Strabo’s views on Homer, which take up a considerable part of Books I and II. More recent discussion in Ellis-Evans (2019) 18-33.

²⁵ Str. 13.1.8; blurred regions also at 13.4.12.

enough to report even boundary markers of the Aeolians around Phokaia (14.1.38). Despite the initial statement that “after Cape Lekton [there lay] the most noteworthy *poleis* of the Aeolians” (13.1.49), he sets some settlements on the southern coast of the Troad on Mysian soil (13.1.66: “Noteworthy *poleis* [in Mysia] are Assos and Adramyttion”; note the omission of Antandros). The inland settlements, such as Kebren and Neandreia under the control of the Assians (13.1.33; 13.1.51), were not considered Aeolian, contrary to Xenophon. Apparently, Strabo applied the term “Aeolian” only to coastal settlements once under the control of the Mytilenians.

The final outcome of his geographical layout entails a Large Aeolis and a wholly insignificant Mysia restricted to a small portion of the Troad’s southern coast. Strabo inserts Mysia into the area around Adramyttion (13.1.65), but his view of the region is fragmented, scattered throughout Books 12 and 13. Nevertheless, a more or less clear idea is evident: Mysians dwell inland.²⁶

An examination of Mysia is included in Book 12, where contradictory reports brought Strabo again to the brink of despair. His account of Mysia and Phrygia reveals his methodology and offers insight into the close connection between receding Mysia and expanding Aeolis in geographical accounts of the period. Strabo establishes a twofold Mysia, one around Mt. Olympos, the other alongside the Kaikos valley down to the coast (Str. 12.4.1-10). In addition, he records the old location of the Mysians in Bithynia, and his Mysia stretches to the west of the Troad on the Sea of Marmara (12.4.5-8). Strabo notes that it was impossible to discern boundaries between the regions of the area, and he cites a proverb on the notorious difficulty of separating Mysia from Phrygia (12.4.4).

In fact, Phrygia Epiktetos is a good example of how Strabo composed his account of northwest Asia Minor. Essentially, he piled up toponyms from different sources and different times. He acknowledges the duality of both Phrygia and Mysia, in the sense that they were known by two different names and split into two parts (12.8.1-2). While Strabo reports that the Attalids changed the name of Phrygia from “Hellespontine” to “Epiktetos” (= acquired), he fails to proceed with the obvious solution to his problem of delineating the regions: to take into account the dates of the authors he consulted. Authors writing before the treaty of Apameia, which put Phrygia under Attalid control and permitted the name Epiktetos, could use only “Hellespontine”; those writing after 188 BCE could use both. Instead, at this point Strabo appears to be at the mercy of his sources, trying to interpret different accounts that included Mt. Sipylos in “Phrygia”, called Tantalos and Pelops “Phrygians”, and so on (12.8.2).

I suggest that Strabo applied the same reasoning to Mysia. Accordingly, he lists views he read in literature, from Homer to Scylax; inevitably, they contradicted one another (12.4.5-10). He then places his twofold Mysia around Olympos and the Kaikos, and resorted to early myth to sketch the history of the habitation of Mysians in the area (12.8.1-6). As a result, he admits that obscurity had risen due to the movement of populations and discrepancies in ancient authors. On a very rare occasion where his text is not dominated by old myths and Homeric geography, he places Mysians around Mt. Olympos, between the Troad and Bithynia (12.8.8). His coastal Mysia is probably based on the locality of Telephos in Teuthrania (13.1.69), combined with Telephos’ identification as Mysian (12.8.12). Strabo concludes his discussion with another incident of compiling information, indicative of his method: “some

²⁶ Mysia in the valley of the Kaikos (13.4.2); north of Pergamon (13.4.4); in a more human-based approach, Strabo mentioned Mysians dwelling around Mt. Tmolos (13.4.5, among other populations), in the upper Hermos (13.4.5), after Lydia around Philadelphia (13.4.10), and on the brink of the barren Anatolian plateau (13.4.11).

call the area *Mysia*, others *Maionia*” (contra 13.3.2, where “Maiones” is a synonym for Lydians). Strabo’s problematic approach resulted in Book 13’s confusing account of the Troad’s southern coast and opportunistic application of geographical terms. In 13.1.65, Mysia is located around Adramyttion, contrary to Strabo’s previous location of Mysia around the Kaikos; in fact, the river is not included in Mysia, and only a river Mysios appears in his discussion of Teuthrania (13.1.69-70). Mysia is absent from the list of regions to the east of Cape Lekton (13.1.49-51) and Mysians are not included in a short list of mythical people living on the coast (13.1.60). Mysia appears again in passing in the valley of the Kaikos west of Pergamon (13.4.2).

To conclude, Strabo admittedly appears confused. His Mysia is divided into several parts, connected only through a mythical, obscure past. However, Strabo’s discussion reveals current trends regarding geographical terminology, which in turn invites my interpretation of terminology and fluctuating boundaries laid out in detail below.

The Roman View. From Small Aeolis to Large and Back

Pomponius Mela’s (fl. before the mid-1st century CE) entry on “Aeolis” in his *de Chorographia* incorporates a historical approach and lists Aeolis and the Troad as a unified region. In a spirit reminiscent of Pseudo-Scylax’s “Lydia” (“once called Mysia”), he reports that Aeolis received its name after the Aeolians had cultivated the land of the region previously known as “Mysia”, and he terms its northern part “the Troad” (1.90). He describes a Large Aeolis, covering an area defined by two *poleis*, Phokaia (89) and Assos (93). As a consequence of this choice, Aeolis coincides heavily with the Troad to the extent that a single entry for the two regions is composed. That left absolutely no room for Mysia in his account.

Pliny’s Aeolis begins at Cape Lekton, the southern boundary of the Troad, and continues along a coastal strip throughout the southern shore of the Troad, with Mt. Ida in the background (Pliny *HN* 5.32.122-124). The southern boundary of Aeolis is defined by Phokaia, with Ionia extending from Phokaia to the gulf of Iasos (5.31.112; 5.31.119). Lydia is placed “over” (*super*) Ionia, with Phrygia to its east, Caria to the south, and Mysia to the north (5.30.110).

Note that this is the only appearance of Mysia as a geographical entity still in existence in Pliny’s account. On occasion, it appears as a vague territory of unspecified location (5.30.110, 5.32.12, 5.40.143). Pliny could be blunt: people and islands were sometimes considered negligible, defined as “ignobilis” (e.g., the “insignificant” people concluding a list of population groups in Caria in 5.29.105) or “inhore” (e.g., in 5.33.126, when referring to some “worthless *poleis*” within the *conventus* of Pergamon). Arguably, he treats Mysia and Mysians in the same way: evident at 5.32.123, where the Mysians are reduced from a distinct, independent entity of past time to a contemporary population group containing sub-groups, such as the Abretenni, the Hellespontines, and other, wholly unimportant people (“alii ignobiles”). Consequently, no description of Mysia is presented by Pliny in his description of the known world. One might reasonably expect a description of Mysia either alongside his description of Lydia, Ionia, and Aeolis, or after the Troad (i.e., 5.39.140). There, Pliny describes *poleis*, mountains, promontories, rivers and so on, yet the region remains unnamed. 5.41.145 opens with a clear localization (“Phrygia Troadi superiecta”), similar to most, if not all, other descriptions of regions by Pliny.

In the fifth book of his *Geographica*, Claudius Ptolemy's first *pinax* (= table or catalogue) commences with the province of Bosporos and Propontis, before our area of interest, the province of "so-called Asia, Phrygia, and Lycia". "Small Mysia" is located in the north-western corner of Asia Minor around Kyzikos and Lampsakos (5.2.2); a "Small Phrygia or Troad" follows to the south down to Assos (5.2.4), and then "Greater Mysia" extends from Gargara to the mouth of the Kaikos (5.2.5). Aeolis is restricted to the coastal strip between Pitane and the Hermos (5.2.6). After describing the coastal regions, Ptolemy continues with the inland regions, listing and locating *poleis* in Small Mysia, Phrygia—"i.e., the Troad" (5.2.14: "Φρυγίας δὲ ἦτοι Τρωάδος"), Greater Mysia (which ends with Pergamon), Lydia, Caria, Greater Phrygia, and Lycia. Regarding our region of interest, Ptolemy offers coordinates for Lekton and Assos "in the Troad"; Antandros, Adramyttion, Palaiskepsis, the mouth of the Kaikos, and Poroselene in "Greater Mysia"; then a Small Aeolis between Pitane and Phokaia; Pergamon is located in "Greater Mysia"; Lesbos with its five *poleis* is defined as "Aeolian", yet it is listed separately as in "the Aegean Sea" (5.2.29).

After nearly a century of Iulian propaganda (as I argue in the next section), and another century since its influence began to wane, a regression is apparent. Mysia reappears on the map, the Troad is confined to the northwest corner of Asia Minor strongly associated with Phrygia, Aeolis is restricted to the Herodotean narrow coastal strip, and Lydia is placed inland. Interestingly, if the authorship of Ptolemy for the part examining Asia Minor had been replaced by the name of Herodotos, the differences between their accounts might have gone largely unnoticed. The two authors, separated by seven centuries of scholarship, discoveries, propaganda, and changing world-perceptions, present very similar pictures of the regions in Asia Minor. This remarkable similarity derives from a combination of geographical archaism applied by Ptolemy, his reliance on well-respected sources,²⁷ and the incorporation of contemporary worldviews.

The Consolidation of Ilion to the North and Imperial Propaganda

The discussion above adds two more points to my observations on the shared information across our sources:

- A) Mysia vanishes from the geographical accounts of the Augustan period and Aeolis grows in size.
- B) Mysia resurfaces in the mid-2nd century CE, alongside a Small Aeolis.

In what follows, I argue that the appearance of a Large Aeolis in the geographical accounts of that period is not coincidental or a case of interchangeability, but was influenced by changes in the area after the 4th century, and the effects of imperial propaganda during the early imperial period.

²⁷ Despite its importance, Ptolemy's work did not offer any new geographical information, but systematically organized previously established knowledge, and provided and checked coordinates for locations placed on a conceptual map by previous scholars (Riley (1995) 233-236; Dueck (2012) 76; detailed discussion in Berggren and Jones (2000)).

The identification of classical Ilion with mythical Troy does not seem to precede the 5th century: the extravagant sacrifices of Xerxes on the site mentioned by Herodotos is the earliest attestation of this identification (Hdt. 7.43).²⁸ Still, it did not do much for the local community, which lived in relative austerity until the visit of Alexander III, who performed his famous pilgrimage to the site (Plut. *Alex.* 15.7; Arr. *Anab.* 1.11.5-7). Before Alexander's theatrical performance in Troy, the site was almost completely depleted of human activity at times, yet probably not to the exaggerated extent stated by Lykourgos in a speech delivered in 330 BCE: "...once destroyed by the Greeks and uninhabited ever since" (Lyc. *Leocr.* 62).²⁹

The local community of Ilion had a foot in both camps and could claim inclusion in collective identities as different as Trojan/local/non-Greek and Achaian/colonial/Greek.³⁰ The foundation of Alexandria Troas and the *Koinon* of Athena Ilias (a union of several *poleis* in the vicinity of Ilion) followed shortly after the death of Alexander, either by the agency of Antigonos the One-eyed, of Lysimachos, or even earlier.³¹ Two "Aeolian" *poleis*, Assos and Gargara, joined the *Koinon*, either of their own volition or after "advice" from Antigonos or Lysimachos. There followed a building frenzy during the 3rd century. The Attalids provided significant financial support and this relationship served both parties well, as they exchanged financial resources for a chance to connect to a mythical past. Accordingly, Ilion adapted to its fame and replaced the traditional deity of the *polis* (Apollo Pasparios) with the expected Athena Ilias.³² Roman interest in the area acknowledged its glorious past, with the crucial addition of the assumed relation between *metropolis* and *apoikia*.

The first recorded visit of Roman officials to Troy is that of C. Livius Salinator in 190 BCE (Liv. 37.9.7), whence the Romans were added to a long line of rulers and military commanders, from Xerxes to Antiochos III, who had performed some sort of pilgrimage to the site (Salinator also sacrificed to Athena Ilias).³³ In 190, Publius Scipio ascended the citadel of Ilion and sacrificed to the goddess (Liv. 37.37.3). In 188, Ilion was exempted from tribute and its territory expanded with the annexation of Rhoiteion and Gergis. This decision was made both for reasons of rewarding past services to Rome and on account of the alleged blood ties between the Romans and Ilians, according to Liv. 38.39.10, who may have derived material from Pol. 22.5. In the 1st century BCE, Strabo informs us about Caesar's benefaction to Ilion, comprising the annexation of new territories (perhaps the annexation of Dardanos, as in Str. 13.1.39 it is included in the Ilian territory) and the granting of freedom and exemption from tax (Str. 13.1.27, still valid in the 1st century CE according to Plin. *HN.* 5.33.124). These may well have been confirmations of previously-bestowed privileges, and Caesar's intention may have been the articulation of his personal kinship to the Ilians (through Iulus from the house of Aeneas, in addition to the already established kinship between Romans and Ilians through

²⁸ Perhaps an apotropaic sacrifice with the imminent crossing to Europe in mind (Borgeaud (2010) 340-342).

²⁹ Berlin (2002); Rose (2014).

³⁰ Erskine (2001) 111, 205, who notes that the abundance of tombs of Achaian heroes on the western shore of the Troad shows that communities had the opportunity to subscribe to more than one identity.

³¹ Cohen (1995) 154 n.4; Pillot (2016); As Ellis-Evans (2019) 29-33 notes, the date depends on one's reading of *Iliad* 1, and need not concern us here.

³² Rose (1998) 407-408; Kosmetatou (2001) 107-110, 117-122, 125-128. In truth, all temples of Athena Ilias attested in textual sources from Homer onwards remain untraced archaeologically and the earliest temple unearthed is dated to the Hellenistic period (Morris (2007) 61).

³³ For visits of rulers to Troy, Vidal-Naquet (1990) 35-62; Borgeaud (2010); for other visitors in general, Körpe (2019).

Aeneas) and an attempt to imitate Alexander (Str. 13.1.27).³⁴ Augustus spent a great part of 20 BCE in Asia Minor (Dio Cass. 54.7) and invested greatly in a building programme at Ilion, including the temple of Athena, the *bouleuterion*, and the theatre. During his rule, for the first time the authorities of Ilion stressed and celebrated the kinship of their *polis* not only to Rome, but also to members of the imperial family.³⁵ Claudius continued Ilion's favorable treatment by the Iulii and confirmed its exemption from tribute.³⁶ Ilion fell slightly out of favor with the Flavii. The myth of Aeneas was not emphasised with the same intensity during that period, yet the *polis* enjoyed the privileges of occasional imperial sponsorship, often focusing more on the Greek aspects linked to Troy (such as Achilles or Ajax).³⁷ Turbulent times had passed, peace was consolidated and, with it, Asia Minor as a Roman province. Henceforth there was no need to pay heed to Ilion in any way other than as an interesting, antique site.³⁸

The formation of the *Koinon* of Athena Ilios to the north offered a fixed location for the vague entity of mythical Troy. The position of Ilion in the northwest part of the peninsula created opportunities for the mountainous *poleis* on the slopes of Mt. Ida and the coastal *poleis* below. Gargara and Assos joined the *Koinon* of Athena Ilios from its very beginning, yet their Aeolian affiliation remained generally undisputed. The narrow coastal strip I term Small Aeolis acquired a northern counterpart, the coastal *poleis* of the southern Troad, with ample sources testifying to their Aeolian affiliation. Their Aeolian identity perhaps originated in their previous political status as dependencies of the Mytilenians, and as such they were attested in Herodotos' account of the Aeolian *poleis*. The Mytilenian dependencies probably gained independence after Herodotos had completed his *Histories* and narratives of their foundation myths and phyletic affiliation circulated thereafter, unanimously supporting their inclusion in Aeolian collective identity.³⁹ By the 4th century, *poleis* such as Assos, Gargara, Neandreia, and others around Mt. Ida, could lay solid claims to both identities, Trojan or Aeolian, both well supported by the corpus of myths and the locations of their

³⁴ Cf. Erskine (2001) 247.

³⁵ Erskine (2001) 250-251, who follows the publications of the excavations by C.B. Rose; Mac Sweeney (2018) 98-99.

³⁶ Suet. *Claud.* 25.3; Erskine (2001) 172-173.

³⁷ Mac Sweeney (2018) 100-107.

³⁸ Caracalla visited Ilion in 214 (Hdn. 4.8.3-5), young Julian in 354/5 (Julian *Ep.* 79), Fatih Sultan Mehmet in 1463 (Kritoboulos 4.11.5-6 with Ousterhout (2004)); cf. n. 33 above. The function of the site for visitors and imperial administration changed drastically after the Flavians (Sage (2000)). Allusions to Troy had lost their potent propagandistic element but retained their value as literary instruments and modes of intertextuality. Compare the dynamic transformation of Trojan elements in Roman identity discussed in Nauta (2004) and Nauta (2007) with the literary negotiations of political power outside the realm of identity formation in late antiquity explained in Hulls (2008). For an archaeological overview of imperial Ilion, Rose (2002); Solomon (2007) 500-504, for a synopsis of the changing receptions of Troy during the Roman period.

³⁹ Mytilene lost the bulk of its mainland possessions in the aftermath of the revolt in 428/7 (Th. 3.50). The *peraia* acquired a new collective name: it was known and inscribed as the Coastal Poleis in the Athenian tribute lists of 425/4 onwards (e.g., *IG* I³ 71 col. III.61 l. 124; *IG* I³ 77 col. IV l. 14; *IG* I³ 285 col. II fr. 2 l. 89). These inscriptions, combined and restored, provide enough evidence to create a list of Mytilenian dependencies on the mainland before the revolt, spread across a large coastal area around the bay of Adramyttion and on the west coast of the Troad: Pordoselene, Antandros, Ophryneion, Polymedeion, Hamaxitos, Larisa, Kolonai, Achilleion, Rhoiteion, Ilion, Petra, Thymbra. Full discussion in Ellis-Evans (2019) 155-197. The Mytilenians might have been able to exert some influence over their previous possession on the land opposite (cf. Theopompos *FGrHist* 115 F 291: Chians and Mytilenians jointly agree to accept or appoint Hermeias of Assos as overlord of the entire area). On the formation, transformation, and evolution of Aeolian identity in ancient Asia Minor, Apostolou (2018).

settlements, traces of which are preserved in later authors and were consulted, among others, by meticulous geographers.⁴⁰ If we reasonably assume that the Herodotean rule still applied, according to which Aeolis was perceived as the accumulation of territories controlled by Aeolians, then the southern coast of the Troad, populated by Aeolians, may easily have become more frequently defined as Aeolis. In sum, the location of Troy in the northwest corner of the peninsula shifted the centrality of “Troad” and “Trojan” to the plain of the Scamander, leaving room for the “intrusion” of Aeolis in the south.

Moreover, an additional factor in the expansion of Aeolis in geographical accounts was Augustan propaganda and the exploitation of the foundation myth of Rome which involved Aeneas and his flight to the west. According to legend, after the sack of Troy, Aeneas led a band of Trojan refugees to the West. Their adventures ended in Italy, where they finally settled in their newly-founded settlement of Rome. This brief statement does little justice to the long process of the development of the myth of Aeneas and his settlement in Italy, as well as the incorporation of the foundation by Aeneas into Rome’s mythical corpus. Rome’s most prevalent foundation myth focused on the twins Romulus and Remus, with the former founding a settlement named after his deceased brother. It has been convincingly argued that the myth of the twins must have been the foundation tale most commonly narrated within Rome and acknowledged by the general populace, while the intended use of the myth of Aeneas was in a context of interaction with the Greeks, first in the west and, after the age of conquests, in the eastern provinces.⁴¹ With the myth of Aeneas, Rome could establish a common ground, a common frame of reference with the Greeks, while keeping itself at a distance from the Greek world, by subscribing to an identity well known to all Greeks, implemented in Greek myth and culture for centuries, yet lying just outside the Greek world.⁴²

Despite the wide circulation of the myth in visual culture in Rome before the imperial period, there are no traces of any cult of Trojan founders before Augustus’ reign.⁴³ This absence reveals the role of Augustan propaganda in the development and upgrading of the Trojan foundation myth and its influence on contemporary scholarly works. The family of the Iulii traced its lineage to Aeneas and Troy; two prominent members, Julius Caesar and Augustus, put Troy in a central position in the 1st century BCE and invested in a flamboyant building programme there.⁴⁴ The Trojan origins of Rome were hailed and sung by artists, scholars, and poets, Vergil and Livy being the most well-known individuals working under imperial patronage. Augustus promoted the myth of Trojan ancestry and the foundation of Aeneas as the principal foundation myth of both Rome and the imperial family, two

⁴⁰ A network of myths interlocking Ilion and the Troad to other *poleis* is recorded in Chiai (2017).

⁴¹ The earliest attestation of the myth of the twins is set in a 4th-century context by Liv. 10.23.5, according to Rodríguez-Mayorgas (2010) 91-92, who also notes that judging from the lack of any references to an alternative myth, all other traditions that may have existed previously must have been forgotten by the end of the 3rd century.

⁴² Gruen (1992) 27-31; Erskine (2001) 133-147.

⁴³ Erskine (2001) 103, 206; Rodríguez-Mayorgas (2010) 98-105. According to Erskine (2001) 198-222, even the arrival of Magna Mater *Idaea* in Rome after 217 BCE probably lacked any Trojan inferences at that time, as only Ovid, Livy, and Virgil associated her with Troy centuries after the fact. For the survival and flight of Aeneas in visual culture throughout Italy, Brown (2002) 313-314 with bibliography.

⁴⁴ Rose (2014) 217-237.

institutions increasingly intertwined. Representations and scenes from the myth spread throughout the Sebasteia of the empire, from Spain to Asia Minor.⁴⁵

Sacrifices of Roman officials at Ilion before Caesar were in complete accord with standards set by tradition and previous rulers visiting the area. After the 1st century BCE, this special relationship was projected onto the past. The accounts of Livy and Justin, heavily affected by and reflective of Augustan propaganda, associated even the first recorded official sacrifice by a Roman at Ilium in 190 (by C. Livius Salinator, commander of the fleet) with a Trojan past.⁴⁶ Conversely, the Iulii were involved in Troy not only with the Trojan origins of state and family in mind, but also to emulate the performance of other rulers before them in Ilion.⁴⁷ Only, this time, state *syngeneia* (kinship by blood) and individual *syngeneia* were intertwined.

The notion promoted by imperial propaganda presented a natural state of affairs. Trojans, led by Aeneas, were guided to safety, away from troubles and the devastation of a long war. Their descendants, now settled in Rome, were again led to safety by a descendant of Aeneas, after a prolonged series of wars and civil strife, into an era of Pax Deorum under the auspices of the gods and the agency of the emperor.⁴⁸ In this new cultural environment, the *poleis* of western and north-western Asia Minor were presented with the opportunity to establish relationships with Rome and the emperor. By claiming Trojan descent, local authorities could bring their people closer to the Roman people, and their affairs closer to the interests of the Roman people and the Senate. Ilion could claim both identities, Greek and Trojan, and evidence shows that its authorities put the alleged *syngeneia* with Rome to good use when mediating on behalf of other *poleis* of the area to their “colony” (for Lampsakos in SIG³ 591 (196/5 BCE); for Lycians in Pol. 22.5 (189 BCE)).⁴⁹ The other *poleis* of the wider area could imitate this practice to a different extent, moving closer to a Trojan past and present by circulating foundation myths and claims of phyletic affiliation. Aeolian *poleis* on the southern coast could become members of the *Koinon* of Athena Ilias without abandoning their Aeolian identity.

What seemed increasingly pointless was the ascription to a Mysian collective identity. By the turn of the millennium, the persisting imperial propaganda had literally removed Mysia from the map. The most renowned *polis* of Mysia was another outsider who attempted to associate with Troy. In Pergamon, the eponymous hero, son of the Greek Neoptolemos and

⁴⁵ Erskine (2001) 255.

⁴⁶ Liv. 37.9.7; Just. *Epit.* 31.8.1-3, discussed in Erskine (2001) 234-235 who observes the intrusion of Augustan-period taste and style into these accounts. In the mid-1st century CE, Lucan (*Phars.* 9.964-979) went as far as staging a visit to Troy that never took place, that of Julius Caesar. His deceptively aloof Caesar almost walked over the tomb of Hector but very selectively traced only elements related to Aeneas and missed all landmarks relating to other prominent Trojan families. As a result, Lucan constructed a distinctively Iulian conception of Troy, perhaps with the intention to underline the Iulian character of the newly re-founded Rome: Rossi (2001); Spencer (2005) 48-56; Borgeaud (2010) 344-346.

⁴⁷ Erskine (2001) 233-234.

⁴⁸ Court poets went to great lengths to present this timeless connection between the people and their rightful leaders. Kondratieff (2012) argues that the scene in Virgil where Aeneas reunites with Anchises during the former's descent into the underworld (Verg. *Aen.* 6.679-683) is strongly reminiscent of the census of 28 BCE. When Aeneas reaches him, Anchises was presiding over a procedure of vetting the souls of his descendants, literally performing a census in the underworld. The entire episode provided an excellent opportunity to incorporate some prominent figures of Roman history into the family of Aeneas and Augustus (Verg. *Aen.* 6.760-859).

⁴⁹ Curty (1995) 78-82; Erskine (2001) 169-172, 176-178; Adak (2007).

the Trojan Andromache (Paus. 1.11.2), incorporated both a Greek and a Trojan past. Eurypylos, Telephos' son by a sister or daughter of Priam, linked Troy to the Attalids.⁵⁰ As a result, Telephos could become the forefather of Romans (Rome as a daughter of Telephos in Plut. *Rom.* 2.1 and Suda s.v. *Λατίνοι*).⁵¹ The non-Greek populations of northern Asia Minor also stressed their *syngeneia* with Troy,⁵² leaving even less room for Mysia or Mysians.

In consequence, scholarly works of the Augustan period had little motivation to refer to Mysia or Mysians. In public knowledge and scholarly works, Mysians were the non-Greek locals. Often, Mysia was represented as a marginal territory of the *Other*: rural, dispersed settlements; a land of bandits; a forest land; an insubordinate region.⁵³ Mysia and Mysians appeared regularly in Herodotos, closely related to Lydia both in terms of territory and culture.⁵⁴ In 5th-century tragedy, the land of Mysia was exalted for its natural resources, the Kaikos and the forests inland, while in a mythical context it remained barbaric even after the arrival of Telephos from Arcadia.⁵⁵ Mysians were portrayed with the typical barbarian characteristic of extreme mourning. The proverbial essence of the “Mysian lamentation” is exhibited by the choice of ethnicity for the mourning sailor soon to meet his death in Salamis (a Mysian in Timoth. *Persae* 105ff; cf. Aesch. *Persae* 1054). Mysia also appeared regularly in the works of Xenophon, and Pseudo-Scylax listed the Greek *poleis* in the area.⁵⁶ A scene on a sarcophagus dated to the early 4th century BCE from the Granikos valley has been interpreted as a fight between some members of the Achaemenid elite and Mysian light soldiers. The scene is portrayed as a hunting expedition and the *Other* is dehumanised, with the Mysian enemy being assimilated to a boar.⁵⁷ After the mid-3rd century, the Attalid kings and their realm were largely defined as “Mysian(s)”.⁵⁸ After the death of Attalos III in 133 and his bequest of the kingdom to Rome, by the beginning of the 1st century CE probably no one had used the name Mysia in everyday affairs for at least a century and a half, as the kingdom

⁵⁰ Sources collected in Erskine (2001) 220 n. 89 and 90.

⁵¹ For the attempt of Pergamos to link to the Trojan myth, Erskine (2001) 219-222.

⁵² Curty (1995) 192-193; sources and discussion in Erskine (2001) 196-197.

⁵³ For a description of the natural environment and the importance of forests for the history of the region, still regarded as backward by 19th and 20th-century travellers, Robert (1978) 442-452. In the *Hellenica* (of unknown authorship, dated between 386 and 346) from the Oxyrhynchus Papyri the Mysoi are “independent” (P.Oxy V 0842 D 21 (651): “εἰσὶ γὰρ οἱ πολλοὶ τῶν Μυσῶν αὐτόνομοι καὶ βασιλέως οὐχ ὑπακούοντες”). This does not necessarily mean absolute independence from the Great King (some Greek *poleis* were left “independent” but continued to pay tribute to the local satrap, as in Xen. *Hell.* 3.4.25; contra Bruce (1967) 135-136, who accepts Mysian independence and presents supporting passages of Xenophon). However, the wording of the second sentence (“and they do not heed to the King”) suggests that some Mysians were independent and manifests the different patterns of control the Persian Empire applied over its peoples (cf. McKechnie and Kern (1988) 179).

⁵⁴ Mysians in the satrapy of Lydia (3.90); as colonists of the Lydians who march alongside them in the lines of Xerxes (7.74); closely related to Carians and Lydians (1.171); cultivating the land in the Kaikos valley (6.28); their land was adjacent to Lydia in the itinerary of Xerxes (7.42), including Atarneus (8.106); their *ethnos* remained among the select forces of Mardonios for a second attempt to subdue the Greek *poleis* in 479 (9.32).

⁵⁵ Aesch. (Mysoi) fr. 143-145 TrGF; Timoth. *Persae* 105-106; Eur. *Telephus* fr. 696.9-16 TrGF.

⁵⁶ Hordern (2002) 185. On Mysia: inland to the borders of Phrygia (Xen. *Anab.* 1.2.8-10, 18); Mysians looting the king's lands and regularly attacked by Pharnabazos (Xen. *Hell.* 3.1.13); Mysians in the front line of Pharnabazos are slain by the forces of the Spartan commander Herippidas in the area of Daskyleion in 395 (Xen. *Hell.* 4.1.24); a list of Greek *poleis* in Mysia in [Scyl.] 93; in 98 a Mysian migration inland is mentioned.

⁵⁷ Ma (2008) 251-253. The iconography of the fighting scene strongly resembles to the hunt scene on the other side of the sarcophagus, with the light-armored warrior and the boar as victims of the Achaemenid elites.

⁵⁸ Sources collected in Pretzler (1999) 91- 92.

based on “Mysian” land and tradition was now integrated into Roman territory. In Asia Minor, the term reappears only after the end of the 1st century CE.⁵⁹ Similarly, in the works of Strabo, Pliny, and Mela, Mysia is regarded as a historical, not a contemporary entity, a relic of the past. Accordingly, Mysia disappears from geographical accounts composed during the Augustan period and its rare appearances occur almost always in mythical or historical contexts. Occasionally, Mysia was restricted to an undefined area south of Kyzikos and its southern appendix, bordering Aeolis, vanishes entirely. The Troad was fixed to the north, and Aeolis stretched all across the southern shore of the Troad.

Mysia and Mysians, terms unattested in non-Greek sources, in fact must have been a Greek construct to define rural, indigenous, non-Greek populations in the area just beyond the coastal zone of western Asia Minor.⁶⁰ The alleged name of the land in mythical times may have provided classical and later authors with a name for the locals. Deriving from the pool of Greek myth, one may define “Mysia” as an arbitrary name for an area largely regarded as backward by people living in a *polis*-scheme world. A great divide has been noted between a flat West Mysia and the East, hilly, forested Mysia, a marginal, unsubdued realm of bandits depicted in the sarcophagus of the Granicus valley.⁶¹ When this construct of “Mysia” lost its meaning and context, it first disappeared from public discourse and then from scholarly discussion. After the intensity of Augustan propaganda subsided, Mysia re-emerged in the era of the Flavian and Antonine emperors, at a time close to the beginning of geographical archaism. Alongside the reappearance of Mysia, a Small Aeolis resurfaced in scholarly works.

Writing in the times of Marcus Aurelius, Pausanias positioned Aeolis, “as we now call it”, between Ionia and an undefined land of the Mysians (Paus. 3.2.1: “...τὴν τῆς Ἰωνίας μεταξὺ καὶ Μυσῶν [ἀποικίαν], καλουμένην δὲ Αἰολίδα ἐφ’ ἡμῶν”). The sub-regions of Asia Minor appear frequently in his work, but Pausanias still felt it was necessary to clarify for his readers that Sardeis was located in Lydia, “as it was known at that time [of Agesilaos in the early 4th century] the largest part of southern Asia”.

In the writings of Cassius Dio (early 3rd century CE) Mysia resurfaces, always with a necessary addition to distinguish Mysia of “Asia” or “Lower Mysia” from its homophone Moesia/Mοισία on the Danube, sometimes referred to as “Upper Mysia, “Mysia in Europe” or simply “Mysia” (e.g., *HR* 38.10.3; 49.36.2; 51.2.3; 51.23-26; 55.23-24). Before the mid-3rd century, Philostratos resorted to a complex definition of the burial place of Palamedes, a mythical figure linked to the Homeric epic. Achilles and Ajax buried Palamedes in “the land of Aeolians adjacent to Troy” (*Her.* 716). Philostratos was concerned that his readers would require further clarification on the location of the tomb of Palamedes, since by “Aeolis” alone his audience would have associated the location with the coastal strip between the Hermos and Pitane. Well into the Byzantine era, geographical toponyms became fossilised, used by scholars adhering to classical terminology. Mysia, Aeolis, and the Troad appear typically in the division of lands among Noah’s offspring after the Great Flood, a tradition building on

⁵⁹ The paucity of inscriptions is remarkable. Very few occurrences appear: in Pergamon (*OGIS* 338 shortly after 133 BCE); in eastern Lydia (a group of settlers in *SEG* 40.1062 around 163/2 BCE and a military unit during the reign of Eumenes II in *TAM* V, I, 690). After a dearth between the annexation of Pergamon to Rome and the middle of the 2nd century CE (with very few exceptions in the proximity of Mysia, i.e., *IG* XII Suppl. 9 (early 1st century CE in Mytilene) and *SEG* 41.1037 (133-100 BCE in Lydia)), the terms resurface on inscriptions from around the empire in the Flavian and Antonine periods (e.g., *IosPE* I² 420 from Chersonesos in 70 CE).

⁶⁰ Ma (2008) 250.

⁶¹ Ma (2008) 248-249 with bibliography; Ma (2013) 62-75 presents a process of gradual urbanization built on Attalid practices of military colonization of what became a frontier zone where Iranian, Hellenistic, and local elements fused.

Josephus in the 1st century CE, who was keen to define the Aeolians as descendants of Alisa, son of Japheth (Joseph., *Ant. Jud.* 1.127). Scholarly archaism, rather than the influence of the Old Testament and its interpretations, lay behind the latest attestation of Aeolis in our sources. After the Ottoman conquest in the 15th century, historian Doucas refers to the emir of Aydin as “the ringleader of Lydia and the Aeolian cities”.⁶²

Epilogue

Establishing a location for Antandros might have caused Strabo additional despair, timeline restrictions permitting. Antandros was located in the Troad (Hdt. 5.26), in Lydia ([Scyl.] 98), in Aeolis (Pliny *HN* 5.123, “once called Mysia”; Mel. 1.90-91), in Mysia (Steph. Byz. s.v. Ἀντανδρος), on Mt. Ida (Conon 41 apud Phot. *Bibl.* 186.139a 12-24), sometimes in wordy identifications involving more than one entity, as “under Ida towards Mysia of Aeolis” (Hdn. *de Prosodia Catholica* 3.1.205). Assos is a similar case. Its initial phyletic affiliation (“Aeolian” in Hellanikos *FGrHist* 4 F 160) was later taken to signify its location within a Large Aeolis (Mel. 1.93). For others it was a colony of the Methymnians (Myrsilos *FGrHist* 477 F 13) or the Mytilenians in Mysia or the Hellespont (Steph. Byz. s.v. Ἀσσός), with Pausanias preserving an all-encompassing form of self-identification: “Sodamas from Assos in the Troad under Ida, the first Aeolian victor...” (6.4.9).

Instead of assuming confusion and inviting despair, I hope I have been able to demonstrate the new possibilities that arise when the question is redirected from actual space to timeframe. A geographical toponym is not a fixed entity inextricably bound to a strictly defined area. Instead, terminology varies, or the same terms come to signify different meanings over time. The locations of Antandros and Assos remained fixed. What shifted were the perceptions of individuals and communities across time, as well as regional political conditions. As a result, Antandros and Assos could be in the Troad in times of a Small Aeolis, in Aeolis in times of a Large Aeolis, and in Mysia in times of geographical archaism.

In this paper, I argued that the contextualization of conflicting accounts about the territory and boundaries of Aeolis in our sources are much more than evidence and outcomes of confusion, inaccuracy, carelessness, or interchangeability. Rather, they can be interpreted as reflections of political changes in the region and beyond. First, the size of Aeolis oscillated between a Small and a Large Aeolis, as its size grew in sources dated to the late Hellenistic period onwards. This was a result of the consolidation of Ilion and Troy to the north, which shifted the centre of the Troad as a geographical entity to the north, thus allowing other phyletic and geographical affiliations to develop on the southern coast of the Troad. The effect became more prominent in the early imperial period and the propaganda of the Iulii revolving around the Trojan origins of the family and the Romans. After the propaganda subsided, the later authors’ reliance on great works of the past returned Aeolis to its classical size.

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⁶² Mich. Duc. *Hist. Turc.* 4.3

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