

Summary

Greek *Poleis* Alive in the Roman Empire Cultural and Economic Dynamics in Asia Minor

Masataka MASUNAGA

The Roman Empire expanded its dominion across the Mediterranean, incorporating regions where the ancient Greek civilization had once flourished. Despite Roman occupation, Greek communities preserved their established urban way of life as *poleis* throughout the Eastern Mediterranean. This book aims to unveil the reality of these Greek civic societies and to enlighten the readers about certain aspects of Roman rule faced by the Greeks. This book also examines the benefactions given by civic elites, which played a vital role in governing and developing the cities in Asia Minor where Greek civic society was dominant in the high empire, from the end of the first century BC until the end of the third century AD.

Greek cities under the rule of the Roman Empire were commonly perceived to have forfeited their political autonomy and undergone a gradual decline. However, in recent years, scholars have drawn attention to the persistent significance of Greek cities located in Asia Minor, which were profoundly influenced by Greek culture during the Hellenistic period preceding Roman conquest. This reassessment stems from questioning whether ‘autonomy’ and ‘independence’ were the defining characteristics of the *polis*, alongside the increased availability of more extensive historical sources that accompanies archaeological advancements.

Research into the practice of benefaction (*évergétisme*) heavily impacted the pivotal turning point in this assessment. The term, which was coined by P. Veyne in the 1970s, is rooted in anthropology and sociology and refers to the historical act of civic elites and Roman emperors providing food, public buildings, and others such offerings to their communities at their own cost. During the Roman imperial period, public benevolence was regarded as a static benchmark for influential individuals. Nevertheless, it is crucial to scrutinize the role and dynamics of these benefactions from the perspective of civic communities, considering the interactions between the benefactors and their communities and the evolving nature of the benefactions throughout the Principate.

To explore this matter, this book investigates the developments of public buildings and festivals that prospered as gifts in Asia Minor, specifically in the western parts, thereby providing the opportunity to reconsider the historical situation of Greek cities. On one hand, these developments had a significant impact on the entire city. On the other hand, their focus on festivals rather than buildings since the second century AD renders them an excellent material for exploring the cultural and

economic dynamics of the benefactions bestowed upon civic communities.

Cities under Roman rule have traditionally been understood to depend on the benefactions from their magnates, which declined gradually from the second century AD because of the impoverishment of the elite classes who were compelled by the imperial authority to make economic contributions. This book prompts a reassessment of the prevailing civic image, which focuses primarily on the activities of influential individuals serving the empire. It also presents an alternative perspective from the wider civic community as a whole, not limited to civic elites.

In accordance with the above, this book progresses as follows, by drawing on diverse sources. These sources include numerous Greek inscriptions from Asia Minor, highlighting honorary and dedicatory ones for public benefactions, literary works discussing benefactors who made contributions, legal texts regulating benefactions, and coins depicting public buildings or festivals.

After establishing the importance of researching the Greek world during the Roman imperial era in the introduction, the initial chapter presents an overview of the research undertaken since the late nineteenth century. It addresses the inadequacies of previous studies concerning Greek cities themselves and *évergétisme* during the imperial period, while also outlining the subjects and methodologies explored elsewhere in the book.

Chapter 2 examines the size, expansion and internal structures of Greek cities in Asia Minor. An overview of the councils and popular assemblies that manage these cities is also presented through an exploration of previous research. Consequently, this book reaffirms its framework of *polis*.

Chapter 3 analyses the role of the city in constructing public buildings, which, among the benefactions, were the first developments to prosper. This chapter draws from inscriptions derived from Ephesus, situated on the western coast of Asia Minor, and the works of the orator Dio Chrysostom, who was active in Prusa in north-west Anatolia. The text explores the evolving representations of the civic community as expressed through dedicatory and honorary inscriptions while also emphasizing the ongoing significance of the city in terms of architectural activity.

Chapter 4 delves into the involvement of civic communities in agonistic festivals, which replaced public buildings as a benefaction. This research mainly derives from inscriptions from Aphrodisias, a city in south-west Asia Minor. The text offers a systematic examination of both traditional 'Greek games' and 'Roman games', including gladiatorial contests, to clarify their shared importance in inter-city rivalries, which were intensified in that period in the region.

The appendix provides a perspective on the chronological development of the theatre of Aphrodisias as a public building and as festival space. This serves to enhance the discussions presented in Chapters 3 and 4.

Chapter 5 discusses the relationship concerning benefactions between the framework of *koinon*, a federation of cities, and individual cities. This analysis is illustrated through the large-scale benefactions provided by Opramoas in mid-second century Lycia on the west coast of southern Asia

Minor, with a specific focus on the involvement of the city of Myra. The chapter discloses how cities responded actively to the donation with the intention of acquiring more additional economic benefits.

Chapter 6 focuses on the transition from endowing public buildings to funding festivals as a form of benefaction during the second century AD. The chapter elucidates the importance and context of this shift in regard to the economic implications of both forms of benefactions. As a result, the community retained the public buildings even after the second century AD, while also gaining economic advantages through the combination of festivals and existing buildings. This also led to a rise in the cultural significance of these benefactions.

Chapter 7 investigates the iconography of public buildings and festivals on coins issued by cities. It clarifies the correlation between their representation on coins and the situations presented in the preceding chapters. It is evident that the shift from public buildings to festivals in the second century AD discussed in Chapter 6 does not relate to numismatic iconography. The text reveals that the pattern of the numismatic imagery is situated within the religious context of the city.

The concluding chapter provides an overview of the city's active and adaptable nature in pursuing honour and economic prosperity in Greek society, while also acknowledging the constraints imposed by Roman imperial rule. This book brings to light the autonomous existence of Greek communities, despite being under the Roman Empire and utilizing its authority at times. It also explores the intricate relationship between empire and city, which cannot be fully grasped through the conventional dichotomy of the domination-subordination lens. Furthermore, it presents a historical narrative of the ever-changing state of Greek civic communities towards the decline of the later Roman Empire.