

ROMAN PROVINCE OF ASIA THROUGH THE PRISM OF URBAN HISTORY

The Roman Province of Asia or Asiana, the territory of the former Kingdom of Pergamon, was founded in 129 BC. But it didn't have a sustainable territory and borders. The date itself is rather questionable, because the last ruler of Pergamum Attalus III (Attalus III of Pergamon) died in early 133 BC, and his will on which area of the kingdom was passed to Rome, was adopted. On the territory of the province of Asia was not hosted a large number of military, so it is different from others.

Roman Province of Asia was a conglomerate of cities and is an example of urban civilization. There were existing, highly structured societies, usually based around networks of towns and cities, and with traditions of civilization which reached back to centuries. Rome found it relatively easy to administer these provinces: the basic structure of government, of urban life, of taxation, communications, and administration was already in place. In order that the task of governing the province was not unmanageable for a proconsul and his staff, Rome – maintained the [Greek] poleis within a wide reaching framework under an unified administration, made use of local government, and encouraged its development. The existing city governments generally had annual magistrates, one or more city councils (boulês), which probably possessed a membership around 300 and 400 members in larger cities, and an assembly (*ekklêsia*). The centers of economic and cultural life of the province were the cities of Ephesus, Pergamum, Smyrna, Miletus, Laodicea on the Lycum, Halicarnassus and so on. These cities had well-developed economy and manufacturing. In Pergamum there lived 120 thousand inhabitants [Doğer 2001, 16–27] (the others say 150 thousand people [Rohde 1982, 58]) and in Ephesus about 200 thousand [Akurgal 2000, 167]. For the province was characterized by high levels of urbanization. This process was spread in the first centuries of our era. Overall, in this area there were at least 282 cities [Крист 1997, 29], most of which retained the system of municipal government, budget, local laws and traditions: Adramyteum and Pergamum in Mysia; Ephesus and Smyrna in Ionia; Apollonis, Thyateira, Nysa, Sardes, Stratonicieia ad Caicum, and Tralles in Lydia; Apameia, Laodiceia, and Synnada in Phrygia; also in Crete coins were minted for private use.

Greek cities under the control of Rome were not in decline. Policies continued to operate in a way similar to their functioning in the archaic and classical periods and as before, civil rights played an important role in the social and political organization of cities. The written sources confirm the fact that Asiana was a conglomerate of cities even under the Roman rule. In particular, Appian from Sulla's mouth says to indefinite leaders of the cities of Asia. Similarly, according to written sources other political figures had been addressed.

Between the cities there were various relationships, but most important of these is competition for the title of the first (*"first of province"*) or association to increase political rights and economic opportunities. During the Empire there was competition between cities not only in the economic sphere but also in the proceedings of the cult of the emperor. Known example is the fight of Pergamum and Ephesus. Pergamum was the first city of

Asia to honor Augustus in his undisputed role. Citizens of Pergamum erected in 29 BC the temple dedicated for Augustus and Rome. At that time in Pergamum there also instituted athletics games, dedicated to the same. After that, in 20 BC the statue of Augustus was erected in Pergamum's Sanctuary of Athena. In their turn in Ephesus there conducted honoring of Domitian. Ephesians built magnificent Harbour bath-gymnasium complex¹ and established short-living Olympic Games in honor of Domitian. Domitian was the first Emperor who allowed Ephesians erecting such monuments to the Romans and it was a great honor for the city of Ephesus. Ephesians publicized their city far and wide as *neocoros* – i. e. warden of an imperial temple. In this ideological struggle Pergamenes note, that Pergamum was not simply *neocoros* but was *protos neokoros* (i. e. *first* warden of an imperial temple). Under Trajan's rule (98–117) Pergamenes built another imperial cults temple – Temple of Zeus Philios and Trajan. After that they advertised themselves now as *protos kai dis neokoros* (i. e. *first and twice* warden of an imperial temple) [Longenecker 2004, 287]. The final point in this struggle put that Hadrian built up both cities, but likewise declaring Ephesus to be the first and greatest metropolis of Asia.

Nevertheless, epigraphic and numismatic sources confirm acts of mutual honor. Examples are the coins. In ancient time cities in Roman Province of Asia minted special coins, on which contained symbols of the two or more cities are depicted side by side. These symbols usually were distinctive gods, honoring in these cities. Such coinage testified the existence of inter-city *homonoia* (the union of harmony or alliance). Such alliances could be the means of settling disputes, but were also used to build coalitions in order to enhance a city's status by aligning itself either with many cities or with particularly important ones. Thus “alliances” formed part of civic “foreign policy” and might have involved the exchange of delegates and joint celebrations and sacrifices. Over 78 cities expressing more than 110 combinations of *homonoia* declarations testify the broad use of this type of coinage during the Principate. *Homonoia* associations devoted to the end of inter-city confrontation. The most common cause of confrontation between the towns of the province became the fight for the title of the metropolis (or *πρώτη Ασίας*) and the struggle for supremacy in the implementation of Worship (*neocoros*). Anyway, *homonoia* means mutual recognition and mutual respect. L. Weber notes that the development of the neocorate beginning in the reign of Augustus coincided with a rise in the appearance of *homonoia* coins minted by the cities of Asia Minor. It was not a surprise that the first *homonoia* coins were minted in the Augustan period in Pergamum and Sardis. For another sources first *homonoia* coins were minted between Pergamum and Smyrna. By the reign of Domitian a fully popularized expression of *homonoia* coins became usual characteristic of the political interactions between cities of Asia Minor. The relationship between the competition for Imperial cult temples as honorific titles, and the minting of coins advertising *homonoia* between rival cities reveals how *homonoia* was often used as a slogan for brokering concord amidst the harsh political realities of the late first century BC. The establishment of *homonoia* between the leading cities was therefore an important part of negotiating power within the political structures of Asia Minor during the first and second centuries. Along with other important social and political institutions like patronage and benefaction, *homonoia* politics were fundamental to inter-city diplomacy under Roman rule, and leading citizens along with most other segments of the population would have been familiar with the idea from their daily intercourse in trade, business, or simply from their handling of coinage [Lotz 1999, 184].

Why was the recognition of their primacy important for cities? Because the ranking of cities was important for the festivals and provincial councils in which an official procession from the imperial cult temple, a meeting of the delegates of the cities, and commonly a sacrifice at the temple altar, all made statements about which cities could lay claim to power in the province [Kampmann 1996, 383].

As Andrew Lintott expertly puts it, in the Greek world the Roman aim was, first, to ensure that the cities obeyed any general rules laid down for the province, whether in an all-embracing *lex provinciae* or on separate occasions and to apply through proconsular authority both laws that the Romans applied to themselves and other regulations devised by emperors or the senate for the provinces [Lintott 1993, 152]. By 27 BC, at least, Roman provinces were divided between the senate and the emperor. Generally, if a province was peaceful and housed few troops, the senate appointed the governor, but if a province was threatened and home to large numbers of troops, the emperor controlled the province himself or appointed a proconsul. These appointed proconsuls had great freedom in governing their provinces, but they were answerable to and subject to instructions from the emperor and the senate.

Roman officials had a difficult time deciding how to exercise their *imperium* both legally and effectively in cases where a Roman or local law had been disregarded or unconsciously violated in a widespread area. Because various cities in the Roman provinces, including Greek cities in Asia Minor, possessed special rights and statuses and because these cities had to be governed separately from ordinary provincial cities, proconsuls had to be extra careful when exercising their *imperium* within them. The common lack of formal rules regarding privileged cities and the lacking documentation of such grants caused great confusion for proconsuls, who were often told by provincials, sometimes incorrectly, that they were exempt from certain rulings [Roundy 2010].

The system of legal relations was complicated by the presence in the province of special rights for cities and special rights for significant sanctuaries. The special rights for significant sanctuaries called asylum. Such kind of rights fueled both economical and religious life in province, because with asylum rights profitable business was associated. The right of asylum in this region held the Sanctuary of Artemis in Ephesus, the sanctuary in Magnesia and Sanctuary in Aphrodisias.

The province of Asia constituted the scene for various actions of wars and political struggle between triumvirs. Given the wealth, major political players (Roman generals or the enemies of Rome) sought to enlist the support of cities of Asia Minor. History of the province began with Aristonicus rebellion. It was a complete struggle in which various cities chose their own way of support. One of the first mentioned cities is Thyateira due to the uprising. Myndos, Samos and Colophon resisted Aristonicus and he had to take it by force (Florus 1.35), Appolonis, Stratonicea and Phocaea were on Aristonicus side. Against Aristonicus on the side of Rome there were Ephesus, Halicarnasus, Cyzikus, Bargylia, Smyrna, Methymna. In the historical literature it is discussed why the cities supported the stranger Rome rather than their countryman. Moreover Aristonicus promoted them the known values and rules of royal rule. Perhaps the city hoped that privileges, obtained with peace in 188 BC would be saved under Roman rule as well [Bernhardt 1971, 81]. Maybe it happened because the ruling elite of the cities had Roman orientation [Hošek 1974, 199] and cities dominated by demos supported Aristonicus. During Mithridatic Wars such wealthy cities as Cyzikus, Laodycea, Rhodes were against King of Pontus. Magnesia, Ephesus, Mitileneae, Pergamum and some islands were an ally with Mithridates. But the balance of power was changing and Ephesus, Smyrna, Colophon, Tralles, Sardis etc. fought against Mithridates. Sulla abolished all regulations of Mithridates and reorganized the coastal cities. Many towns that resisted Mithridates, thought that “84 BC was the beginning of a new era of their existence”. All the rest of the cities, like Ephesus, were punished. Appian describes this situation in the most complete way and notes that many people in Asia were sold into slavery and their country was robbed. Many cities were brutally punished for their “*Cappadocian orientation*”. For the loyalty to Mithridates cities of Asia had to pay a fine of 20,000 talents. Positive aspect is that the cities were not destroyed, but only punished by large fines.

On another hand, Aphrodisias, for example, was an ally of Rome in Mithridates Wars Times. This loyalty of inhabitants had a positive impact on the status of the city. In late republican and early times of Imperia Aphrodisias was a free city. It's mean what the governor of province had little or no legal authority over the community but that these subordinated directly to emperor. But on practice it remains unclear how this privilege in fact was administered. This goes for all the towns across the Roman provinces that hold this status. But prestige connected with this type of status should not be underestimated. During the late Republic (50–30 BC), the status of a free city rested upon both unspecific and unilateral grounds, lacking in any traditional sanction. This worked to the advantage of the Romans, who could construe the obligations of this new style of allies, as they themselves saw fit. Indeed the *lex provinciae*, a law which encompassed a vast range of organizational tasks in relation to the eastern provinces, was mandatory for all cities. Changes to the general constitution of this law could not occur without the authority of the central government. Although a free city could modify its original constitution by its own legislation, it was bound by the command of the Roman Senate or the dictator, who granted the status (which was not unconditional). The Roman word *libertas* does not exactly correspond to the concept of “freedom” of the cities. It did not imply that communities had the untrammelled control of their own international relations, with the right to declare peace and war of their own free will. From this point of view, a “free” city was only one of the constitutional parts of the Roman state [Erdemir].

The free cities did not attempt to retain their earlier status. They are simply known to have sent troops and ships to the kings to assist them during earlier wars. After the Romans had taken possession of Asia, these cities, like the other kingdoms, continued to send troops, ships, or supplies for Roman use. They may have paid money as well as sending goods or materials to Rome. In this sense it is very difficult to identify and classify the ‘free and autonomous’ cities, as it seems that there was no determined, definitive or categorical standard criterion which was applied to define them as free. Most of them however, held varied privileges which gave them exemption from the payment of tribute. An analysis of the status of a free city was given first to strategically important cities of the coast and thus stimulated Rome aid to fight enemies. The status of autonomous towns in Asia there had Alabanda, Apollonis, Aphrodisias, the island Astypalaea, Caunus, Chios, Halicarnassus (doubtful), Cnidos, Cos, Cyzicus, Ilium, Magnesia ad Sipylum, Mytilene, Mylasa, Phocaea, Samos, Stratonicea, Termera in Caria, and Teos. These places received their privileges at various times and under various circumstances, so that this list, which is also probably incomplete, may not be exact as to any one time. Alexandria Troas, and Parium, were made Roman *coloniae*, and, as it appears, Tralles also [Smith 1854].

During struggle between Mark Antony and Octavian cities on western coast of Asia Minor were in center of events. When Antony arrived at Ephesus he offered a splendid sacrifice to the city's goddess and pardoned those who, after the disaster to Brutus and Cassius, had fled to the temple as suppliants, except Petronius, who had been privy to the murder of Caesar, and Quintus, who had betrayed Dolabella to Cassius at Laodicea (App., *Bel. Civ.*, V, 4). After that he released the Lycians from taxes altogether, and urged the rebuilding of Xanthus; he gave to the Rhodians Andros, Tenos, Naxos, and Myndus, which were taken from them not long afterward because they ruled them too harshly; he made Laodicea and Tarsus free cities and released them from taxes entirely, and those inhabitants of Tarsus who had been sold into slavery he liberated by an order (App., *Bel. Civ.*, V, 7). In the reign of Augustus the status of province changed to proconsular province. Also Augustus canceled the debts of Asian cities and contributed to peace in the region. He also tried to introduce the practice of significant presents to cities of Asia Minor, cared about decorating the city of temples and exquisite architecture. In imperial period for confirmation of previously granted privileges, even if the city did not receive direct

imperial attention it is crucial for understanding the community's self-representation that the community persistently brought itself to imperial attention by sending embassies to almost every new emperor [Rubina 2012, 16].

The largest urban centers of the western coast of Asia Minor in Roman times gave their contribution to Roman culture and culture of North Coast of Black Sea. The province had an old and glorious temple of Artemis of Ephesus (*Artemis Ephesia*), Temple of Apollo at Didima near Miletus, Pergamum temple complexes, Halicarnassus (Halicarnassos) and so on. Asia Minor also imported to the east, and reexported to the west, a rich group of semi-philosophical, semi-religious sages, confidence-tricksters, charlatans and missionaries for the numerous emotional religions which had always been specialties of the region. The spicy short stories of Miletus had long been best-sellers, and three most talented Greek romantic novelists of the second century AD, Charito, Xenophon and Longus (author of *Daphnis and Chloe*) came from Aphrodisias, Ephesus and Lesbos respectively. The distinguished educational centres of Asia included medical schools at Smyrna, Ephesus, Laodicea on the Lycus and above all Pergamum, which superseded Cos and produced Galen who dominated later doctors for many generations [Grant 1988, 295].

Thus arises the question about the depth and size of Romanization of the province. Usually considered signs of Romanization spread within the province economic, political, social and cultural forms which were specific to the Romans. However, the territory west coast of Asia Minor at the time of inclusion in the Roman state distinguished high level of urbanization and economic achievements of the ancient way. Asia Minor Greeks only formally took over the Roman paperwork because epigraphic sources do not indicate displacement of Greek. Instead percentage of bilingual inscriptions is insignificant. Also, only a part of society associated themselves with the Romans. First it was those who wanted to improve their social status. It should also be noted that changes in the life of the Greeks recorded the appearance of typical Roman structures – term, basil, aqueducts etc. With the province powerful streams of influence proceeded on the territory of the Mediterranean. First of all, it was a significant provincial distribution of products and a variety of cultural influences from religion to art and medicine. So we can say that the province of Asia held synthesis of Greco-Roman world model, but the city of Asia Minor did powerful indirect impact on the culture of other parts of the Roman state.

¹ Historians only suggest that this complex was built in the honor of Domitian, as written and other sources do not mention this.

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