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Clément Bady, Olga Boubounelle, Alexandre Vlamos, *Les cités grecques face à l'imperium Romanum: résilience, participation et adhésion des communautés grecques à la construction d'un empire (IIe siècle avant-Ier siècle de notre ère)*. Dialogues d'histoire ancienne, 26. Besançon: Presses Universitaires de Franche-Comté, 2023. Pp. 328. ISBN 9782848679648.

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In recent decades, the lens of postcolonial studies has significantly shifted our understanding of Roman power, moving away from the notion of unilateral Roman cultural impositions ('Romanisation') towards recognising the active contributions of non-Roman actors in shaping the Roman Empire and their different strategies of negotiation, adaptation, resistance and collaboration with the ruling power.[1] This novel approach is vividly showcased in this special issue of *Dialogues d'Histoire Ancienne*, which features a collection of essays that originated at a conference held at the Université Paris Nanterre in June 2019. The contributors, primarily doctoral students and early-career researchers, were joined by the late Jean-Louis Ferrary, who gave the inaugural address. Despite Ferrary's passing in August 2020, the text of his lecture is included as the opening essay of the volume, introducing crucial themes such as the freedom of the Greeks in its geopolitical context, the bilingualism of the Roman Empire, a hierarchy of 'Greekness' in the Greek world, and the resilience of local political institutions in the Greek-speaking part of the Empire (as opposed to the spread of *municipia* in the Latin West). In his view, the history of Roman expansion in the Greek East is more aptly described as a process of interaction and dialogue and interaction between Rome and the Greeks.

Already in his doctoral thesis, published as *Philhellénisme et impérialisme* (1988; 2014²) Ferrary elaborated a new perspective on the relationship between Rome and the Greek world in the 2nd century BCE. While maintaining a largely Roman viewpoint, this book was ground   breaking for its argument that Rome's policies, particularly the

'freedom of the Greeks' and the philhellenism of the Roman elite, provided some Greeks, albeit subject to Rome, with a moderate degree of bargaining power. This approach marked a profound departure from previous studies that had focused primarily on the role of Rome, instead suggesting that the Greeks possessed some degree of agency within this relationship.[2] Some years later, Susan Alcock contributed significantly to the debate with her archaeological study *Graecia Capta* (1993)*,* which also highlights the role played by local elites in shaping the developments that occurred in the region under Roman rule.

More recent scholarship has built on Ferrary's foundational work. Influenced by postcolonial theory, these studies have moved away from the notion that Greek agency was merely a consequence of Roman cultural politics directed towards the Greek East. Instead, they argue for an understanding of Greek subjects as active participants with their own role and agency, independent of Roman 'concessions' from above. [3] Expanding upon this framework, the editors of this special issue propose a 'middle-ground' approach, borrowed from ethnicity studies, which they reinterpret to characterise the political relations between Rome and Greek communities as shaped by mutual interactions (pp. 27–31).[4] As highlighted in the collection's subtitle, their focus is on the diversity of local strategies and responses to Roman authority.

The ten contributions in this volume cover a broad chronological span from the 2nd century BCE to the early 2nd century CE. They examine a variety of strategies employed by cities in their interactions with Rome (partie I: choix et stratégies des communautés grecques face au nouvel Empire) and the internal transformations that occurred following the establishment of Roman rule (partie II: recompositions sociales et trajectoires individuelles dans l'Empire en construction).

Weidgenannt challenges the notion that Roman influence over the Achaean League, ally of Rome against Perseus, was so intense that their silver coinage stopped after Pydna and only resumed in the 1st century BCE. In contrast, his analysis of hoard evidence suggests that this interruption was, in fact, much shorter. The impact of Pydna is also reconsidered in another contribution of the second part, focusing on its consequences for the social composition of Macedonian elites. Based on epigraphic and onomastic evidence, Boubounelle points to a higher level of continuity than previously assumed: the Roman intervention mainly affected a limited group of nobles linked to Perseus' court, leaving the wider Macedonian elite relatively unaffected into the 1st century BCE.

Epigraphic sources prove to be crucial for understanding the diverse strategies that local communities employed in their interactions with Rome and the Romans. Jordan focuses on the cities of Asia, showcasing their proactive role in shaping the formation of the Roman province between 133 and 44 BCE. The temporary power of Roman officeholders and the institutional framework of the Roman Republic disrupted the established honorific culture that had existed between the local cities and the Attalids. In response, the cities of Western Asia explored various honorific strategies in their

interactions with Rome, which included the practice of addressing Roman officeholders as their patrons, thereby modelling their interstate relations on a Roman personal bond. [5] The financial crisis following the Mithridatic wars left these communities in desperate need of diplomatic intermediaries between their cities and Rome. In this precise context, Chin's contribution provides an overview of the developments in local honorific practices, which involved a process of honorific elevation, introducing new, sometimes divine, attributes and encouraging competition and emulation between benefactors. Some decades later, the institution of the imperial cult (29 BCE) imposed a ceiling on the honours that local benefactors could receive, as they could not be honoured more than the emperor. A 'memorial turn' thus occurred, marking a transition from a culture of competitive emulation to one placing greater emphasis on the distinctiveness of a benefactor's career, highlighting its uniqueness and, implicitly, its inimitability.

Epigraphic evidence also offers valuable insights into the presence of Romans in Greek cities and their evolving relationships with these communities. Vlamos examines this dynamic from the perspective of Greek cities in the period from the early 2nd century BCE to the 1st century CE, largely focusing on banquets as a means of social integration for Romans. Particularly in the case of Cos, he notes the progressive blending of Romans into the social fabric of Aegean cities: by the 1st century CE, Romans were no longer a separate group of foreigners but were frequently mentioned alongside locals in dedications and other inscriptions, which suggests their integration. [6]

Exploring local decision-making becomes particularly compelling against the backdrop of the civil wars during the late Roman Republic, a time when provincial communities and individuals were compelled to take sides. Porte's contribution analyses the attitudes of the cities on the Greek mainland towards Caesar and Pompey, noting that both generals tried to fashion themselves as the legitimate representative of Roman *imperium*. In a similar context of civil strife but on a more individual level, Bady traces the post-Actium fates of three Alexandrian courtiers and intellectuals: Timagenes, Alexis of Laodicea, and Philostratus, who had previously supported Cleopatra and Antony. His paper underscores the selective nature of Octavian's *clementia* and the diversity of his reactions towards Antony's previous followers in the Hellenistic East.

Moving to the Principate, Nicolleau attempts to shed light on how different emperors enjoyed diverse levels of popular support in the Greek East. He focuses on the considerable backing received by three usurpers claiming to be Nero, which, in Nicolleau's view, points to Nero's enduring popularity with the lower social echelons in the Greek world during the Flavian era. He argues that this suggests a degree of resistance to the ruling dynasty and offers a counter-narrative to the elite perspectives prevalent in Roman sources. Thus, he contends that Ando's concept of 'provincial loyalty' applies primarily to the upper classes.[7]

Ferrary's influence is evident in the contribution of Weber-Pallez, which demonstrates the value of cultural history as a means for exploring interactions between the Greek world and Rome. He argues convincingly that the 'freedom of the Argives' was not merely a top-down gift from Roman authorities but rather a direct outcome of proactive diplomatic efforts by the city of Argos. The Peloponnesian city creatively forged and exploited its 'cultural memory' (to borrow Jan Assmann's notion), by strategically adapting and developing its genealogies and kinship connections over time to suit the strategies it decided to employ in relations with Rome and other Greek communities.

The volume's final article shifts the focus to the era of the Second Sophistic, emphasizing its importance as another moment of Greek negotiation with Roman authority. Through a meticulous analysis of Dio of Prusa's third speech *On Kingship*, Cinotti highlights Dio's nuanced approach to Roman power. The sophist addresses an unnamed Emperor directly, self-fashioning himself as a philosophical advisor. His interpretation of Roman power through Greek cultural lenses denotes not opposition but a form of cultural 'resilience': Dio still conceives the Roman world only within the framework of Greek *paideia*.

All the articles share a local perspective, highlighting the diversity of attitudes towards, and interaction strategies with, the ruling power of Rome. One could rightly observe that a uniform impact of the Roman conquest across the Greek world would be expected only if the focus is exclusively on Roman influence, thereby underestimating local agency. By contrast, acknowledging the historical agency of non-Roman communities suggests a broad spectrum of outcomes, as each provincial community could develop and embrace its own unique strategy. This methodological approach, therefore, encourages regional studies or individual case-studies over broad generalisations. In fact, the most persuasive articles in this volume tend to avoid ambitious schematisation; for example, Jordan highlights the different experimentation of each city, Bady notes the distinct post-Actium life trajectories of Timagenes, Alexis of Laodicea, and Philostratus, while Cinotti contrasts Dio's stance towards Rome with that of another sophist, Aelius Aristides. Similarly, Weber-Pallez engages with the specific case-study of Argos' cultural memory, avoiding generalisation. By contrast, Vlamos seems to draw general conclusions from his case-study of Cos, which from a methodological perspective seems less convincing.

The role of individuals as connectors emerges as a crucial aspect of the relationships between Rome and the Greek communities. However, it is important to note that the categories of 'Romans' and 'Greeks' are perhaps overly simplistic and also encompass groups that interacted with each other regardless of their 'Roman' or 'Greek' identities. This dynamic was not limited to 'philo-Roman' Greeks such as Theophanes of Mytilene, who served under Pompey and received Roman citizenship, but also applied to the *publicani*. The Senate and Roman officeholders often protected Greek cities from their rapacity, highlighting the diversity of interests and conflicting attitudes towards the provincials within Roman society.[8] These examples suggest that the reality of

Greek-Roman interactions was indeed multifaceted, demanding a nuanced understanding.

From an editorial perspective, it must be pointed out that the volume regrettably includes only one map (on p. 91), primarily illustrating Caesar's and Pompey's movements in Greece during the civil war without marking any locations outside continental Greece. Without additional geographical charts, non-specialist readers may find it difficult to navigate the numerous cities mentioned throughout the volume. In contrast, the inclusion of tables in Jordan's and Boubounelle's contributions proves beneficial, serving as effective tools to present the evidence.

In conclusion, the main feature of this special issue is its focus on local perspectives and its emphasis on the historical agency of non-Roman communities and individuals in the Greek East. Importantly, if the acknowledgment of local agency is not merely a by-product of specific concessions to the Greeks from Rome, this approach can also be applied to other regions, regardless of their 'Greek' identity. And in fact, there is an already quite long tradition of postcolonial approaches to the 'Roman' West, where this perspective would hardly be novel.[9] However, these studies are primarily focused on ethnicity, culture and religion, while political history is generally left almost untouched. When postcolonial approaches are applied to this field, it is crucial to be aware that pushing too far notions such as negotiation, though intended to acknowledge the historical agency of non-Roman actors, may ultimately divert attention away from the warfare and violence that they experienced with the expansion of the Roman Empire. [10]

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Authors and Titles

Partie I. Choix et stratégies des communautés grecques face au nouvel Empire

2.1. The battle of Pydna and the monetary history of the Achaean League. David Weidgenannt

2.2. The cities of Western Asia Minor and Rome: local agency in the construction of Empire (133–44 BCE). Bradley Jordan

2.3. Entre César et Pompée. Les Grecs face à l'*imperium Romanum* en temps de guerre civile (49–48 avant J.-C.). François Porte

2.4. La "liberté des Argiens" (Tite-Live, XXXIV, 41) sous l'*imperium Romanum*. Clémence Weber-Pallez

2.5. Les Grecs et l'empereur romain: Néron et "faux Néron" en Achaïe et en Asie. Mathias Nicolleau

Partie II. Recompositions sociales et trajectoires individuelles dans l'Empire en construction

3.1. D'une élite à une autre? L'impact de la conquête romaine et de la provincialisation sur les hiérarchies sociales en Macédoine. Olga Boubounelle

3.2. Les communautés de Romains sont-elles solubles dans la cité? Cités égéennes, *Rhômaioi* et l'*imperium Romanum* aux IIe et Ier siècles avant notre ère. Alexandre Vlamos

3.3. Roman power and the memorial turn in civic honourability in Western Asia Minor, *ca* 85 BCE–14 CE. Marcus Chin

3.4. L'entourage hellénophone d'Antoine et Octavien/Auguste. Transferts d'allégeance et processus de résilience. Clément Bady

3.5. Adhésion et contre-pouvoir rhétoriques chez Dion Chrysostome. Le sophiste et l'Empire dans le troisième discours *Sur la royauté*. Vincent Cinotti

Notes

[1] Mattingly 2011.

[2] Badian 1967 and Gruen 1984.

[3] Zoumbaki 2008, Heller 2014, and Müller 2014.

[4] This concept was first introduced by White in 1991 to describe the interactions between Native Americans and European newcomers in the Great Lakes region. For the

ancient Greek world, see Malkin 2002 and Malkin and Müller 2012.

[5] Jordan 2023.

[6] Note that on p. 179 'aux IIe et Ier siècle de notre ère' is wrong, and the reference should instead be 'between the 2nd century and the 1st century BCE' (and not CE!).

[7] Ando 2000.

[8] E.g. *Syll*. 747 = *I.Oropos* 308

[9] E.g. Woolf 1998.

[10] See, for example, the criticism faced by Terrenato 2019 in Maschek 2021, 323–24. Ramgopal 2022 for the notion of 'disconnectivities' in combination with that of 'connectivities'.