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Groups and Associations in Bithynia and Pontus: Interaction with prominent Statesmen and provincial Governors¹

Abstract: Pliny's correspondence demonstrates that private associations in Roman Bithynia and Pontus were considered forces of considerable significance in the local civic societies and consequently a matter of care and concern for the provincial authorities. But how could these non-official corporate bodies acquire such an importance? The present paper proposes to deal with this problem by focusing on the relations cultivated between Bithynian-Pontic associations and specific individuals possessing high status at a local or regional level. The epigraphic evidence indicates that local statesmen provided formal leadership and external championship to associations and received public honours from them. Bithyniarchai and provincial governors even collaborated with individual associations in the construction of monuments honouring, or dedicated to, the Roman emperor. This sort of personalized interaction with specific members of the elite enabled associations to advertise themselves as the favourites of important political figures and through their contribution to the imperial monuments to participate in a common political discourse which placed their own micro-communities in an empire-wide context. On the other hand, in a structurally factionalist political environment, the persistently democratic character of which encouraged politicians to appeal directly to the people, the associations' affiliation to prominent statesmen could also function as vehicle of mobilization in time of conflict.

Keywords: Bithynia; Pontos; associations; city elites; euergetism; personalized interaction; patronage.

1. Introduction

The study of associations has witnessed a considerable growth in recent years, mainly because of an increasing awareness on the part of ancient historians that the perspectives shared and the conclusions reached in the pioneering works of the late 19th and early 20th centuries needed to be enriched and re-examined. The institutional and even juristic approach of Foucart, Ziebarth and Poland is still fundamental in focusing on the internal organization and structure of associations and on the nature of the various unifying forces behind each of them (cultic, professional, local), as revealed by the multiplicity of names used to define them.² But the overall prevailing view that emerged from these studies, that associations constituted alternative communities and flourished because the traditional civic institutions were steadily declining and people who could not find any meaning in them – or who were being barred from them because they were foreigners – were looking for alternative providers of identity, has now been decisively challenged. On the contrary, it is precisely the civic dimension of associations, the various ways in which they integrate into the public sphere and the dynamics created

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² Foucart 1873; Ziebarth 1896; Poland 1909.

by their interaction with other forces of local society that are now being presented as major aspects of the associational phenomenon in the Greco-Roman world.³

Within this framework, Bithynia and Pontus represent a highly interesting case-study. Despite the fact that Pliny's correspondence, and especially his references to the famous ban on the operation of associations issued in accordance with instructions received by Trajan,⁴ demonstrate that such groups were forces of considerable significance in the local civic societies and consequently a matter of care and concern for the provincial authorities, the associational phenomenon in Bithynia and Pontus has not yet been the object of specialized studies. However, three recent synthetic works on Hellenistic and Roman Bithynia and Pontus,⁵ frequently cited in this paper, illuminate the political and social background against which the various functions performed by associations should be placed.

So how could these non-official corporate bodies acquire such an importance as the one attributed to them in Pliny's correspondence? The present paper proposes to deal with this problem by focusing on the interaction between particular groups/associations and prominent public figures. Unsurprisingly, our evidence is mainly epigraphic. About four dozen inscriptions testify to the existence of various professional clubs, cultic and neighborhood groups and even groups of friends, which cover the period from the 3rd century BC to the 3rd century AD. Even though in many cases it is not always possible to establish if these groups constituted well-organized corporations possessing a permanent and durable internal structure or were just groups of persons united for a specific purpose such as the construction of a monument, the general impression is that in Bithynia-Pontus, as elsewhere in the Greek world, the associational phenomenon was well rooted in local society.⁶ However, it should be stated in advance

³ Cf. for example the introductory remarks of Fröhlich and Hamon in a recent collective volume dedicated to groups and associations in the Hellenistic and Imperial periods (Fröhlich – Hamon 2013, 14–26). From the rich recent bibliography see the studies of van Nijf (1997 and 2003) on the civic integration of professional associations in Asia Minor and that of Gabrielsen (2001) on the patronage relations fostered between the Rhodian elite and the local associations. For the examination of the Koan evidence from a similar perspective see Maillot 2013. For a comprehensive recent assessment of previous scholarship on associations see also Arnaoutoglou 2003, 25–27. Cf. also Kloppenborg – Ascough 2011, 1–13 and Liu 2009, 4–11 who focuses on the Roman West and summarizes the highly interesting conclusions reached in recent studies which approach critically the aforementioned 'integration model'.

⁴ Plin. ep. 10,33–34 (Trajan pronounces against the formation of a band of firemen in Nikomedeia); 10,92–93 (Trajan allows *eranoi* to be established in the *civitas foederata* Amisos but explicitly forbids the operation of associations in the subject cities); 10,96,7 (Christians suspend their meetings in Amisos after an edict issued by Pliny in accordance with Trajan's *mandata* imposing a prohibition on all *hetaeriai*). Although these restrictions may recall other similar, but sporadically and conditionally enforced, decisions of the Roman state (cf. Sherwin-White 1966, 608–609; Cotter 1996, 78–88; Liu 2008, 55–56), Trajan's ban on associations was not a general but a local measure, and, as a matter of fact, a short-lived one (Arnaoutoglou 2002 is in this respect decisive; cf. also Van Nijf 1997, 21 note 84 and 180; de Ligt 2000, 245 and Nigdelis 2010, 22 with respect to Thessaloniki).

⁵ Fernoux 2004; Bekker-Nielsen 2008; Madsen 2009.

⁶ In this paper I mainly focus not on institutional issues but on the relations between particular groups within the city and local or Roman statesmen. Hence I bring together testimonies concerning both what seems to be fully organized associations and other groups which perhaps did not possess such a developed and permanent structure. For a similar approach see Fröhlich – Hamon 2013, 21–22. I exclude from my analysis civic subdivisions (with the possible exception of the *syngeitones* at Kios), groups of Roman citizens and age-groups such as the semi-public body of the Gerousia.

What follows in this note is an attempt to present an as full as possible list of evidence concerning such groups and associations in Bithynia and Pontus (on the relative character of any classification of groups and associations see Nigdelis 2010, 14 note 5): *Professional associations*: IPrusa 1036; TAM IV 22 and perhaps 33; INikaia 73, 197; ISinope 128; Mendel 1901, 36 no. 184; Anderson et al. 1910, 7 no. 2 and 43 no. 29. *Religious groups*: TAM IV 42, 63, 76 and 262; IKios 20 and 22; IApameia 33–35, 103 and 116; IKalchedon 13; IPrusa 48, 159; IKPolis 65; INikaia 1206, 1324; SEG 36 1150; SEG 53 1416; SEG 58 1453; Mittford 1991, 200–205 no. 12. *Neighborhood groups*: IKios 12; IPrusa 50; IPrusias 63–64 and 168; IAmastris 56B. *Groups of relatives*: INikaia 1034–1035 and 1512–1513; IPrusa 36; TAM IV

that only a small proportion of the aforementioned inscriptions provide useful information on the relations cultivated between Bithynian-Pontic associations and specific individuals possessing high status at a local or regional level. Consequently, it is these documents that constitute the focus of this paper. Since they mostly emanate from the groups and associations themselves, they enable us not only to search for the actual facts and details of the aforementioned relations but also to grasp the issuing bodies' point of view,⁷ to see how each group chose to publicly express its position vis-à-vis the influential individuals with whom it interacted and to examine the implications that these contacts and their representation carried as far as the group's position in the local society was concerned.

2. Associations and prominent Statesmen in the Cities of Bithynia and Pontus

The earliest example of interaction between an association and a prominent statesman in the areas of Bithynia and Pontus comes from an honorific decree found in Abonoteichos.⁸ The decree, dated to 137/6 BC, was issued by a group of *phratores* and concerned the *strategos* Alkimos, either a civic official or a royal general in the administrative hierarchy of the Pontic kingdom. It is noteworthy that Alkimos was honoured by the *phratores* on at least two different occasions. Prior to the benefactions which initiated the surviving decree, Alkimos had received a golden crown in return for some unspecified services. After the bestowal of the crown Alkimos continued with his benefactions by offering distributions, 200 silver drachmas (it is not clear if this sum concerned the distributions or constituted a different act of generosity) and golden crowns to certain elder members of the *phratra*. In response, the *phratores* decided to extend in perpetuity the public proclamation of the honours previously voted for Alkimos (crown and public praise) and to bestow the same *philanthropa* on his descendants as well.⁹ These decisions were to be added to the law of the *phratores* and to bind all future members of the group. Clearly, the first honours generated further benefactions which, in their turn, led to further honours. The exchange of honours for benefactions established permanent and durable bonds between a prominent local figure and the *phratores*, which were to be continued by the descendants of both parties.

The problem here is that we cannot be certain about the exact nature of this group. The terms *phratores* and *phratra* may denote either an official civic subdivision or a private association,¹⁰ like the *phratrai* attested in Phrygia.¹¹ In our case, the term *koinon* used to define the honouring body in l. 6 may be seen as indicating a private organization but this is not an entirely safe criterion.

We are moving onto much safer ground when we focus on an inscription of the Imperial Period found in the Church of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary in Iznik. The inscription records the honours awarded to T. Flavius by the association of *chalkeis*:¹²

τὸν ἀρχιερέα
2 καὶ τειμητὴν καὶ π[ρ]ο-

74 and 272. *Phratores* and *adelpoi*: IAmastris 1; Öğüt-Polat – Şahin 1985, 118 no. 44; ISinope 117. *Groups of companions and friends*: IPrusa 24 and 161; INikaia 1210; IAmastris 57; SEG 30 1430;

⁷ Cf. in this respect the sound remarks of Gabrielsen 2001, 166, who, in referring to the Rhodian case, drew attention to the fact that inscriptions set up by associations emphasize what the issuing body wanted to be known about itself.

⁸ IAbonuteichos 1; the inscription was first edited by Reinach 1905 with a commentary.

⁹ The motion was introduced by the *hierateuon* Daipos, in all probability an official in the internal administration of the group.

¹⁰ Poland 1909, 52–53.

¹¹ Ramsay 1895/1897, 142–143 nos. 30–31, 156 no. 65, 609 no. 56; MAMA IV 23.

¹² INikaia 73. I follow the new readings provided by M. Adak after an autopsy of the stone. See Adak – Stauner 2013, 147 note 26. I wish to express my gratitude to Prof. Dr. M. Adak for this valuable information.

ἡγορον δίκαιον γυ-
 4 μνασίαρχον ΚΩΜ.Ο
 Τ. Φλάουιον ΥΠΑΥΡΑ
 6 χαλκείς τὸ[ν] ἑαυτ[ῶν]
 εὐεργέτην.

The inscription was engraved on a round base probably supporting the statue of the honorand. The latter was manifestly a prominent local figure that held the important post of *timetes* (censor) in Nikaia and assumed the high-priesthood of the imperial cult, either in Nikaia again, or, in the Bithynian *koinon*. Styled as a just advocate (προήγορος δίκαιος; more on this below), T. Flavius also held the post of *gymnasiarchos*. What emerges from this laconic but rich *cursus honorum* is the image of a legal expert, who, at different times of his public career, occupied a top political office that enabled him to control and supervise the admission of new members to the council of Nikaia,¹³ associated himself with the celebration of the imperial cult either on the civic level of Nikaia or on the regional level of Bithynia¹⁴ and was placed at the head of the local gymnasium. The *chalkeis* of Nikaia advertised their connection with this man by referring to him as their own benefactor in the end of the inscription erected in his honour.

Is it possible to associate these benefactions with a particular aspect of the honorand's career? Van Nijf thought that the key lies in T. Flavius' function as *proegoros*: T. Flavius was honoured for defending the legal interests of the association.¹⁵ Dittman-Schöne adopted the same view and associated the inscription of T. Flavius with honorific inscriptions set up by other professional associations in Asia Minor, which similarly refer to the honorands' legal excellence.¹⁶ The closest parallel comes from Tarsos: an honorary inscription for M. Aurelius Gaianos emanating from the association of grain-carriers refers to the honorand's other public distinctions (*kilikarches*) and ends with the formula τὸν ἀπερίεργον σὺνδικον τὸ συνέργιον τῶν ἐν τῇ σειτικ[ῆ] ὠμοφόρων, τὸν ἑαυτῶν προστάτην, διὰ γραμματέων...¹⁷ According to L. Robert, it is the mention of the function of *syndikos* immediately before the name of the honouring party that demonstrates that the honours were given in return for legal aid.¹⁸ Other cases invoked by Dittman-Schöne are not of equal relevance. The honours awarded by Thyateira's *linourgoi* to the *asiarches*, high-priest, *rhetor* and *nomikos* Annianos are explicitly associated with services provided to the entire city, not with legal aid rendered exclusively to the association itself.¹⁹ Likewise, the gardeners of Thyateira honoured M. Gnaeus Licinius Rufus for, among other things, defending the legal rights of their homeland (καὶ πάντα τὰ δίκαια τῇ πατρίδι κατορθώσαντα).²⁰ Finally, in honouring T. Flavius Aleksandros, the *skytotomoi* of the same city recorded his public distinctions in the following order: *agoranomia*, leadership of the Roman *conventus*, three embassies to Rome, *ekdikia*, and priesthood of

¹³ On the office of *timetes* in the Bithynian cities see Bekker-Nielsen 2008, 77–78 and Adak – Stauner 2013, 147 with testimonies and bibliography.

¹⁴ According to Fernoux 2004, 352–354, the term *archieus* in the cities of Bithynia denoted a priest of the imperial cult functioning not at the local but at the provincial level. With respect to T. Flavius the same view is shared by Bekker-Nielsen 2008, 84.

¹⁵ van Nijf 1997, 96.

¹⁶ Dittman-Schöne 2001, 55–56 and 126–127 no. I.8. See also van Nijf 2003, 312–313.

¹⁷ SEG 27 947.

¹⁸ Robert 1977, 90.

¹⁹ TAM V 933 (= IGR IV 1226): Ἀννιανόν, φιλοσ[έ]βαστον ἀσίαρχη<ν> δί<ς>, | ἀρχιερέα τῶ<ν> Σεβαστῶ<ν>, | τὸν ἄριστον τοῦ <λ>αμπροτάτου τῆς Ἀσίας ἔθνους | καὶ πρῶτον τῆς πατρίδος, | τὸν ῥήτορα καὶ νομικὸν | ἀνείδρυσαν τεμῶντες | ἐφ' οἷς εὐ ποιῶν διατε<λ>εῖ | τὴν πατρίδα τὴν ἑαυτοῦ τὴν λαμπροτάτην | καὶ διασημοτάτην καὶ μεγίστην Θυατειρηῶ<ν> | πόλιν | οἱ λινουργοί. | ἐπιμελησαμένου Αὐ. Ε[ὐ]τυχιανοῦ Ἀσκλᾶ ΑΠΟΑΥ|ΤΟΥΡΗΙΩΥ. |

²⁰ Dittman-Schöne 2001, 184 no. III.1.16.

Artemis. Again there is no manifest connection between the honorand's legal services and the honouring association.

Furthermore, one cannot escape noticing that, in applying L. Robert's criterion to T. Flavius' inscription, we come upon a difficulty: between the mention of *proegoros* and that of the *chalkeis* the post of the *gymnasiarches* is introduced. Although, this does not suffice to reject Van Nijf's and Dittman-Schöne's suggestion, the fact remains that the honorand's *proegoria* is not presented in the text of the inscription as being more relevant to the honouring association than his censorship or his high priesthood and *gymnasiarchia*. Thus caution is needed: benefactions resulting from the other offices T. Flavius held and generosities offered in an entirely private context may also have formed part of the relations between the honorand and the *chalkeis*. Even if, as is probable, some kind of legal aid should be assumed, the latter may well have been provided within the framework of an overall civic *proegoria*, enabling T. Flavius to speak on behalf of a professional association of his homeland before a court.²¹ In fact, the crucial factor in assessing the relation between this prominent statesman and the association of *chalkeis* lies in the way the latter chose to represent it. If honorific inscriptions set up by professional associations tend to signify an attempt on the part of the latter to enter the public sphere,²² then the concluding phrase χαλκείς τὸ[ν] ἑαυτ[ῶν] εὐεργέτην, served, as noted above, the purpose of highlighting the exact manner according to which such an entrance was possible: the *chalkeis* became part of Nikaia's civic world by publicly proclaiming the introduction of T. Flavius and his whole public presence into their own microcosmos. Remaining temporarily and factually unspecified, T. Flavius' interaction with the *chalkeis* of Nikaia enabled the latter to present him as their 'own' *euergetes* and thus to make him one of their own.

This affiliation of local magnates to associations could also take other forms. Evidence is provided by a 2nd century AD inscription from Sebastopolis set up in honour of M. Antonius Rufus by his daughter. The honorand was undoubtedly a highly distinguished figure, as may easily be understood by the enumeration of his public offices and generosities, which included the financing of public constructions and distributions, the lifelong high priesthood of Hadrian, the organization of gladiatorial games,²³ the *Pontarchia*, and several tenures of the office of *agoranomos* and other *archai*. This impressive *cursus honorum* makes the fact that Antonius Rufus had also repeatedly been *thiasarches* (ἄρξαντα καὶ θιασαρχήσαντα πολλάκις) even more interesting. This is important not only as it seems to provide our sole evidence from Bithynia-Pontus for a local magnate being the formal head, and not only an external patron, of one or various private associations (the past participle *thiasarchesas* is not decisive in this respect), but also because it seems to demonstrate that for M. Antonius Rufus, not a parvenu but a descendant of a prominent family (ll. 1–2: ἀπὸ τε προγόνων διασημώτατον), providing leadership for associations was a constant feature of his public presence and consequently a political asset that his daughter could not leave out of his record. However, there is another possible interpretation of the presence of the term *thiasarchesas* in this inscription: it may refer to various religious liturgies assumed by the honorand.

Two other inscriptions, both from Nikomedeia, may be considered as providing further evidence for associations headed by prominent statesmen. The first is the funerary inscription of Aurelios Eu[---] Katuleinos who had been βουλευτής, μυστηριάρχης, σειτώνης and αργυροταμίας of the council and had also contributed several times to the reception and hosting of the emperor and his army, probably

²¹ As Fernoux (2004, 339) has noted, civic *proegoroi* could function on behalf of individuals as well.

²² Cf. Van Nijf 2003, 314–316.

²³ The most recent edition of this inscription is provided by Mittford 1991, 200–205 no. 12. Cf. Anderson 1900, 153–156 no. 2; IGR III 115; OGIS 529; Le Guen-Pollet 1989, 65–67 no. 10. On the gladiatorial games see Robert 1940, 128–129.

during one of their several passages through Bithynia in the Severan period (παραπέμψας πολλάκις).²⁴ The second one is a fragmentary inscription recording several distinctions in the genitive case: ὑπατικοῦ, ἄρχοντος τὸν α' τόπον, ἀρχιμύστου διὰ βίου, ἀγορανομήσαντος, κοινοβούλου, παιδονομήσαντος.²⁵ It is clear that in both these inscriptions distinguished local politicians appear to have treated the presidency of groups of initiates as an important part of their overall public career. However, it should be noted that, although the terms *archimystes* and *mysteriarches* demonstrate the existence of a hierarchical organization within these groups, they do not necessarily indicate a private association.

3. Construction of Imperial Monuments and Interaction with Provincial Governors

Another indication of this notion of closeness between a highly influential political figure and a specific group inside the city may be found in the following fragmentary inscription from Kios:²⁶

[-----] Μόσχος [-----]
 2 [-----] Βιθυνιάρ[χης -----]
 [-----]γης τῆς λα[μπροτάτης Κιανῶν πόλεως -----]
 4 [-----] Τραϊαν[ὸν Ἄδρια[νὸν -----]
 [-----] οἱ συγγεί[τονες -----]
 6 [-----]ιος τοῦ δια[-----]
 [-----]ου Γαίου [-----]

As Th. Corsten has noted, what we have here is the erection of an imperial monument for Hadrian by the *bithyniarches* Moschos (a by no means unsurprising initiative on his part) who collaborated with a group of neighbours styled as *συγγείτονες*.²⁷ Terms such as *geitosyne*, *geitniasis*, and their derivatives may refer either to an urban neighborhood-group of private or official character²⁸ or to a rural settlement and its residents.²⁹ In our case the find-spot of the inscription (the public baths of Gemlik) leaves no doubt that our *syngaitones* were city-dwellers, though it cannot be demonstrated whether they constituted a permanently established association or merely a group of neighbors united ad hoc for the specific purpose of constructing the imperial monument.³⁰ Unfortunately, the exact role played by each of the two associates in this project remains uncertain. The initiative might have come either from the *syngaitones* requesting Moschos' financial and political support so as to bring their plan to completion or from the *bithyniarches* himself, who had chosen to associate this particular group with a project initially conceived by himself.³¹ This collaboration might have been either the first contact between the

²⁴ TAM IV 262, dated to the 3rd century AD; on *παραπομπή* see Fernoux 2004, 409–414 and Bekker-Nielsen 2008, 101–104 with further examples.

²⁵ TAM IV 42. Cf. Adak – Stauner 2013, 147 note 21 with further bibliography on this inscription.

²⁶ IKios 12; cf. LW 1142; IGR III 21.

²⁷ IKios 12 p. 87.

²⁸ Poland 1909, 85; cf. van Nijf 1997, 181–182 with further bibliography; on the debate whether these groups were privately organized associations or officially recognized subdivisions of the urban population see van Nijf 1997, 181–182 and Pont 2013.

²⁹ Cf. Pont 2013, 133 with further bibliography.

³⁰ Other such groups in Bithynia-Pontus include a *geitosyne* in Prusa (IPrusa 50) and a *geitniasis* in Prusias ad Hypium (IPrusias 63–64 and 168). In Amastris two *amphoda* are known to have awarded crowns to a certain Aurelios Tatianos and his wife Valeria Strategis, but nothing more is known on the relations between the two parties (Robert 1980, 151–159; IAmastris 56B; on the debate over the official or private status of these *amphoda* cf. Jones 1987, 303 and 336 and the bibliography cited above in note 28).

³¹ A similar example of such joint dedications of imperial monuments comes from Lampsakos: The local Gerosia erected a cultic statue (ἄγαλμα) of Livia, but the financial burden was shouldered by the priest of the *Sebastoi* and *stephanephoros* of their *oikos* Dionysios (ILampsakos 11; cf. Giannakopoulos 2008, 431–433).

two parties or the natural development of preexisting relations. But, however we choose to reconstruct the events surrounding this dedication, the fact remains that the monument commemorated a joint act, undertaken by two manifestly unequal associates. The hierarchical distance between them was vividly demonstrated by the very structure of the text: first the name and the title(s) of the prominent dedicator, then the name of the honoured emperor and finally a return to the nominative case so as to record the name of the less important dedicator, the *syngeitones*. But despite – or as a matter of fact because of – this subaltern position, what was important for the *syngeitones* was the very fact of their participation in this scheme. Whether they were invited to join or initiated the project, whether they carried it out as an already functioning corporate entity or as a group making its first appearance as such, their participation enabled them to enter into negotiations and to establish or further cultivate solid bonds with a top regional – and not merely local – statesman, probably placing themselves under his patronage and protection.³²

The nature of the project was in itself highly significant. By recording their name on an imperial monument, even in a subordinate position, our *syngeitones* added themselves to those local forces which undertook the task of performing a highly prioritized civic function in any Greek city of the imperial period: the public expression of devotion and loyalty to the emperor.³³ A ceremony of consecration of Hadrian's statue like the one attested for Caracalla's statue in Paphos (see below) would have given to this function a dramatized expression, the *syngeitones* standing behind or next to the powerful *bithyniarches* before the imperial monument to which they had also contributed.

Of course, the overall prestige of our *syngeitones* should not be exaggerated. After all, they were no more than residents of an urban quarter of a provincial town. According to Th. Corsten, it was in their neighborhood that an imperial temple or another similar facility was located.³⁴ This may plausibly explain their participation in the construction of Hadrian's statue. But the crucial point lies elsewhere. Whatever claim or argument the *syngeitones* could provide so as to present themselves as suitable candidates for jointly undertaking the construction of an imperial monument, the fact that this was not an act undertaken by the group alone gave that claim a validity officially recognized through the *bithyniarches'* authority. In this respect the *syngeitones'* expression of loyalty to the emperor, far from being an exclusively internal affair of a body confined to the inner circle of its own members, constituted an act addressed to a wider, even provincial (given their collaborator's status), audience. For this neighbourhood-group Hadrian's statue marked a successful attempt to break out of isolation.

The role that groups and associations could potentially assume in the imperial cult is emphatically demonstrated by a well-known inscription from Nikomedeia which constitutes our sole certain testi-

³² *Bithyniarchai* are considered by Fernoux (2004, 352–353) as the presiding officials of the Bithynian *koinon*, though distinct from the *archiereis*. Bekker-Nielsen (2008, 83–86 and 105–106) gives a full bibliographical account of the relevant scholarly debate, highlights the high status of the office and its holders and also raises the possibility of more than one *bithyniarches* officiating simultaneously. According to Madsen 2009, 93, the office of the *bithyniarches* was not only different from but also superior to that of the *archiereus*.

³³ With respect to Bithynia cf. Madsen 2009, 95–96. Another example of a Bithynian neighborhood-group attempting to advertize itself as an important agent in local civic life may be found in the two dedications made by the *geitniasis* in Prusias ad Hypium to Zeus Soter, the first one on behalf of the *polis* (IPrusias 63–64; for a probable third dedication see IPrusias 168; Ameling in IPrusias 63 p. 64–65, raises the possibility of a temple of Zeus being erected in the specific city quarter where the *geitniasis* was located). Outside Bithynia, a parallel may be found in a dedication of an altar to an emperor and to Zeus Olympios by a neighborhood-group in Mylasa (IMylasa 403; cf. Harland 2003, 97 and Pont 2013, 155). These dedications were also public expressions of devotion which marked a claim to a distinct position in the public sphere through a mediatory role between the city and its gods; however, they were acts undertaken solely by the neighbourhood-groups, whereas in Kios the collaboration of the *syngeitones* with the *bithyniarches*, instead of minimizing their contribution, further underlined its significance.

³⁴ IKios 12 p. 87.

mony for the existence and the operation of a professional association of *naukleroï* in this important maritime port:³⁵

[Αὐτοκράτορι Οὐ]εσπασια[ν]ῶ Καίσαρι Σε[βαστῶ]
 2 [------ τέ]με[ν]ος καὶ ο[ἱ]κον ναυκλη[ρικὸν οἱ]
 [------ ναύ]κληροι, Μάρ[κ]ου Πλανκίου Ο[ὐ]άρου]
 4 [ἀνθυπάτου κατασκευ]ασθῆ[ν]αι [ἀ]πο[φ]ηναμένου, Κα----
 -----ος ἀνθύπατος καδιέρωσε -----
 6 -----ΔΟΥΩΥΙΟΥΟ-----

The inscription once again commemorates a joint act of two unequal parties. The *naukleroï* decided to dedicate a *temenos* and their own building to Vespasian, but this project was subject to the approval of the proconsul Marcus Plancius Varus,³⁶ as the formula Μάρ[κ]ου Πλανκίου Ο[ὐ]άρου ἀνθυπάτου κατασκευ]ασθῆναι [ἀ]πο[φ]ηναμένου indicates. The following line mentions another proconsul as the person who performed the actual *kathierosis*: we may safely assume that he was one of Varus' successors in this post, whose term of office witnessed the completion of the building program undertaken by the *naukleroï*. As far as the role of this second provincial governor is concerned, close parallels both in terms of chronology and procedure come from other Bithynian cities as well. In Prusias ad Hypium a gymnasium dedicated by Klaudios Nestor to the Imperial House was consecrated by M. Salvidienus Asprenas, governor of Bithynia in 76/77 or 77/78.³⁷ The northern and eastern gates of Nikaia, also dedicated to the Flavians, were constructed under the care of a local notable, C. Cassius Chrestus, but consecrated again by the governor M. Plancius Varus around 70–72 AD.³⁸ At about the same time in Perge the brothers Demetrios and Apollonios constructed and dedicated a triumphal arch in honour of Domitian, Titus and Vespasian, while the actual consecration was performed by the provincial governor Gaius Caristianus Fronto and the imperial procurator Lucius Vienus Longus.³⁹ Likewise, the aforementioned statue of Caracalla erected by the city of Paphos was consecrated by the proconsul and the *logistes*.⁴⁰ The phrase παρόντων καὶ καθιερούντων used in this inscription indicates the organization of a public ceremony in the presence of the two consecrators. Although, unlike in the case of statues, there is no explicit information on rites of consecration as far as imperial temples are concerned,⁴¹ a similar ceremony probably took place in Nikomedeia as well, marking the end of the construction of the sanctuary and the *oikos* and the official beginning of their operation.

Reconstructed as such, the events surrounding the dedication of the Nikomedeian *naukleroï* may lead to the following conclusions:

a) By dedicating both a sanctuary and their own common meeting-hall – probably located within the premises of the *temenos* – to Vespasian, the Nikomedeian *naukleroï* manifestly linked the satisfaction of their own internal need to improve their infrastructure with the satisfaction of the aforementioned omnipresent civic need to express loyalty to the emperor. As the parallel cases invoked above demonstrate, by acting as an initiator of a building project related to the Roman emperor and ultimately con-

³⁵ TAM IV 22.

³⁶ On M. Plancius Varus and his career see Eck 1970, 231 n. 506; Halfmann 1979, 104–105; Fernoux 2004, 243 and 316.

³⁷ IPrusias 42.

³⁸ INikaia 25–28. On this collaboration and the personal bonds between the two parties cf. Fernoux 2004, 388; Bekker-Nielsen 2008, 112–114 (with further bibliography); Madsen 2009, 90.

³⁹ IPerge 53.

⁴⁰ SEG 6 810.

⁴¹ Price 1984, 134.

secrated by his local representative, the association of *naukleroï* advertised itself as a collective functioning in the same way and in the same capacity as an individual notable did.⁴² Above all, the building project of the *naukleroï* enabled (and/or obliged) the association to enter into negotiations with the Roman governors, perhaps involving the exchange of embassies and letters, which obviously lasted for a quite considerable period of time. Thus, just like any other politically ambitious and prominent individual, the association was establishing itself as an interlocutor of the provincial authorities. This had undoubtedly significant implications with respect to the prestige of the body within the local society.⁴³

b) Given the role played by the provincial governors in promoting, approving and supervising local initiatives regarding both the imperial cult and building projects, this was both a premeditated and expected possibility. In other words, the Nikomedean *naukleroï* knew in advance that their plan, whether the original idea came from the association itself or from a proconsular stimulus, would be closely monitored and that there was no room for failure, which would have entailed a considerable loss of face before the provincial authorities.⁴⁴

c) Seen in this light, the dedicatory inscription – and the consecrating ceremony, if one actually took place – proclaimed the successful outcome of an operation which enabled the *naukleroï* not only to claim a distinct position among the local agents of the imperial cult, which was traditionally important for Nikomedea's civic identity⁴⁵ but also – and perhaps more importantly – to present the person of the emperor as a permanent constitutive element of their own corporate identity. The *kathierosis* performed by the proconsul gave this claim to affiliation with the emperor an official recognition.⁴⁶

It is worth pointing out that – unlike the *syngeitones* of Kios – the Nikomedean *naukleroï* constituted an association whose individual members were by definition in close contact with various parts of the Greco-Roman world.⁴⁷ Furthermore, the fact that at least one Nikomedean *naukleros*, Telesphoros, is

⁴² Madsen (2009, 90–96) highlights the prestige that the members of the Bithynian elite derived from associating their names with the imperial power and the imperial cult. Personal acquaintance with the provincial governor and of course the emperor was in this respect a highly appreciated distinction deserving special mention.

⁴³ It would have been evident, for example, that it was through the deeds of the association of *naukleroï* that Nikomedea was acquiring another monument proving her devotion to the emperor and hence a further argument potentially used in her favor before the Roman authorities.

⁴⁴ On the relation between the provincial Roman authorities and the imperial cult see Price 1984, 69–71. Madsen 2009, 40–53, emphasizes that even local initiatives in this field were ultimately shaped by the Roman authorities. On the role played by the provincial governor in local building projects in Bithynia see Fernoux 2004, 362–366 and Madsen 2009, 17–20, based on the evidence drawn from Pliny's letters.

⁴⁵ The dedication of a sanctuary to Vespasian implies cultic activities in honour of this emperor. Cf. Harland 2003, 96. Since the construction of the temple of Augustus and Rome (Cassius Dio 51.20.6–9), Nikomedea viewed the imperial cult as being strongly linked with the overall prestige of the city, as the continuous efforts to secure further *neokorai* indicate. Cf. on these efforts Fernoux 2004, 180 and 326–327; Madsen 2009, 52–53.

⁴⁶ TAM IV 33, dated to the 2nd or 3rd century AD, is an honorary inscription for the high priest P. Aelius Timotheos, who also held other important posts both in the city and in the Bithynian *koinon* (TAM IV 33 ll. 4–6: δ[ις ἄρξαντα τ]ῆς πόλεως τὴν μεγί[στην ἀρχή]ν καὶ δις τοῦ κοινοβο[υλίου]). Fernoux (2004, 352–356 and 359) thinks that the honorand twice occupied the posts of *archon* in Nikomedea and that of *bithyniarches*, and also served as high priest for the province. Cf. also Adak – Stauner 2013, 147 note 21. In any case, the final phrase [πρ]οστάντα αὐτῶν (TAM IV 33 l. 8) certainly indicates some sort of patronage or leadership provided by the honorand to the honouring body. J. and L. Robert (BE 1974, 572) have restored the latter's name in l. 2 as follows: [οἱ ἐν τῶι] πρεσβυτέρωι οἴκ[ωι ναύκληροι]. If accepted, this restoration provides an interesting indication of close personal contacts between the *naukleroï* and top-ranking local politicians, the association being the protégé of a high priest and *bithyniarches*. The imperial cult, to which the *naukleroï* had been devoted since Vespasian's principate, may have constituted the framework for the fostering of these bonds.

⁴⁷ Individual Nikomedean *naukleroï* are well attested both in the city itself (TAM IV 110, 127, 195, 197, 297 and 304) and abroad (see Robert 1939, 171; Vélissaropoulos 1980, 55 n. 241).

known to have also been a member of the local council,⁴⁸ may be seen as an indirect indication of the significance of this association in the civic context. The construction of a *temenos* and an *oikos* – whatever their size – testify to the association’s ability to mobilize significant resources.⁴⁹ The local economic conditions should also be taken into account. Nikomedeia functioned as a maritime port serving and controlling a great part of the export and import trade of the whole of Bithynia, and even of more remote regions such as Phrygia and Mysia.⁵⁰ In this respect, the horizons of the Nikomedeian *naukleroi* were clearly much broader than those shared by the Kian *syngaitones*. More importantly, the overall political significance of the association cannot be underestimated nor reduced only to the individual members’ potential access to public offices. The *naukleroi* played a vital role in the normal operation of the market and the Nikomedeian *naukleroi* in particular were in this respect active on a regional level. This was precisely a field which encroached on the provincial governors’ scope of interests and competence as well.⁵¹ Hence, it was the very nature of the *naukleroi*’s professional activities and not only their willingness to act as local agents of the imperial cult that provided common ground for interaction with the provincial authorities.

Against this background, the association of the Nikomedeian *naukleroi*’s double building project with the emperor in his divine capacity went beyond the standard and quite expected tendency of any collective or individual living in the Roman world to find an opportunity to express sentiments of loyalty to the head of the state. The fact that both a sanctuary and the very hearth of the association were dedicated to Vespasian in accordance with a proconsular sanction could also be seen as an indication of a commitment undertaken by the Nikomedeian *naukleroi* to continue a successful collaboration which placed them under the obligation to serve the state interests – under the watchful eye of the provincial governor – in a field crucial for the maintenance of political and social stability and coherence.

The *libellus* handed to Pliny and forwarded to Trajan regarding the operation of *eranoi* in Amisos is the only other evidence we have for the interaction between private associations and the provincial authorities of Bithynia and Pontus.⁵² The problem, however, is that the exact identity of the party which approached Pliny is not entirely clear. If this was the work of civic officials, prior contacts with associations under formation and wishing to acquire approval from a higher authority should be certainly assumed.⁵³ On the other hand, it should be noted that Pliny does not explicitly mention any civic authority as the petitioner. He simply speaks of citizens of Amisos, which raises the possibility

⁴⁸ TAM IV 304

⁴⁹ As Gabrielsen has observed (2001, 176), expensive honours voted and buildings constructed by Rhodian associations may indicate possession of considerable funds on their part. On the other hand, a part of the funds needed for the building project of Nikomedeian *naukleroi* may have derived from individual contributions offered by the members. The *τελωνεῖον* constructed by the association(s) of fishermen and fish-sellers in Ephesos, also dedicated to the Roman emperor (Nero) and other members of the imperial family, was financed in this way. See IEphesos 20. Cf. Harland 1996, 326. On subscriptions organized by private associations see Migeotte 2013.

⁵⁰ See Fernoux 2004, 261–263. The trade in the famous Dokimeian marble and the wood from the Mysian and Phrygian forests was channeled through Nikomedeia. Cf. also Madsen 2009, 20 based on Plin. ep. 10,41–42.

⁵¹ On the, admittedly sporadic, involvement of Roman authorities in the normal operation of local markets, especially in times of crisis, see Erdkamp 2005, 265–268 with evidence and bibliography. Dion Chrys. 38,32–37 demonstrates that the normal functioning of the inter-city commerce in Bithynia could be a matter of concern for the proconsul.

⁵² Plin. ep. 10,93–94. Cf. above note 4.

⁵³ The use of the plural in Plin. ep. 10,93 (In hac datum mihi libellum ad ἐράνοῦς pertinentem his litteris subieci) demonstrates that probably the issue concerned the establishment of more than one association. In his reply (10,94) Trajan mentions Amisos’ *eranum habere*, but the singular here rather refers to a general right rather than to a single association. Cotter 1996, 82 also speaks of *eranoi*, not commenting further on this point.

that the associations concerned communicated directly with the governor.⁵⁴ But since Pliny's vocabulary is rather ambiguous, the matter should not be pressed further. What remains certain is the concern displayed by the state authorities for the private associations.⁵⁵

4. The evidence from Prusa ad Olympon

A particular aspect of the associational phenomenon in the Greek cities is the formation of groups around a specific individual whose name was in various ways incorporated in the name of the collective itself. The usual formula adopted for this purpose is οἱ περὶ or οἱ σὺν + the name of the individual or even an epithet deriving from a personal name + the suffix -εἰος. Such groups are frequently attested in Rhodes and Kos, almost always with a further specification of their character provided by the use of the terms *thiasos* or *thiasitai*, or even by an epithet derived from a deity such as *Aphrodeisiastai*, *Anoubiastai*, etc.⁵⁶ Elsewhere in the Greek world groups such as οἱ ἐν Πειρα[ιε]ῖ πραγματευταὶ οἱ περὶ Βα(λέριον) Ἀγαθόποδα in Athens,⁵⁷ οἱ περὶ τὸν Αἴλιον Τείμωνα μύσται Ἑρμοῦ in Termessos⁵⁸ and ἡ συναγωγή ῥωποπωλῶν τῶν περὶ Σωκράτην Μενίσκου in Perinthos⁵⁹ are defined both in terms of a common religious or professional function and the name of an individual. A 1st-century AD inscription found in Bursa⁶⁰ gives us a variation:

οἱ τοῦ πρεσβυτέρου Ὡφελίω-
 νος ἑταῖροι καὶ συνήθεις φί-
 λοι ἐτείμησαν Σακέρδοτα
 4 Μενάνδρου τὸν ἀρχιερέα
 καὶ γυμνασίαρχον τὸν ἑαυ[τ]-
 ῶν διὰ βίου εὐεργέτην ὑποσ-
 χομένου τὸν τελαμῶνα δω-
 8 [ρ]εἶαν ἀναστήσαι ὑπὲρ τοῦ κοινοῦ Θεμιστο-
 κλῆς Λυσικλέους ὁ καὶ Φοῖβος.

In fact, the term *syntheis* or the equivalent *syntheia* are quite frequent in associations formed around an individual in Macedonia,⁶¹ but the combined use of the terms *syntheis philoi* is considerably more rare, attested, as far as I know, in an inscription from Ankyra Sidera in Mysia, dated to 57/8 AD:⁶² the text of this inscription, however, is too laconic and it may simply refer to a band of friends wishing to honour one of their comrades. Another relevant parallel may be found in a funerary inscription from Amastris which mentions the deceased's ἑταῖροι and φίλοι.⁶³ The two words are separately engraved, each inside a crown, and this may suggest two different groups of people having awarded crowns to the

⁵⁴ Arnaoutoglou 2002, 38–39, seems to accept this alternative as he speaks of 'people' from Amisos, while Cotter 1996, 82 attributes the approach to the 'city'.

⁵⁵ This, of course, does not mean that Amisos was obliged to ask for permission to form the *eranoi* in question. It was rather a matter of acquiring a further approval that was highly esteemed because it emanated from the provincial governor. On this point see Arnaoutoglou 2002, 38–39, following Oliver 1954.

⁵⁶ See on this topic Pugliese Carratelli 1939/40, 147–200; Gabrielsen 2001, 168–170; Maillot 2013, 204–207.

⁵⁷ IG II² 3607.

⁵⁸ TAM III 910–911.

⁵⁹ IPerinthos 59.

⁶⁰ IPrusa 24.

⁶¹ See, for example, IG X 2 1, 219, 679, 933 and Nigdelis 2006, 147–151 no. 4; 178–193 no. 9; 191–196 no. 12; 206–211 no. 15 (Thessaloniki); EKM I 371 (Beroia).

⁶² MAMA 10 458, dated to 57/58 AD. Cf. Arnaoutoglou 2002, 31–32.

⁶³ Marek 1985, 140–141 no. 21; cf. IAmastris 57 pp. 172–173.

deceased which were recorded together on his funerary monument. In any case, the inscription from Amastris also does not permit us to conclude whether the terms *hetairoi* and *philoï* corresponded to pre-established groups or to unions formed solely for the purpose of honouring the deceased. On the other hand, in our inscription the use of the term *koinon* to describe the group on behalf of which Themistokles, son of Lysikles, promised to erect the stele indicates that this was not a body formed ad hoc but a single permanent association with a considerable sense of common identity.⁶⁴ This identity was based on the members' relation to the *presbyteros* Ophelion: the very name of the group, which appears in a document emanating from the group itself and consequently gives us a sense of self-definition, focuses exclusively on the person of Ophelion, not mentioning any other common activity, quality or function, as opposed to the aforementioned groups attested in Athens, Termessos, Kos and Rhodes.

The bipartite structure of the association's name implies a division corresponding to two different kinds of bonds uniting the members with Ophelion: the group brought together his companions (*hetairoi*) and his close friends (*syntheis philoi*).⁶⁵ Companions in what? Th. Corsten, basing his arguments on the fact that Ophelion is defined as a *presbyteros*, a term frequently used to describe members of the Gerousiai centered around the gymnasia all over Asia Minor,⁶⁶ has remarked that the *hetairoi* of our inscription were probably Ophelion's sport-comrades of the same age.⁶⁷ This is a sound hypothesis, indirectly supported by other evidence as well, as we shall soon see, which, however, demands more elaboration. To begin with, the term *hetairoi* did not necessarily apply to purely political clubs but could be used for other kinds of associations as well.⁶⁸ Thus, there is nothing to prevent us from associating Ophelion's *hetairoi* with his capacity as *presbyteros*, and the fact that this is the only title borne by him in the inscription, and consequently his main status-symbol, adds further weight to Corsten's suggestion. In this respect it would be perhaps more accurate to define Ophelion's *hetairoi* not simply as sport-comrades but as co-participants in the Gerousia. As far as the *syntheis philoi* are concerned, these might have been Ophelion's other close friends, perhaps lying outside the framework of the gymnasium.

What thus emerges is a picture of a well-established association formed around and by a public figure who participated in the respectable semi-public body of the Gerousia⁶⁹ and could profit from and capi-

⁶⁴ On the connotations of the use of the term *koinon* as a generic description for associations see Gabrielsen 2007, 187.

⁶⁵ Cf. Arnaoutoglou 2002, 34.

⁶⁶ See on this topic Zimmermann 2007, Giannakopoulos 2008, 13–27 and Fröhlich 2013, with further bibliography. According to Zimmermann, at least in some cities the Gerousia was a more restricted group that evolved from the *presbyteroi*.

⁶⁷ Th. Corsten in IPrusa 24 p. 46.

⁶⁸ Poland 1909, 54; Robert 1983, 45–63. The term *hetairoi* was associated by Corsten with the *hetaeriai* whose function Trajan prohibited. Corsten understood such *hetaeriai* as 'dangerous' – at least from the imperial perspective – political clubs, and it is exactly in this sense that Trajan used this term when he refused to authorize the establishment of a *collegium fabrum* in Nikomedeia (Plin. ep. 10,34). However, the same term is used by Pliny in a rather different context: requesting instruction for the proper treatment of Christians, he highlighted the stopping of their common activities as a result of an edict prohibiting the operation of *hetaeriai* (Plin. ep. 10,96,7; cf. above note 4). Applying to the Christians as well, in this context *hetaeria* is not necessarily a purely political club but a generic term denoting all kinds of groups which could potentially evolve into disturbing political forces. On a similar generic use of the term *hetaeria* see Dion Chrys. 47,22,4; Cf. Liu 2008, 59.

⁶⁹ The high status of the Gerousia in the Greek cities of the Imperial Period is a common theme in all three monographs on this institution (Oliver 1941; van Rossum 1988; Giannakopoulos 2008; especially on the Bithynian evidence see also Fernoux 2004, 303–308). Bekker-Nielsen 2008, 79, basically ascribes to this view but also notes that being a member of the Gerousia or assuming an office in its internal hierarchy were not as prestigious distinctions as holding purely civic posts. But the problem may be approached in a different way. While elsewhere in Asia Minor the Gerousia is frequently attested as a partner of the Council and the People in the attribution of honours, this constitutional inter-

talize on his status so as to bring together a group of followers and supporters which cut across but also went beyond the circle of the gymnasium. It is precisely this manifest predominance of Ophelion within the association that makes even more interesting the fact that the group named after him publicly declared its dependence on and its permanent affinity and gratitude to another person, the high priest and *gymnasiarchos* Sakerdos. The title διὰ βίου εὐεργέτης highlighted both the enduring bonds uniting the two parties and Sakerdos' role as perpetual benefactor. Clearly, Sakerdos' supervision of the gymnasium and of the imperial cult constituted public distinctions that placed him at a level considerably superior to that enjoyed by the *presbyteros* Ophelion.⁷⁰ However, a feature common to both of them can be found in the institution of the *gymnasium* which may have provided the framework for the establishment of contacts between the two parties. We cannot of course know precisely what benefactions were rendered to the association by Sakerdos, but it is important to note that the relief of the stele erected in his honour represented him as a priest offering sacrifices. Though it is possible that this was mainly the result of the honouring party's intention to exalt the honorand's more impressive public office, it is by no means unlikely that the choice of iconographical theme also reflected at least some of Sakerdos' services to the body: invitations to sacrifices, meals and/or distributions performed by him as part of his official duties, or in a private context. But this is no more than a working hypothesis. Irrespective of the exact content of Sakerdos' services, the championship of a group centered on Ophelion and consisting of Ophelion's companions and friends undoubtedly meant promoting, securing and protecting Ophelion's interests as well. Seen in this light, Sakerdos' honorary inscription enables us to grasp the sense of hierarchy governing the relation between three unequal but strongly interconnected parties: a private association of Prusaeans comprising a fraction of the local body of *presbyteroi* was officially organised and headed by a respectable *presbyteros* but was also placed under the auspices of a statesman occupying the top echelons of the local/regional hierarchy. What thus defined the association's position in Prusa was not only its leader's status but also the influence exercised by its much more prominent benevolent champion.⁷¹

In the same city another example of an association formed around an individual may be found in a dedication engraved on a marble pedimental stele:

A.

οἱ μύσται
Ἑρμί.

B.

Λουκίῳ Ἰουλίῳ Φρούγει εὐχαριστο[ῦσ]ιν
οἱ μύσται ὑπὲρ Ποτάμωνος Σωστράτου τῆς εἰς ἑαυτὸν εὐεργεσίας.
Σαράπιδι καὶ Εἴσιδι εὐχαριστήριον
οἱ περὶ Λεωνίδην Ἑρμησιλάου ἱερέα
μύσται καὶ δεκατισταί.

action is entirely absent from Bithynia. This indicates that the cooperation between the Gerousia and the traditional civic institutions was not as developed in Bithynia as in other parts of Asia Minor. Cf. below note 83.

⁷⁰ *Gymnasiarchia* is rarely attested in Bithynian cities, as both Fernoux (2004, 340) and Bekker-Nielsen (2008, 80) have noted. However, the latter's view that this office was not very prestigious and that the Bithynian *gymnasiarchoi* did not hold other important posts is not confirmed by Sakerdos' *cursus honorum* which also included the high priesthood of the imperial cult, although he was one of the rare *archiereis* not to possess the *civitas Romana* (see Fernoux 2004, 355 and Bekker-Nielsen 2008, 104 with note 37). T. Flavius, honoured by the *chalkeis*, was another important Bithynian statesman who officiated as *gymnasiarchos* as well.

⁷¹ For an interesting parallel outside Bithynia see IGBulg I² 20 from Dionysopolis in Thrace. The priest of Dionysos Apollonios dedicated a statue of Pan to Dionysos on behalf of the *backheastai* around Eraton, son of Demophilos.

Ἄγίας Ἑρμησιλάου
 Διόδωρος Ἑρμησιλάου
 Τι. Φλάβιος Περσεύς
 Μειδίας Ἀλεξάνδρου
 Διογένης Ἀπολλωνίου
 Ποτάμων Δημοσθένου.
 Ποτάμων Σωστράτου ἐχαριστῶ Λ(ουκίῳ) Ἰουλίῳ Φρούγει εὐεργέτη καὶ
 τροφεῖ
 vacat -----] Διογένου τοῦ Ἀγε[- -----
 vacat -----]72

The first part of the inscription is a dedication to Hermes by the *mystai*. The second part contains a dedication to Lucius Iulius Frugi by the *mystai*, offered as a thanksgiving for his benefactions towards Potamon son of Sostratos. Then, follows a dedication to Sarapis and Isis by the *mystai kai dekatistai* around the priest Leonides, also offered as a thanksgiving. After a list of six names, the inscription closes with a thanksgiving offered by Potamon son of Sostratos to Lucius Iulius Frugi.

The latter has been generally considered to have been related to the well-known family of Iulii Frugi: Ti. Iulius Frugi was governor of Bithynia around 130 AD and his homonymous son *quaestor* and governor of the same province around 145 and 150–155 AD respectively.⁷³ This was a senatorial family which apparently had considerable links with Bithynia⁷⁴ and it is within this framework that relations between the *mystai* and L. Iulius Frugi may have been cultivated.

These relations seem to have primarily involved Potamon son of Sostratos. The titles benefactor and *tropheus*, which Potamon himself used to define his position vis-à-vis L. Iulius Frugi, demonstrate that the latter had been responsible for the upbringing and the education of the former. Why this was considered very important by the *mystai* as well is not entirely clear. Since Potamon son of Sostratos was not included in the list of persons recorded immediately below the *mystai kai dekatistai* formed around the priest Leonides, he obviously did not belong to this particular group. He may have been simply a *mystes*, if course the term *mystai* in our inscription denoted a group different from, but somehow related to, the *mystai kai dekatistai*, the latter perhaps being a subdivision high in the internal hierarchy. On the other hand, the term *mystai* may simply have been an abbreviated form of a single association's full name (*hoi peri Leoniden Hermisilaou hiera mystai kai dekatistai*), as Vidman has suggested.⁷⁵ In

⁷² IPrusa 48. The two parts (A and B) were initially published separately by Mendel (1900, 367) and subsequently brought together by Laurent (1932, 427–429). The brief text of part A was inscribed between the busts of Isis and Sarapis depicted on the upper part of the stele. Part B was inscribed on the lower part of the stele, under the two busts. A coroneted head at the top of the stele was interpreted by Dunant (1973, 106 note 2) as representing Hermes or Helios. The Egyptian origin of Sarapis and Isis makes it possible that Hermes was also worshiped in the Greco-Egyptian form of Hermanubis (see on this point Vidman 1970, 127; Dunant 1973, 106; Corsten in IPrusa 48 p. 71).

⁷³ On this identification see Mendel 1900, 367; Robert 1950, 60 note 1 with further bibliography; Vidman 1969 no. 326; Vidman 1970, 127; Corsten in IPrusa 48 p. 71 with further bibliography; Fernoux 2004, 452–453; Bricault 2005, 471.

⁷⁴ See Fernoux 2004, 453, who dismisses the possibility of L. Iulius Frugi being a freedman, arguing that the association would not have honoured a man of that status.

⁷⁵ Vidman 1970, 127. Corsten (IPrusa 48 p. 72) has put forward the hypothesis that a single association was divided into several sub-groups, each of which was headed by its own priest. He has also suggested that the term *dekatistai* may not have referred to all the persons included in the list of names in B ll. 6–11, but only to a small proportion of them. Fernoux (2004, 517) sees in the terms *mystai* and *dekatistai* different hierarchical levels within the same association.

fact, Vidman's hypothesis is further supported by the fact that, as L. Robert has first noted,⁷⁶ the phrase ὑπὲρ Ποτάμωνος Σωστράτου τῆς εἰς ἑαυτὸν εὐεργεσίας in B l.2 was written in denser letters and added later in a *rasura*, after the words οἱ μύσται. As Corsten remarked, the full name of the group may have originally been written at this point.⁷⁷ In this case we have to assume that Potamon son of Sostratos, although not a member of the single association self-defined as *mystai* in the first two dedications and as *hoi peri Leoniden Hermisilaou hiera mystai kai dekatistai* in the third one, was nonetheless somehow related to this group and consequently in a position to intervene in and influence the content of the dedication (perhaps via the mediation of L. Iulius Frugi himself), recording his own private thanksgiving (B l. 12) after those offered by the collective.⁷⁸ In this respect, it is worth pointing out that, as L. Robert has also noted, this private expression of gratitude was also written in denser letters and added later. We may thus conclude that, although these modifications in a document issued by one or two associations created the impression that L. Iulius Frugi was receiving an expression of gratitude only for the services rendered to a specific individual, this was surely not the initial intention of the group(s) which made the dedications. Therefore, a direct relation between our *mystai* and L. Iulius Frugi (perhaps in the form of unknown services provided by the latter to the former) seems highly probable.⁷⁹ In any case, what is important for our topic is that establishing and maintaining contacts with L. Iulius Frugi potentially gave the *mystai* of a provincial city indirect access to the resources and patronage of a family belonging to the higher strata of the imperial aristocracy.

In fact, these dedications place us on a familiar ground. We have another example of a Prusaean association which recognized in its very name the leadership of a specific individual and at the same time expressed its gratitude to an influential person standing outside the members of the group, acting in this respect together with an individual (Potamon son of Sostratos) to whom the members of the association were somehow connected. This triangular relation at the very least gives us a brief glimpse of the dynamic developed by the relations fostered between a small private religious association and the outside world.

5. Implications and Consequences of Interaction

The visible signs of interaction between associations and external parties in Bithynia fall into two categories:

- a) Honours voted by associations for their benefactors.
- b) Cooperation in the construction of monuments honouring, or dedicated to, the Roman emperor.

Whereas the term *mystai* obviously denotes the mysteries performed by the association, the term *dekatistai* has been variously interpreted. Mendel (1900, 367–368) thought that it referred to functionaries of the association, charged with receiving the *dime*, i.e. the sums of money demanded from the members for the expenses of the cult ceremonies and the overall financing of the association. This interpretation has been rejected by Vidman (1969, 167 no. 326 and 1970, 127), Corsten (in IPrusa 48 p. 72) and Bricault (2005, 471), who see in the same term an allusion to collective events organized on the tenth day of each month. Dunant (1973, 106–107) puts forward a somewhat intermediate hypothesis, claiming that the term *dekatistai* denoted both the members' participation in events organized each month and their obligation to provide a *dime* (perhaps of their income, but this seems too high) for the financial needs of the group. The relatively small number of *mystai kai dekatistai* mentioned by name in B ll. 6–11 has been interpreted either as a result of high property qualifications and/or financial obligations for initiates or as an indication that Isis' devotees in Prusa were few in number (see Vidman 1970, 127; Bricault 2005, 471).

⁷⁶ Robert 1950, 59; cf. Corsten in IPrusa 48 p. 70 and 72; Bricault 2005, 470.

⁷⁷ Corsten in IPrusa 48 p. 72.

⁷⁸ One could suppose that Potamon son of Sostratos may also have been considered as a benefactor of the association, perhaps to a lesser degree than, and through his relation to, L. Iulius Frugi.

⁷⁹ Cf. in this respect Fernoux 2004, 452.

The first type of interaction falls into a pattern well treated in recent scholarship on the associational phenomenon: the relations fostered between members of the elite and individual subgroups within the city in the form of services rewarded by honours.⁸⁰ Of course, it should be noted that the cooperation between associations and the People and the Council in the awarding of honours, that is attested elsewhere in Asia Minor, is entirely absent from the Bithynian epigraphic record. We have no evidence of Bithynian associations functioning as executors of civic decisions by undertaking the task of setting up statues voted as honours by the civic bodies.⁸¹ Of course, inscribing the award of honours in a public space presupposed the permission of the civic authorities, the Council and the Assembly, and thus the establishment of formal contacts between the latter and the honouring private clubs.⁸² But this does not alter the fact that the Bithynian associations were not primarily connected with the elite-dominated civic institutions as such but directly associated with specific influential statesmen who occupied the top civic posts.⁸³ Moreover, what needs to be emphasized here is not only the predominantly personal character of this relationship but also its complexity. Even associations officially acknowledging in their own name the excellence of a specific individual were nonetheless subject to patronage and support provided by another external figure. The case of Ophelion's companions and friends who were placed under the *gymnasiarchos* and high priest Sakerdos' tutelage and that of the *mystai kai dekatistai* headed by the priest Leonides who publicly declared their gratitude to L. Iulius Frugi and furthermore also allowed a third party to do so reveal how networks of people united under a charismatic leadership were themselves integrated into wider networks guided by persons of a status higher than that of their own leaders.

As was common all over the Greek East, the honorific inscriptions set up by the Bithynian associations did not generally mention any specific benefactions addressed to the honouring parties, but tended to focus on the honorands' overall civic services, distinctions and generosity. This has been rightly interpreted as a strategy enabling the associations to claim a special position in the civic sphere by presenting themselves as bodies with great interest in the well-being of the entire *polis*.⁸⁴ But we could go further than this. As has already been briefly noted, vagueness, as far as the services rendered to the honouring associations was concerned, was not equated with complete silence over these services. On the contrary, the title ὁ ἑαυτῶν εὐεργέτης and similar terms, far from diminishing the civic dimension of the honorand's services (these were copiously mentioned) served the purpose of emphasizing their associational aspect as well. In this respect the honorific inscription constituted both an appropriate public expression of gratitude and a public statement about the honouring association's importance. The latter could in this way advertise itself not only as a sub-group of the city which cared for the whole community but also as an organized body fully equipped to reach collective decisions and one which, because of its involvement in the community, was significant enough to secure its own distinct profit from a prominent statesman's public deeds. If high priests such as T. Flavius and Sakerdos took an active interest in specific associations, this could only mean that it was worth supporting these associations. In this respect, being presented as the favourite of important political figures was as important as the specific gains drawn from their benevolence.

⁸⁰ See the bibliography cited above in note 3.

⁸¹ On this aspect of the associations' public presence see van Nijf 1997, 125–126 and 2003, 316–317. Two other phenomena treated as signs of integration into the civic institutions, the participation of associations in public ceremonies such as banquets, processions and distributions and the special seats reserved for associations in theatres, are also unattested in Bithynia.

⁸² Cf. on this point van Nijf 1997, 121–125 and Gabrielsen 2007, 196. For an example of such a procedure form Thessalonike see Nigdelis 2010, 34–35 based on IG X 2 1, 192.

⁸³ The same conclusion may also be reached with respect to the relations between the Gerosia and the traditional civic bodies in Bithynia. Cf. above note 69.

⁸⁴ van Nijf 1997, 111–121 and 2003, 314–316.

A similar strategy of self-advertisement may be traced in the role played by Bithynian associations in the construction of imperial monuments. Given the overall importance of the imperial cult and ideology in the civic life of the Greek cities in the Imperial Period,⁸⁵ the associations' collaboration with the provincial functionaries of that cult (the *bithyniarches* Moschos) or the provincial representatives of that power (the Roman proconsuls), gave them an opportunity to participate in a common political discourse, shared by all Roman subjects, which placed their own micro-communities in an empire-wide context.⁸⁶ In this respect, it is worth pointing out that our two Bithynian examples concern associations of a manifestly different range of action.

So far we have examined the implications of the interaction between private clubs and prominent statesmen from the association's point of view. But it is equally important to examine our topic from another perspective as well. Why did these prominent statesmen choose to champion or collaborate with these associations? If acts of civic euergetism and the corresponding honours offered substantial benefits to benefactors seeking to express their superiority, construct their identity as a ruling group distanced from the common people and enhance their social and political capital,⁸⁷ why would someone decide to spend time and resources on a particular subgroup within a city and not exclusively on the whole city?

Economic factors may be suspected. In general, euergetism could sometimes be a highly costly business. This is a common theme in recent scholarship on the subject. It will perhaps suffice to note Zuiderhoek's conclusion that only a small proportion of elite families could bear the cost of major benefactions.⁸⁸ Moreover, the competitive ethos characterizing elites always in demand of honours and the popular expectations regarding the proper attitude of the wealthy towards the city combined to exert considerable pressure on the political class of the Greek cities to offer benefactions.⁸⁹ Plutarch's remark that a politician had to assemble vast amounts of money so as to satisfy his ambitions by offering gifts, organizing banquets and paying for gladiatorial shows, perfectly reflects this reality.⁹⁰ In another illuminating passage from the *Political Precepts*, which has not been fully exploited with respect to the financial implications of euergetism, Plutarch felt it necessary to state that there was no shame in a politician admitting his inability to compete against those richer than him in benefactions. On the contrary, it was borrowing money for these purposes that made him look miserable and contemptible.⁹¹ In this respect, considerations of the lower cost of benefactions addressed to specific groups within the city rather than to the entire city may partly explain the interest shown in the championship of associations which could be considered as potential alternative suppliers of honours.⁹²

The problem with this interpretation is that of our few known champions of this kind from Bithynia and Pontus the majority of them (T. Flavius, M. Antonius Rufus, Moschos and Sakerdos) had an im-

⁸⁵ As has been rightly noted, it is hard to find any aspect of the political and social life of the Greek cities which was not affected by the imperial cult and the imperial ideology. Public buildings, benefactions, sacrifices, meals, festivals and games were commonly integrated into this framework. In this respect, besides being an expression of political loyalty, the imperial cult provided an impetus for renovating the conditions of civic life. See on this point Mitchell 1993, 116–117.

⁸⁶ On the multiple ways various religious and professional associations consciously incorporated the imperial cult in their own activities see Harland 1996 and 2003.

⁸⁷ Cf. Sartre 1991, 162–166; van Nijf 1997, 117–119.

⁸⁸ Zuiderhoek 2009, 23–35 with further bibliography.

⁸⁹ Cf. Veyne 1976, 230

⁹⁰ Plut. mor. 525D.

⁹¹ Plut. mor. 822D. In his *de vitando aere alieno* Plutarch lists among the reasons for borrowing the desire to organize lavish and extravagant public ceremonies, as liturgists engaged in fruitless rivalries (mor. 830E).

⁹² On the concept of associations providing for the elite's demand for honour see Gabrielsen 2001, 171. On the overall political significance of honour in the Roman Empire see Lendon 1997, 31–57.

pressive *cursus honorum* which rather placed them in the top strata of the local and regional elites. Hence, other factors should also be taken into account. Previous relationships cultivated in a common environment may also have had some relevance. In this respect the case of Sakerdos is worth examining closer. As noted above, the fact that the gymnasium constituted a common point of reference for this *gymnasiarchos* and the group united around the *presbyteros* Ophelion, may explain the interest taken by the former in the latter. Moral obligations, deriving from the supervision of the city's gymnasium, to take care of the different subgroups related to this institution should not be underestimated and the fact that there is a significant number of civic *gymnasiarchoi* in Asia Minor who also undertook the *gymnasiarchia* of the Gerousia may provide an indirect parallel.⁹³ The desire to express the highly esteemed public virtue of piety towards specific gods has also been proposed as a motive behind services rendered to religious associations devoted to their cult, such as the ones provided by L. Iulius Frugi to the *mystai kai dekatistai* of Isis and Sarapis.⁹⁴ The possible involvement of Bithynian notables in industry, evident in Dio's construction of a portico with workshops, either directly exploited by him or rented to others,⁹⁵ may possibly explain T. Flavius' interest in the Nikaean *chalkeis*. Finally, Moschos or one of his relatives may have had a residence in the quarter of the *syngeitones*. But all this may seem rather hypothetical and, more importantly, it does not take into account the deeply political dimension which characterized the public presence of the Bithynian associations' benefactors. These were men devoted above all to politics and, as has been repeatedly stated in recent studies on ancient associations, it was the votes, the electoral support and the political allegiance of the members of the associations that their patrons and champions valued the most.⁹⁶ Hence, the important question to ask is how local politicians could draw political benefits from their connections with individual associations.

The persistently democratic nature of Greek civic politics may provide a clue. The prevailing orthodoxy of an elite-dominated polis which reduced the power of the People to a mere formality in favour of an 'aristocratic' Council has been seriously challenged by recent studies which, though not questioning the movement towards oligarchization, offer nonetheless a more balanced picture by highlighting both formal and informal ways in which the ordinary citizens not belonging to the bouletic class could exercise a considerable degree of political influence.⁹⁷ The available epigraphic record indicates that even in the imperial period the Assembly of the People did – at least sporadically – act independently from the Council and reached decisions not dictated or initiated by it.⁹⁸ On the other hand, we should also take into account that leading politicians were always able to appeal directly to the popular assembly, bypassing the council and the civic magistrates. This is a point worth examining further as it may contribute to a better understanding of the political consequences of the interaction between statesmen and particular associations. In a highly interesting passage Dio speaks of ἀπροβούλευτα ψηφίσματα introduced to the Assembly by irresponsible demagogues, contrasting this con-

⁹³ See on this topic Giannakopoulos 2008, 57–73.

⁹⁴ See Fernoux 2004, 517.

⁹⁵ Fernoux 2004, 285. On the involvement of notables in business see also van Nijf 2003, 311–312.

⁹⁶ As for the benefits drawn by benefactors from their contacts with associations see van Nijf 1997, 118–120 and 127–128. With respect to Bithynia see Fernoux 2004, 308–310 who places the bonds developed between civic subcategories (tribes and associations) and individual notables within the context of 'une politique clientéliste'. On members of Rhodian associations functioning as political followers of prominent patrons see Gabrielsen 2001, 168–170. Cf. also Maillot 2013, 206–207 and 220–221. The most famous example is the political and electoral support provided by occupational and religious groups in Pompeii (see MacMullen 1966, 167–168 and 173; on this much debated subject see Liu 2008 with further bibliography).

⁹⁷ See in this respect, Ma 2000, 112–122; Salmeri 2000, 69–73; Zuiderhoek 2008, 419–425 and 433–435; Vujčić 2009; Heller 2009, 346–348 (citing further bibliography) and 368–372; Fernoux 2011, 118–147 and 191–204.

⁹⁸ See the material assembled by Fernoux 2011, 191–204.

demnable practice with the attitude of the noble king who always takes into account his wise advisers.⁹⁹ While C. P. Jones thought that what Dio had in mind was probably an illegal procedure,¹⁰⁰ it is better to side with La Rocca and Fernoux, who point out that Dio's criticism had nothing to do with the breaking of a law but with the non-compliance with what he considered as the best way to reach a decision: seeking counsel.¹⁰¹ But Dio's criticism reveals both the frequency of the phenomenon (note the phrase *οἱ δὲ πολλοὶ τῶν δημαγωγῶν*) and the initiating role played by ambitious politicians. There is, however, another relevant passage which, though not coming from a Bithynian writer, should also be brought into this discussion. In his *Political Precepts* Plutarch noted that if a politician has something useful to propose but finds the magistrates unwilling to cooperate, then he should appeal directly to the people.¹⁰² Although Plutarch admits that this course of action may be viewed as a sort of novelty attracting criticism, it is justified by the rightness of the purpose it serves.¹⁰³ Plutarch was no radical democrat and there is no hint whatsoever that the procedure he recommended could be regarded as illegal. In fact, the suggested course of action strikingly recalls Dio's *ἀπροβούλευτα ψηφίσματα*, and even the possible criticism Plutarch alluded to is confirmed by Dio's remarks. Taken together, Plutarch's and Dio's comments present two opposite ways of assessing a political practice which was constitutionally allowed and thus potentially available to every local politician: a direct appeal to the Assembly of the People was always an option worth considering in order to overcome obstacles posed by political rivals and influence political decision-making. The highly factionalist nature of civic politics, which as far as the Bithynian cities are concerned is reflected both in Dio's municipal speeches and in Pliny's correspondence with Trajan,¹⁰⁴ could have made this option even more attractive. In fact, Dio himself made use of similar tactics by addressing the assembly so as to denounce his political opponents.¹⁰⁵ This was of course an assembly dominated by city-dwellers, to a large but indeterminable extent united in various groups of associational type which displayed a strong sense of identity and coherence and therefore provided key focus-points within which political capital could be constructed, accumulated and expanded.¹⁰⁶ In this respect one cannot escape noticing that our few examples of Bithynian and Pontic politicians interacting with associations include individuals occupying various ranks in the internal hierarchy of the political class: top figures whose range of action expanded even out of the city at a provincial and even extra-provincial level, such as the *gymnasiarchos* T. Flavius, the *bithyniarches* Moschos and the *pontarches* M. Antonius Rufus, but also less prestigious statesmen who, despite being affiliated to the imperial cult, did not yet enjoyed Roman citizenship, such as Sakerdos. It seems that every sort politician appreciated what the associations had to offer.

In this respect the arguments used against Dio's building project in Prusa may be of some relevance. The rhetor himself points out that the opposition to his plan included protests against the demolition of coppersmiths' workshops.¹⁰⁷ As has already been stated, his opponents were leading civic officials.¹⁰⁸ Of course, there is no concrete evidence linking these political rivals with the Prusaean coppersmiths,

⁹⁹ Dion Chrys. 56,9–10.

¹⁰⁰ Jones 1978, 201.

¹⁰¹ Cf. La Rocca 2005, 108–109; Fernoux 2011, 200–201.

¹⁰² Plut. mor. 817D.

¹⁰³ Plut. mor. 817E–F.

¹⁰⁴ See the account given by Bekker-Nielsen 2008, 125–136 with regard to the opposition against Dio. The main sources are Dion Chrys. 40, 43, 45, 47 and 50. Cf. also Jones 1978, 100–103 and Salmeri 2000, 67–73.

¹⁰⁵ See on this topic Salmeri 2000, 72 and Fernoux 2004, 300–301, based on Dion Chrys. 45.

¹⁰⁶ Although Zuiderhoek (2008, 439) is right in stressing the predominance of city-dwellers in the assemblies, his view that the latter 'consisted for the most part of craftsmen and traders' cannot be tested empirically.

¹⁰⁷ Dion Chrys. 40,7–11 and 47,11.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Dion Chrys. 45,16 and Plin. ep. 10,81. See also the bibliography cited above, notes 104–105.

nor any hint of the latter being organized in an association. However, this episode allows us to form an idea of how issues potentially affecting the interests of people likely to join private associations could enter the field of current political debates. As Nigdelis has noted, getting permission to publicly honour a benefactor involved the political mobilisation of the honouring associations on behalf of their champions during the meetings of the Assembly;¹⁰⁹ this kind of mobilization could surely serve other purposes too, so as to promote the interests both of the associations themselves and their favourite politicians.

6. Concluding Remarks

Through their interaction with local politicians and Roman governors the associations of Bithynia and Pontus performed a variety of functions. The public praise of persons considered to have devoted themselves to the service of the community elevated the status of the praising bodies as institutions recognizing the significance of honours as a prerequisite for the proper continuation of one of the cornerstones of civic life, i.e. euergetism. Moreover, the same honorific inscriptions, by presenting these great benefactors as persons also devoted to the honouring bodies in particular, allowed associations to appropriate the whole public presence of the honorands and to draw prestige from their affiliation to them. In this respect the awarding of honours enabled the associations not only to ensure further generousities but also to accumulate social and political capital. The collaboration of associations with local functionaries and provincial governors in schemes variously pertaining to the omnipresent institution of the imperial cult contributed to the same result.

All such public acts on the part of particular groups and associations have been legitimately seen as public declarations of respect for and adherence to the established political order.¹¹⁰ This is of course true but not the whole truth. We should not leave out of the picture the fact that at least the Bithynian and Pontic associations entered the civic world principally through a personalized interaction with specific members of the elite, not with the city institutions controlled by the elite. In a structurally unstable and factionalist political environment the associations' affiliation to prominent statesmen could also entail significant dangers for the cohesion of the community. In this respect the relations fostered between the two parties could function both as factors contributing to the internalization and reproduction of prevailing norms and as vehicles of mobilization in time of conflict, as Trajan seems to have feared.¹¹¹ This inherent contradiction marked the presence of associations in the civic sphere.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Nigdelis 2010, 34–35.

¹¹⁰ It suffices to cite van Nijf 1997, 128 and Arnaoutoglou 2002, 29 and 42–44 with further bibliography.

¹¹¹ An illustration of what Trajan might have had in mind is provided by the intense political activity of some Roman *collegia* in the middle of the 1st century B.C. (see de Ligt 2000, 243). But it should be pointed out (*contra* de Ligt 2000, 252) that it was not only the *collegia* with members among the elite which could be involved in political conflicts. By becoming affiliated to prominent statesmen, the associations of the less privileged – or their individual members – could also pursue a similar course of action. In fact, Trajan himself made no such distinction in Plin. ep. 10,34 (cf. above note 68).

¹¹² Of course, this contradiction was only one among many aspects of the associational phenomenon. As noted above (note 3), recent studies on the *collegia* of the Roman West have criticized what may be called as 'the integration model' and re-emphasized that associations provided alternative political space enabling city-dwellers who did not belong to the political class to claim a special social status which was rather unattainable within the framework of the established civic order (see Liu 2009, 6–7 citing further bibliography). The extent to which these remarks apply to the evidence from Bithynia and Pontus is a problem that cannot be treated here. However, it should be stressed that the reproduction of the prevailing civic values expressed through honorary inscriptions which emphasized the civic virtues and services of the honorands, the personalized affiliation to prominent statesmen with its potentially factionalist consequences and the affirmation of social status could be seen as factors working together to give groups and associations a multi-dimensional character. Furthermore, although Bendlin (2002), followed by Liu (2009, 6–7), may be correct in observing that imitating and drawing on prevailing models of action did not necessarily lead to the integration of

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associations into the civic sphere, their interaction with prominent statesmen contributed to this result, admittedly by recognizing a hierarchical distance between the two parties.

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Özet

Bithynia ve Pontos'ta Grup ve Dernekler'in Yerel Siyasetçi ve Eyalet Valileriyle İletişimleri

Bithynia ve Pontos kentlerinde birçok dini ve mesleki dernek belgelenmiştir. Bunların, kentlerinde önemli bir siyasi faktör oluşturdukları bilinmektedir. Bazı derneklerin kentlerde yerel yöneticiler ve vali gibi Romalı yöneticiler ile ilişki içine girdikleri ve bu kişileri onurlandırdıkları görülmektedir. Plinius'un mektuplaşmaları da Roma Dönemi Bithynia ve Pontos'undaki özel derneklerin, kentlerdeki yerel toplum içerisinde kayda değer ölçüde önemli güçler ve buna bağlı olarak da eyalet yöneticileri için bir itina ve ilgi meselesi olarak düşünüldüğüne işaret eder. Ancak bu resmi olmayan tüzel kişiler böyle bir öneme nasıl ulaşmışlardı? Bu onurlandırmaların arkasında yatan sebepleri irdeleyen yazar Bithynia-Pontos dernekleri ile yerel ve Romalı yöneticiler arasında söz konusu olan ilişkilere yoğunlaşmak suretiyle bu probleme eğilmeyi amaçlamıştır. Bir yandan kentteki söz sahibi kişilerin kazanılması derneklerin statüsünü yükseltmekte, onların çeşitli imtiyazlar elde etmesini kolaylaştırmakta ve derneklere resmen liderlik ve bir üstünlük kazandırmaktaydılar. Diğer yandan yerel siyasetçiler de bu derneklerin desteğiyle resmi onurlar elde etmekte ve hedefledikleri siyasi amaçlara daha kolay ulaşabilmekteydiler. *Bithyniarchai* ve eyalet valilerinin de Roma imparatoru için dikilen onurlandırma ya da adak anıtlarının inşasında söz konusu bu özel derneklerle işbirliği içerisine girdikleri görülmektedir. Eşraf tabakanın elinde tuttuğu kent kurumları vasıtasıyla değil de, eşraftan seçkin üyelerle gerçekleşen bu türden bir kişisel ilişki toplum yaşamının temel taşı olan *euergesia* sisteminin düzgün bir şekilde devamını sağlamakla birlikte, derneklere, önemli politik figürler haline gelerek kendi *micro*-toplumlarının imparatorluk içerisindeki yerini belirleyen siyasi hayata iştirak etme olanağını da sağlamıştır. Öte yandan, yapı itibarıyla değişken ve hizipçi politik çevre içerisinde, politikacıları doğrudan halka danışmaya teşvik eden ısrarcı demokratik karakter ve derneklerin önemli devlet adamlarına bağlanması anlaşmazlık zamanlarında bir nevi seferber olma aracı olarak da işlev görebilmekteydi.

Anahtar kelimeler: Bithynia; Pontos; dernekler; kent elitleri; *euergesia*; kişisel ilişki; patronluk.