THE YOUNG, THE OLD AND THE BLESSED: CORPORATE BODIES AND ELITE REPRODUCTION IN ROMAN ASIA MINOR*

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Summary: The article traces the impact of Roman rule on the organisational history of Asia Minor through a comparative study of three well-attested institutions: associations of young men (*neoi*) tied to the gymnasium, councils of elders (*gerousiai*) that could claim authority and decision-making capacity in their respective cities, and groups of initiates (*mystai*) who acted on behalf of their cities in public settings. While their Hellenistic origins would suggest a clear-cut distinction between civic institutions such as the *neoi* and private associations such as the *mystai*, their operations and status in the Roman period appear remarkably similar, and are difficult to classify within a traditional private/state binary. It is argued here that two features of Roman rule, the reliance on civic elites and the use of legal privileges for certain kinds of associations, created the conditions for wide-ranging institutional change, driven by a combination of Roman administrative input and local agency.

1. Introduction

Private associations seem to have been a fairly common phenomenon in Hellenistic Asia Minor, although the evidence is nowhere near as extensive as in Greece. Of the extant inscriptions, some show specific traits that can be connected to the different patterns of monarchic rule: in Pergamon and surroundings, associations were often involved in the ruler cult and other demonstrations of loyalty towards the Attalid dynasty; in areas controlled by the Ptolemies, mercenaries could form associations of βασιλισταί; an association of μύσται near Sardeis could direct enquiries first to the Seleucid, then to the Attalid high priest of the satrapy.[1]

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But there are also cases that could just as well have come from the Greek mainland or a Cycladic island: family associations founded for the purpose of commemoration; cult groups with or without theophoric names assembling citizens and foreigners; and in one case even an association of ὀργεῶνες, the only one attested outside the direct sphere of Athenian influence.[2] Asia Minor can therefore be regarded as an integral part of the Hellenistic associational sphere. Given the wealth of epigraphic evidence from the Roman period, the region is thus well-suited to guide enquiries of a more general nature: how did Roman rule influence private corporate organization in the Eastern Mediterranean world?

It is tempting to content oneself with an easy answer. When looking for direct policy measures, no significant influence can be detected. Associations existed both before and after the Roman takeover, and a review of the evidence for legal measures against them has revealed only a small number of rather exceptional cases.[3] However, it cannot be denied that Roman law, while not necessarily leading to prohibitive measures on a large scale, offered incentives and suggestions as to what acceptable organizations worthy of Roman support might look like. The Digest preserves several attempts by legal scholars to develop a concept of 'useful' *collegia*, which according to Gaius were to be treated in legal matters like a *res publica* after their official recognition by the state.[4] That these were

1 Pergamon and surroundings: *OGIS* 326 (Ἀτταλισταί of Teos); *SEG* 52 1197 (Müller & Wörrle 2002 with extensive commentary on the Attalid context). Βασιλισταί: Wörrle 2015 with Wörrle 2021 (Limyra). Μύσται: *SEG* 46 1519 with Eckhardt & Lepke 2018: 44.

2 Family association: *LSAM* 72 (Halikarnassos; see Carbon & Pirenne-Delforge 2013 with a re-edition by Carbon, 99-114); perhaps *SEG* 57 1188 (Koloe, Ἡρωϊσταί; see Jones 2008). Other cult groups: e.g. *SEG* 55 1463bis (Limyra, Σαραπιασταί); *I. Apam. Bith.* 35 (male and female members of a θίασος); *SEG* 60 1332 and 1333 (Yaylaköy, Ἀσκληπιασταί; likely soldiers as argued by Müller 2010); *I. Smyrna* 765 (Ἀνουβιασταί). Ὀργεῶνες: Pottier & Hauvette-Besnault 1880: 164 no. 21 (see Boulay 2013 for re-editions and discussion of this and other texts from Teos).

3 Cf. Arnaoutoglou 2002.

4 *Dig.* 3.4.1.1 (Gaius 3 ad ed. prov.): *Quibus autem permissum est corpus habere collegii societatis sive cuiusque alterius eorum nomine, proprium est ad exemplum rei publicae habere res communes, arcam commune et actorem sive syndicum, per quem tamquam in re publica, quod communiter agi fierique oporteat, agatur fiat.* Cf. *Dig.* 50.6.6.12 (Callistratus 1 de

not mere scholastic debates is suggested by a plethora of Western evidence and a few nuggets from the East: Flaccus' ban on associations in Alexandria, Pliny's failed attempt to create an association of *fabri* under Roman law in Nikomedeia, the measures taken against an association of bakers in Ephesus, an inscription from Miletus preserving Hadrian's positive response to the city's request to gain official recognition of the local association of ship owners, and the "privileges and immunities" granted by Septimius Severus to professional associations connected with temples in Ephesus and Miletus.[5] While Roman involvement in the field of political institutions – such as associations – was less extensive in the East than in the West (and certainly less often recorded in inscriptions), there can be no doubt that in principle, the regulations on corporate organization were known and applied in Asia Minor.

Neither in the Western provinces nor in the East did this mean that every group classified by modern observers as an 'association' underwent a ratification procedure; in fact, only few of them did, and direct measures were rarely taken by Roman officials. But at the very least, there was an ideology of control that could, but did not have to influence administrative policy.[6] At the same time, this ideology remains somewhat elusive, as several of the categories operating in the legal texts are not at all clear. The whole concept of *utilitas publica* lacks a clear definition,[7] and Marcianus adds to the confusion with his much discussed remarks on exceptions for *tenuiores* and assemblies *religionis causa*.[8] I have

cogn.): *Quibusdam collegiis vel corporibus, quibus ius coeundi lege permissum est, immunitas tribuitur: scilicet eis collegiis vel corporibus, in quibus artificii sui causa unusquisque adsumitur, ut fabrorum corpus est et si qua eandem rationem originis habent, id est idcirco instituta sunt, ut necessariam operam publicis utilitatibus exhiberent.*

5 Phil. *Flacc*. 4; Plin. *Ep*. 10.33-34; *I. Ephesos* 215 (bakers; cf. Perry 2015); Ehrhardt & Günther 2013 (ship owners; *SEG* 63 974); *I. Ephesos* 295 with the new copy from Miletus published by Akat Özenır & Ricl 2023: 112-15 no. 9. Western evidence: for an (incomplete) list of associations stressing their official permission, see Tran 2006: 352; for the (rare) occasions where an association is referred to as *res publica*, see Tran 2012: 68-69.

6 On the importance of this ideology as a historical fact in its own right, see recently Bendlin 2016; Perry 2016. For a full-scale reconstruction, see Eckhardt 2021.

7 Cf. the recent attempt by Stagl 2017.

8 *Dig*. 47.22.1pr-1; cf. discussion in Eckhardt 2018.

argued elsewhere, based on a concept taken from Neo-Institutional Economics, that such legal vagueness can lead to institutional isomorphism, i.e. to organizations copying each other and ultimately copying the state.[9] So while there was no masterplan, and local reactions to the structural framework provided by Rome could not be predicted in detail, that framework did have a significant potential for integrating associations into a common imperial order. This in turn could mean that new forms of association were chosen at the expense of others.

Clifford Ando has described that order in very broad terms. According to him, the creation of 'imperial identities' was accompanied and shaped by the spread of organizations with largely identical forms and structures. Ando notes that "not simply the membership, but the values and norms of public and private organisations overlapped and these latter were, at the level of institutional arrangements, largely homologous".[10] And I would like to quote another of his very pertinent remarks:

> The organisations in themselves served to bisect and reconstitute populations along multiple axes. But they also came gradually to mimic the institutional arrangements of provincial and city government, and in so doing they will have further naturalised and legitimated the basic postulates of a Roman social order.[11]

In other words, 'imperial identities' were created through a constant reduplication of state patterns on a regional and local level, from provincial κοινά to ever smaller units, to civic βουλαί and even down to the many specialized professional *collegia*. Ando does not speak of 'Romanization', but his structural model is nothing less than an attempt to theorize precisely what other scholars have subsumed under this label. And although the term has been the object of critical reevaluation many

9 Eckhardt 2016, using DiMaggio & Powell 1983.
10 Ando 2010: 20.
11 Ando 2010: 43.

times, it is still an obvious and legitimate choice for describing the influence Roman rule had on developments in various social fields.[12]

The danger with models focused on the broad structures of empire lies in the possible marginalization of local agency.[13] For a full picture to emerge, an important role must be accorded to local attempts to inscribe oneself into the Roman imperial order. For Asia Minor, this has been done admirably by Onno van Nijf in his study of professional *collegia*, formed by people primarily concerned with their own status, searching and finding a place for themselves in an increasingly manifest hierarchy of *ordines*.[14] Adding a further differentiation, people in the cities had different interests (and formed different associations) from those in the rural areas and villages, who nevertheless can be shown to react to the trend they perceived to be happening in the cities, in a process that we might call 'second order Romanization'.[15]

Professional associations and village corporations were formed by local middle classes or rural farmers according to their own interests. But it is a reasonable assumption that incentives provided by Rome were directed primarily at the civic elites. Getting these people on board would have been the most important goal of any strategy of Romanization – not least because other strata of society when forming their associations would look out for models of successful integration into the Roman order. The development of Greek cities in the late Hellenistic and Roman periods has often been described in terms like 'Honoratiorenregime' or 'aristocratisation'.[16] But the creation of an increasingly hereditary elite in the cities depended on elite reproduction both in a physical and in a sociological sense: institutions were needed that could prepare young members of the elite for their future role in the public sphere, serving as training grounds for the implementation of habitual dispositions. Organizations could serve several purposes in this respect – as nodal points in

12 Cf. Alföldy 2005; against the skeptical views by Sartre 2007 (who denies a significant Roman influence on the culture of Asia Minor) and Versluys 2014 (who prefers to do away with the Roman/non-Roman dichotomy altogether).

13 Cautioned against by Ando 2010: 45.

14 Van Nijf 1997.

15 Cf. Eckhardt 2016; on associations in the villages of Asia Minor see now also Thonemann 2022: 219-20; Parker 2023: 9-14.

16 E.g. Quaß 1993; Hamon 2007; Fröhlich & Hamon 2013: 1-3; Scholz 2015.

local and regional networks, but also as a public manifestation of the dignity and the superiority of its members in both political and religious matters. The aim of this article is to show that Roman rule in Asia Minor fostered the emergence of organizations that fulfilled these needs. All of them had some Hellenistic roots, but their transformation under Roman influence was so thorough that it seems legitimate to regard them as a product of Romanization.[17]

All groups discussed here possessed some degree of autonomy, but they were also entangled with civic administration. They fulfilled some, but not necessarily all the criteria that can be argued to define 'private associations'.[18] The changing trajectories in this regard, i.e. developments from a civic to a more private character and vice versa, are an important factor for any evaluation of the impact of Rome, and will therefore be studied in some detail. However, another question, to be discussed in the conclusion, necessarily has to concern the validity of the civic/private-divide itself.

2. The Young

The first group to be discussed here are young men under thirty, the νέοι. For the Hellenistic period, it seems firmly established that they formed an age-class following the ἐφηβεία.[19] Much like ἔφηβοι and παίδες, νέοι or νεώτεροι are seen in public roles, obligated to take part in

17 Whether one regards this process as 'cultural' or 'institutional' Romanization is a question of secondary importance. Associations have an important role to play in both the cultural and the institutional history of ancient Mediterranean cities. It can also be granted, taking into account the criticism by Heller 2009 and 2013, that many elements of the 'aristocratization' narrative have their roots in the Hellenistic period, and that local contexts may often be the more immediate background to change than the somewhat diffuse notion of a 'Roman social order'. I nevertheless think that regardless of a priori assumptions, the development of associations in this period and region follows an observable pattern influenced by a Roman model, and occasionally described in legal terms derived from that model. Associations thus provide an argument in its own right that largely favors the traditional narrative.

18 As explained by Gabrielsen & Thomsen 2015.

19 Cf. Dreyer 2004; Kennell 2013; van Bremen 2013.

processions, or using their military training to fight for their cities – in short, they appear as "an integral component of many (if not all) Hellenistic cities".[20] At the same time, they were autonomous to an unusual degree: they often had their own magistrates and their own finances, honored their benefactors and negotiated their relationship with the city. The νέοι of Kolophon exerted pressure on the city council to honor a gymnasiarch,[21] and in Methymna, the local νέοι famously supplied the city with 2,300 staters when it suffered from the war of Aristonikos.[22] Many traits of the νέοι's organization have their closest analogies in the world of private associations, and yet it seems clear that all this took place "dans le cadre d'une obligation publique, civique".[23] To be sure, we should not assume timeless uniformity. The gymnasiarchal law of Beroia clearly shows how the status of local νέοι could change, in this case from an independently organized club to direct state control.[24] And yet even seemingly independent behavior could be bounded by the integration of young men into the civic institutional framework: the νέοι of Hellenistic Teos were able to elect their own προστάται and to rent out a sanctuary they had in their possession, but civic magistrates had to act as witnesses to the transaction, and of course the Teans still expected their "young men and boys" to compete in civic festivals.[25]

It is a fair guess that the νέοι generally represented the higher strata of society, but there are no grounds for seeing them as a closed elite club. The ideal of preparing the young men for participation in the community of citizens, combined with a focus on military training, seems to preclude a strongly maintained social exclusivity. This does not of course mean

20 Van Bremen 2013: 31.

21 *SEG* 55 1251; cf. Gauthier 2005; van Bremen 2013: 49-50 for the interpretation followed here.

22 *IG* XII Suppl. 116; cf. Migeotte 2013: 117.

23 Fröhlich 2013: 60. Cf. Dreyer 2004: 232-36.

24 Gauthier/Hatzopoulos 1993 (*I. Beroia* 1); cf. Schuler 2004: 174-77.

25 For the προστάται and the sanctuary, see the long inscription published by Adak & Stauner 2018, with notes by Jones 2019 (notably 109 n. 1 on the identity of the προστάται: if they are indeed identical with the ἀποδεδειγμένοι ἄνδρες of l.1-2, perhaps their designation as ἄνδρες marks them as older than the νέοι and thus chosen from outside the corporation). The "young men and boys" (νέοι καὶ παῖδες) competing at the Leukathea: Adak & Thonemann 2022: 15 l. B 77.

that these groups could not serve the purpose of elite representation and reproduction. From the second century BCE onwards, the importance of gymnasiarchs in the Hellenistic cities largely depended on their ability to supply the νέοι with oil from their private resources, thus contributing to the formation of oligarchic roles;[26] wealthy benefactors regularly chose the gymnasia (and specifically the νέοι) as recipients of their donations. At the same time, processes of social distinction must have taken place within the νέοι-groups. Because the organization was essentially a civic one, status differences could easily be translated from the group's environment to the inside. The institution could thus contribute to elite reproduction in the sense of acquiring habitual dispositions – precisely because not everyone there had the same social standing, but needed to find the place appropriate for him on the social ladder.

In Asia Minor, organizations of νέοι were not uncommon in the Hellenistic period. But their wide-spread appearance in almost all larger cities is a Roman phenomenon.[27] What were the characteristics of the Roman νέοι? Many have argued for a fundamental change in character, usually interpreted as a symptom of decline: "Though primarily an athletic establishment in origin, they had acquired a social character and were to all intents and purposes a club".[28] This seems to presuppose a certain privatization of an institution that used to be an 'establishment' integrated into the civic apparatus, but the evidence is a bit more complicated. Especially in the later imperial era, the νέοι occasionally appear very close to the governing bodies of a city – not only in decrees, but also on coins. In the time of Elagabal, the συνέδριον of the νέοι of Phrygian Laodikeia issued its own coins; already under Antoninus Pius, there had been a series of coins "for the νέοι of Laodikeia". Similar coinage was issued in Herakleia Salbake.[29] It may be compared with the occasional coin-

26 Cf. Schuler 2004: 189 on the contribution of the gymnasiarchy to the development of a "Rollenbild des Honoratiorenpolitikers, der einem kleinen Kreis führender Familien entstammte und sein Prestige laufend durch den Einsatz privater Gelder für öffentliche Belange untermauerte". Cf. Scholz 2015 on the imperial period.

27 Cf. Forbes 1933: 17-19.

28 Macro 1980: 681. Cf. Dreyer 2004: 236 (they became "nicht eine politische, sondern eine soziale Organisation").

29 Cf. on these coins Martin 2013: I 203-7.

age of the Dionysiac σύνοδοι of performers, but the more useful comparison is with the γερουσία of Aizanoi, which was honored by a local γραμματεύς with a special coinage.[30] If these νέοι were clubs, they must have been clubs of influential people whose goodwill was of special interest to both individuals and the city itself.

While it is difficult to generalize individual findings, it seems that the νέοι remained integrated into the institutional inventory of cities, but could enjoy a significant degree of autonomy, as they had their own magistrates and benefactors. In Aphrodisias, νέοι and ἔφηβοι were both organized in corporate bodies; the νέοι had their own secretary and funds, awarded the title 'son of the νέοι' to benefactors (thus imitating the 'son of the πόλις') and had their own seats in the stadium.[31] The νέοι of (probably) Hierapolis may have had their own archive, overseen by a γραμματοφύλαξ.[32] The νέοι of Pergamon are particularly well-known, not least because they had their own gymnasium where several inscriptions have been found. These raise a number of questions with regard to the νέοι's autonomy. We know that the νέοι exchanged letters with Trajan and Hadrian (whose answer has survived intact; he calls them ἄνδρες ἀγαθοί, irrespective of age), and that they honored a Roman proconsul of Asia as their benefactor and eternal gymnasiarch.[33] A board of three secretaries of the νέοι is mentioned in two inscriptions.[34] On first sight, the impression is that the 'young men' had gained more control over their own affairs in the imperial era. An earlier honorific decree for a gymnasiarch, while voted for by the νέοι κατὰ πλῆθος, was nevertheless passed as a decree by βουλή and δῆμος, which suggests that in the late

30 On coinage of Dionysiac σύνοδοι, cf. Lorber & Hoover 2003 (Teos, late Hellenistic); Martin 2013: I 207-15 (Tralleis, Severan); on the γερουσία of Aizanoi: Martin 2013: I 145-46.

31 *MAMA* VIII 484 = *I. Aph.* 12 308 (υἱὸς νέων and γραμμτεὺς τῶν νέων); *I. Aph.* 10 26 (stadium; νεωτέρων presumably identifies the νέοι); cf. on these inscriptions Chaniotis 2015: 123.

32 *SEG* 31 1106; cf. discussion by Labarre 2005.

33 *I. Pergamon* 273 (Trajan); *I. Pergamon* 274 (Hadrian); *I. Pergamon* 440 (proconsul).

34 *I. Pergamon* 274; *I. Pergamon* 440.

Hellenistic period, the νέοι were still unable to make decisions themselves.[35] So how could they now honor the proconsul? That the situation is more complicated is suggested by Aelius Aristides' report that νέοι could be used by the city of Pergamon to give an appropriate welcome to famous visitors. Could they be obligated to do so, and what would this mean for criteria of membership?[36] A fragmentary inscription seems to mention a δοκιμασία, an entrance fee, and a clause on "those leaving".[37] Fraenkel explains this as a rule on the βουλευταί of the νέοι, because βουλευταί in some cities had to pay entrance fees, and another fragmentary inscription seems to mention a βουλὴ νέων.[38] But the entrance fee could have been paid by ordinary members, and there seems to be no parallel for νέοι (or any other association) with a separate βουλή of their own.[39] The δοκιμασία – if indeed carried out by the νέοι – nevertheless points to a significant degree of autonomy; it may have served as a regulatory mechanism to keep the institution closed off against 'unworthy' candidates.

The magistracies related to the νέοι, attested since the later Hellenistic period, raise another problem, as it is often not clear whether or not the magistrates of the νέοι were ultimately chosen by the city.[40] While

35 *I. Pergamon* 252 (second or first century BCE). The symbolic value of the gymnasium in a time of transition may be taken into account here, as it turned gymnasiarchs into guarantors of Pergamene civic traditions; see the remarks by Wörrle 2007: esp. 509-11.

36 Ael. Arist. *Or*. 51.29. Fraenkel (in *I. Pergamon*, p. 184) regarded it as natural "dass die römisch gewordenen Pergamener als Ersatz für die ihnen versagte politische Betätigung dem wichtig thuenden Studendentum den ersten Platz im öffentlichen Interesse gewährten".

37 *I. Pergamon* 278 l. 7: δοκ..., l.8: ἀποδιδόσ[θαι], l. 9: [τ]ῶν ἐξιόντων, l. 12-13: [τὸ τῶν] | νέων γυμνάσιον.

38 *I. Pergamon* 486 B l. 4: [ὁ δεῖνα γραμματεὺ]ς βουλῆς νέων.

39 Poland 1909: 386 n. † (followed by Forbes 1933: 35 n. 10) therefore proposed a comma: [γραμματεὺ]ς βουλῆς, νέων. This is not an elegant solution, but possibly the only one that does away with the unlikely 'council of the νέοι' – the person in question would have served as γραμματεύς of both βουλή and νέοι.

40 The latter explanation is preferred by Forbes 1933: 36. Cf. Dmitriev 2005: 31-32; Labarre 2005 : 122: "Ces magistratures, créées pour encadrer la partie la plus jeune du corps civique, étaient de nature publique. Elles étaient indissociables de celles de la cité".

gymnasiarchs 'of the νέοι' (often also responsible for ἔφηβοι or γέροντες) were most likely civic officials, this is far less evident for secretaries or treasurers. It is therefore not clear how much direct influence wealthy people with their own agenda could exert on these organizations, apart from the informal rules of euergetism.

The spread of νέοι in Roman Asia Minor, their ambiguous status and their aristocratic outlook have occasionally led scholars to postulate an influence from the *collegia iuvenum* broadly attested in the Western provinces.[41] As these groups have often been seen as a 'Kaderschmiede' for local elites in the West,[42] their relationship to the νέοι would be very pertinent to this discussion. But not only are there good arguments against the aristocratic character of the *iuvenes*;[43] it is also difficult to align the supposed influence from West to East with the chronological data. The specific evidence adduced cannot carry much weight. The older literature unanimously refers to the νεανίσκοι of Thyateira as the prime example of a thoroughly Romanized group of young men, formed according to the model provided by the *iuvenes*, but the data hardly justifies this conclusion. What we have are seven honorific decrees by a group that

41 Kornemann 1900: 389 on the *neaniskoi* of Thyateira (but cf. 390 on γερουσία and νέοι generally: "spezifisch griechische Erscheinungen"); Chapot 1904: 155 ("ils ont peut-être voulu imiter les *collegia iuvenum*"). Rostovtzeff 1905: 61-71 argues for the creation of the *iuvenes* by Augustus, based on the model of the ἐφηβεία, but also notes an influence by the *iuvenes* on the νέοι of Asia Minor (93 n. 1). Forbes 1933: 68 considers similar ideas (*iuvenes* influenced by νέοι), but cf. 62 on the νεανίσκοι of Thyateira, which were "patterned after the organized *iuvenes* of Italy and the West". On the *iuvenes*, cf. Jaczynowska 1978, who (12-13, 18) points to local tradition and rejects the supposed influence of νέοι or ἔφηβοι.

42 Cf. the literature mentioned in the preceding note. There can be no doubt that *iuvenes* could be an element of local or regional networks with a strong Roman focus; cf. Roncaglia 2015: 206-7 on *AE* 1953: 18. But uniformity of organization and purpose should not be assumed, as shown by Randazzo 2000.

43 In the Severan period, Callistratus seems to presuppose that the large majority of *iuvenes* would be *tenuiores*: *Dig.* 48.19.28.3 with Jacques 1980: 217-24, who also notes that the evidence for nobles in groups of *iuvenes* is limited to patrons and magistrates, which may point to control exercised by local elites over youth organizations. See also Kleijwegt 1994: 83-84.

carries references to Herakles and the civic gymnasia in its name.[44] All inscriptions thoroughly root the νεανίσκοι in a Roman context: one is for a senator, and most others are concerned with services rendered or victories achieved during the Severan ἄγων. But this does not distinguish the νεανίσκοι of Thyateira from other groups; in addition, they do not seem to be identical with the νέοι, who also appear at Thyateira alongside δῆμος and βουλή.[45] We are left with the worship of Herakles, which would certainly fit a Roman context, but can also be explained in the context of Greek gymnasia.

While it is impossible to show that the *iuvenes* influenced the νέοι or vice versa, the constant importance of νέοι in Roman Asia Minor may well have had something to do with the fact that Romans knew comparable organizations from Italy and the Western provinces. Emperors were aware of the peculiarities of Greek gymnastic culture (to the point that Trajan famously ridicules it in a letter to Pliny),[46] but they also knew what kind of organizations fostered Roman rule in other places. A direct equation between νέοι and *iuvenes* is not made in the most important document relating to the Roman perception of νέοι, namely, the *Senatus Consultum* from the time of Antoninus Pius concerning the νέοι of Kyzikos.[47] But the document confirms the impression that Roman law could act as an integrating factor with regard to 'useful' associations.[48]

44 E.g. *TAM* V 2 949 (233-235 CE): ἀγαθῆι τύχηι. | [οἱ] περὶ τὸν Ἡρακλέα τῶν πρώ|[των] γυμνασίων καὶ κατὰ τὸ ἀρ|[χαῖο]ν τοῦ τρίτου νεανίσκοι | [Αὐρ.] Γλύκωνα, υἱὸν Αὐρ. Γλύκωνος | [τοῦ] Μητρᾶ ἀνδρὸς ἐκ προγόνων | [λειτ]ουργοῦ, προστάντα ἐνδόξως | [καὶ πο]λυδαπάνως τοῦ ὑπὸ αὐτῶν | [ἐπιτελ]ουμένου Σεβηρείου ἀγῶ|[νος] τῶν ἐπινικίων ἑορτῶν | [τοῦ κυ]ρίου ἡμῶν Αὐτοκράτορος | [[Μ. Αὐρ. Σεβήρου Ἀλεξάνδρου]] | [Εὐσε]βοῦς Εὐτυχοῦς Σεβαστοῦ | [π]αρ' ἑαυτῶν ἀνέστησαν. Cf. *TAM* V 2 987, 994, 1007, 1008, 1009, 1015.

45 *TAM* V 2 925 (νέοι dedicating a statue of βουλή from their own resources through their γραμματεύς); 1065 (joint honors by δῆμος, νέοι and παῖδες).

46 Plin. *Ep.* 10.40.2: *gymnasiis indulgent Graeculi*. Roman elitist discourse on the gymnasium has been recently discussed, from different perspectives, by Orth 2015 and Mann 2015.

47 *CIL* III 060 = *FIRA* I² 48; cf. the recent treatment by Groten 2015: 178-79.

48 That corporations connected to the gymnasium could fall under the rubric of *utilitas publica* is also argued (but with a focus on education) by Sommer 2006: 106-10, 126-35.

According to the Latin summary, the Kyzikenes had asked "that the *corpus* which is called 'of the νέοι' and which they have in their city should be confirmed through the authority of the senate".[49] As in the case of the οἶκος ναυκλήρων in Miletus,[50] the city asked for – and received – official confirmation of its right to 'have' an already existing group. *Confirmare* is also used by Gaius in his note on the legitimate *collegia* which receive special permission from either the senate or the emperor.[51] By leaving the designation in the Greek, the text not only precludes a direct equation with *collegia iuvenum*, but also marks the νέοι as a typically Greek institution. The parallels should nevertheless have been obvious. The use of the Greek may be explained by the need to give the precise *nomen* and *causa* of a *collegium licitum*, and the *nomen* was νέοι.

The case of the νέοι of Kyzikos supports a reading of the legal regulations that sees the whole discourse on *collegia* as directly relevant only for an altogether limited number of privileged groups with claims to *utilitas publica*.[52] The νέοι were among these groups because they evidently fulfilled a function that was judged important by the authorities: the continued reproduction of local elites with a strong orientation towards Rome. The request does not concern the foundation of the group, which

49 *Ut corpus, quod appellatur Neon et habent in civitate sua, auctoritate amplissimi ordinis confirmetur*.

50 Ehrhardt & Günther 2013 (*SEG* 63 974).

51 *Dig*. 3.4.1pr (Gaius 3 ad ed. prov.): *Item collegia romae certa sunt, quorum corpus senatus consultis atque constitutionibus principalibus confirmatum est*.

52 De Ligt 2001: 350-52 argues against the earlier view of Mommsen and de Robertis (that the *neoi* had to ask for permission because they did not consist of *tenuiores*; cf. *Dig*. 47.22.1pr) and instead focuses on the Kyzikenes' attempt to gain prestige, which comes close to the reading offered here. But de Ligt goes on (355-356) to state that νέοι, γερουσίαι etc. generally did not fall under the terms of the *lex Iulia de collegiis*, which was supposedly concerned only with *collegia sodalicia* (*Dig*. 47.22.1pr: *Mandatis principalibus praecipitur praesidibus provinciarum, ne patiantur esse collegia sodalicia neve milites collegia in castris habeant*). I read Marcian's text as referring to *collegia* and *sodalicia*, i.e. all possible forms of private organization (as do Groten 2015: 268-69 and Bendlin 2016). The focus on Roman law as an incentive to participate in a new order turns de Ligt's argument on its head: it was precisely semi-public groups like the νέοι who could accept the offer made by the *lex Iulia*. This also has a bearing on the reading offered by Randazzo 2000: 209-10 (who, in addition, too readily equates νέοι and *iuvenes* and does not take into account the long prehistory of νέοι at Cyzicus).

the Kyzikenes already "have in their city",[53] but its confirmation as a *corpus*; it is a successful attempt to gain official recognition of a corporate 'imperial identity'. The omnipresent quest for status and privileges fueled the provincials' desire to become part of the system. Individuals could pride themselves of having a part in a legitimate, elitist institution – which could in turn commemorate its members as φίλοι ἀδελφοί, as in the footprints accompanied by inscriptions from Kyzikos.[54] Rome, on the other hand, could only profit from the legal integration of an institution that might, under special circumstances, foster not loyalty, but social unrest.[55]

A necessary consequence of such recognition was that the organization gained the right to be treated *ad exemplum rei publicae* – this is what *corpus habere* was all about. We may want to describe this as a process of privatization, as the νέοι should henceforth have been able to autonomously administer their own affairs without interference by civic magistrates.[56] However, we do not know how things played out locally, and

53 A list recording gifts by Philetairos of Pergamon already mentions νέοι at Cyzicus for the year 277/6 BCE: εἰς ἔλαιον καὶ [σ]υναγω[γὴν] | τῶν νέων ἀργυρίου τάλαντα Ἀλεξάνδρεια | εἴκοσιν ἕξ (*OGIS* 748 ll. 15-17). Although συναγωγή is probably used as a term for assembly and not as a corporate designation, this may well have been the *corpus quod appellatur neon* later to be the subject of the SC.

54 E.g. *IMT Kyz Kapu Dağ* 1508 (third century CE?): [Ἀ]ρτεμιδώρου κ(αὶ) | [Σ]ωσιπάτρου κα(ὶ) | [Ἀσ]κληπιάδου κ(αὶ) Πο|[π]λίου τῶν φίλω|[ν] ἀδελφῶν μέμνη|[σ]θε οἱ νέοι; cf. Hasluck 1910: 293; Ziebarth 1914: 103-4; both authors point to a parallel phenomenon from the gymnasium of the νέοι at Pergamon (*I. Pergamon* 576).

55 Cf. esp. *Dig.* 48.19.28.3 (Callistratus 6 de cogn.): *Solent quidam, qui volgo se iuvenes appellant, in quibusdam civitatibus turbulentis se adclamationibus popularium accommodare. Qui si amplius nihil admiserint nec ante sint a praeside admoniti, fustibus caesi dimittuntur aut etiam spectaculis eis interdicitur. Quod si ita correcti in eisdem deprehendantur, exilio puniendi sunt, nonnumquam capite plectendi, scilicet cum saepius seditiose et turbulente se gesserint et aliquotiens adprehensi tractati clementius in eadem temeritate propositi perseveraverint.* That the *iuvenes* in view here may not have been organized in *collegia* is argued, among others, by Randazzo 2000: 205-8; contrast Jacques 1980: 220. Laurendi 2016: 283-85 argues that *volgo* marks the lack of official organization.

56 This may have been one of the points addressed by the proconsul Memmius Rufus in his regulations concerning the gymnasium of Beroia (*I. Beroia* 7). Some specific competence (the right to appoint the ephebarch according to Kennell 2007) is left to the "association of the νέοι" (l.45: – - -χίας τόπον τῇ τῶν νέων ἀπολείπω συνηθείᾳ). Kennell points to the fact that the νέοι are treated as a "legally-constituted association".

in any case, legal recognition by Rome can also be seen as a transition from one state oriented context (an institution embedded into the civic framework) to another (an institution embedded into the imperial framework). The city's interest in this transition remains somewhat unclear, but as it was the city that made the request, there must have been some kind of advantage to be had. Perhaps the creation of a legally independent entity could relieve the city of some of the financial burden connected to the maintenance of νέοι associations: as a legitimate *corpus* the νέοι of Kyzikos could hope to gain "privileges and immunities" from Roman administrators, and to attract benefactors who wanted to associate themselves with the group.[57] However, our ignorance about how a constellation like this would have played out in financial terms is almost total.

The νέοι thus fit the model developed above quite well. Their long Hellenistic history shows that not all the bricks in the wall of Roman imperial culture had to be newly manufactured. However, the institution was transformed and re-imported into Asia Minor. We need to ask why an institution survived and even spread that had lost much of its original relevance in the Roman period, when the military training of future citizens was not decisive for a city's future anymore. The symbolic dimension of having young men train for combat and demonstrate their skills in public performances should not be underestimated.[58] But another reason may well have been this institution's capacity to foster elite reproduction on several levels, as a school for acquiring the habitual dispositions needed, and a platform of representation for gymnasiarchs and other benefactors.

57 In the case of Beroia (see preceding footnote), the independent legal status of the νέοι appears to be part of the proconsul's solution to the problem of chronic underfunding of the city's gymnasium.

58 This is not the place to enter discussion of the recently published ephebarchic law from Amphipolis (*SEG* 65 420; new ed. by Rousset 2017), which has received much attention already (Rousset *ibid*. with the response by Hatzopoulos 2015/16 [published 2017]; Mari 2017). Setting aside its value for reconstructing Antigonid social institutions, in our context it is important to note that in 24/3 BCE, a law from the second century BCE was (partially? faithfully? cf. Hatzopoulos vs. Rousset) re-inscribed that regulated the military training of ephebes, although the political context had clearly changed and many rules were no longer applicable.

The paradigmatic parallel for this would be the Athenian ἐφηβεία. Due to the exceptional amount of data, we can here trace a transformation "from a school for citizens to an aristocratic club" – not because only aristocratic families would have been allowed to enter, which was not the case, but because the ἐφηβεία became a primary focus of elite representation.[59] Aristocrats took care to be appointed κοσμήτης in the year their son entered the ἐφηβεία (or even sons: age limits were apparently less important than the desire for elite representation); catalogues of ephebes were no longer erected by the city, but by the elite members or functionaries at their own costs.[60] At the same time, the ἐφηβεία became a precise copy of the Athenian state. Its function as a corporate body of elite reproduction is especially visible: after the ἐφηβεία, people often held high offices in the city, thus taking over roles for which they had been thoroughly prepared through their period as ephebes.[61] They had learned the codes of elite behavior, they had enhanced their network (even translocally, as the ἐφηβεία was open to citizens from abroad), they had distinguished themselves from the non-aristocratic ephebes, and had already entered a competition for fame and honor with their aristocratic equals. The public or private nature of this institution has been debated.[62] Perhaps we should locate the ephebes and their organization exactly at the boundary between the modern notions of public and private. The processes described here have their roots in the Hellenistic period,[63] but their formalization under Roman rule is still remarkable. And while it is certainly justified to warn against taking Athens as a normative model for understanding the ἐφηβεία in other cities at least in the Hellenistic period,[64] it can serve as a model for the development of

59 The quotation is taken from Wiemer 2011 (title), who, however, argues against this development (see below, note 62).

60 Wiemer 2011: 500-8.

61 Wiemer 2011: 506.

62 Wiemer 2011: 512-13 stresses the public character of the ἐφηβεία, noting that no private association could have acted in public or made similar claims to being a civic institution; both arguments are open to question. Perrin-Saminadayar 2013: 173 notes a structure "de type associatif", but justly sees a decisive difference to private associations in the temporary nature of membership.

63 Stressed by Perrin-Saminadayar 2013.

64 Hin 2007: esp. 141-43.

age-based organizations in the Roman period, including the νέοι of Asia Minor.

3. The Old

From the 'young', we may now move on to the 'old', the πρεσβύτεροι or, much more common in the Roman period, the γερουσία. The origins of clubs of old men (i.e. older than thirty) tied to the gymnasium are Hellenistic, but they appear later than the νέοι, and not in the same quantity. In Roman times there seems to have occurred a development in terminology from πρεσβύτεροι (as the more natural antonym to νέοι) to the corporate designation γερουσία, although in the early Roman period both terms were used, even within the same city and in the same decree, as in first-century BCE Iasos.[65] It has been argued convincingly that the late emergence of πρεσβύτεροι was the result of individual benevolence shown by gymnasiarchs.[66] Unlike the νέοι, πρεσβύτεροι do not seem to have been subject to civic obligations, so they appear as an originally private organization. That they were a club of nobles is suggested by the very fact that benefactors found it advantageous to include them in their distributions.

The late Hellenistic πρεσβύτεροι never reached the wide distribution and the political influence that characterized the γερουσία of the Roman period. That influence was such that on first sight, there seems little sense in searching for private characteristics of the γερουσία. In many cities of Roman Asia Minor, it regularly appears as co-author of civic decrees, alongside δῆμος and βουλή, sometimes even replacing the latter. Its significance may also be measured by the fact that the trend towards personification of civic institutions included the γερουσία; as in the case of δῆμος and βουλή, both statue groups and coins showing γερουσία personified are well attested.[67] Roman law does not seem to be of help either:

65 *I. Iasos* 87 and 121; cf. Zimmermann 2007: 1524. On the πρεσβύτεροι of Iasos, cf. now Fröhlich 2013.

66 Fröhlich 2013: 79-97.

67 Martin 2013: I 141-51. An inscription from Halikarnassos published by Carbon, Isager & Pedersen 2017 mentions the "first priestess of (the) γερουσία", who was elected by

in Pliny's exchange of letters with Trajan, a *collegium fabrorum*, Greek ἔρανοι and even distributions of money among people grouped *quasi per corpora* are all treated as problematic (with different results), while the existence of a γερουσία is mentioned only in passing, with no reference at all to the ban on associations Pliny was supposed to carry out in Bithynia et Pontus.[68] That Vitruvius refers to the γερουσία of Sardeis as a *collegium seniorum* also does not tell us much, as *collegium* could designate a private association as much as a board of magistrates.[69] However, this official outlook might be the result of accumulated influence overshadowing the original nature of the institution. Two aspects in particular link the γερουσία with the sphere of Romanized corporations: the issue of membership and the issue of foundation.

As regards membership, two inscriptions from Phrygia strongly suggest that γερουσίαι could be governed by different rules and interests than one might expect from an institution supposedly analogous to either the βουλαί or age-classes. At Sebaste, a whole family of Iulii (father, mother, three children including a daughter) was among the 71 persons who joined the local γερουσία in 99 CE.[70] This is remarkable in several ways: members of the γερουσία of Sebaste, which was perhaps founded on this occasion, apparently did not need to be old, nor did they need to be male.[71] At least in this case, the γερουσία seems to have served as a

the σύστημα γερόντων and honored by the people. Perhaps we are again dealing with γερουσία personified, which would make the dating of the inscription (first century BCE according to the editors) all the more interesting.

68 Plin. *Ep*. 10.33.1 (*gerusia*); 10.33-34 (*fabri*); 92-93 (*eranoi*); 117 (*quasi per corpora*).

69 *Vitr*. 2.8.10: *Croesi domus, quem Sardiani civibus ad requiescendum aetatis otio, seniorum collegio gerusiam dedicaverunt …*

70 Paris 1883: 452-56 no. 2.

71 It is well known that there were female gymnasiarchs, but these were liturgical positions of an honorific character, perhaps most often carried out by widows (see Wörrle 2016, 410-14 on a new inscription from Limyra). It is true that membership of the Iulii in the γερουσία of Sebaste may also be regarded as honorific in character; cf. the case of Tate, a former gymnasiarch who was accepted in the γερουσία of Herakleia Salbake (*CIG* 3953c with Robert & Robert 1954: 174-75 no. 67), and *TAM* II 130 from Lydai for a γεραιὸς διὰ βίου (Wörrle 2016: 420 n. 80: "vielleicht eine Art Ehrenmitgliedschaft"). However, the inscription itself gives us no reason to think that children could not be brought to the meetings. – The recent attempt to show that women

venue for elite representation involving the whole family; the introduction of children was an effective way of integrating them into the local high society. By joining an elite club, they would have acquired the habitual dispositions necessary to perpetuate this family's status in the future. This is a rather natural way of elite reproduction, based on ancestry and on the existence of organizations where elite behavior could be learned. The tendency to encourage members to introduce their children, e.g. by reducing the entrance fee, is visible in other elite groups whose activities oscillate between civic and private. A prominent example is provided by the ὑμνῳδοί of Pergamon, a group that specified its calendar and some conditions of membership on stone and looks much like a private organization, until we remember that issues surrounding the hymn-singers of Asia were subject to direct regulations by the emperor.[72] In this semi-private body, "the one who takes over the hymn of his father" enters for half the price.[73]

At Akmoneia in 64 CE, a certain Demades was allowed to inscribe someone into the membership list of the local γερουσία without an entrance fee (ἀσύμβολος).[74] Demades chose Karpos, a freedman (most likely: his freedman). The whole process must have been unusual, because the decree explicitly emphasizes that Karpos should enjoy rights on an equal footing. This needed to be stressed either because the procedure deviated from the normal process of admission (which at least included payment of a fee), or because freedmen were not normally members of Akmoneia's club of elders. The γερουσία of Akmoneia is known as an important local institution, treated on a par with δῆμος and πόλις (not βουλή!) in the monumental representations of the city's main governing bodies erected by a priest of Athena.[75] But in this case, it seems to act more like a private association. Demades had presumably gained this

could regularly be trained in gymnasia just like men (Tsouvala 2015) depends on rather doubtful evidence.

72 *I. Pergamon* 374 (time of Hadrian). For imperial measures regarding the ὑμνῳδοί, cf. *I. Ephesos* 17-19; on their public nature, cf. Poland 1909: 47-49; for their interpretation as a private group, see Ziebarth 1896: 90-92; Price 1984: 118; on financial aspects, cf. Edelmann-Singer 2012: 167-69.

73 *I. Pergamon* 374 d ll. 17-18: ὁ δὲ πατρῷον διαδεξάμενος | ὕμνον.

74 *SEG* 56 1489 (Varinlioğlu 2006: 368-71, no. 5) ll. 1-5.

75 *SEG* 56 1490 (Varinlioğlu 2006: 363-68, no. 4); cf. Giannakopoulos 2013: 23-24.

right as a reward for benefactions; parallels are known from associations in Athens and on Delos.[76] We may ask why he did not introduce his son – maybe he had none, maybe his son was already a member. Introducing a freedman would mean two things: Demades' influence within the γερουσία was strengthened through the integration of a person loyal to him, and Karpos' membership in the local γερουσία was visible proof of the fact that Demades had the power to elevate people (and by inference, to bring people down). This is a classic theme of elite representation. It is based on a somewhat different way of elite reproduction than the one discussed above, namely on the possibility of 'leapfrogging': dependents could be promoted to elite status, or at least join the elite clubs, through loyalty towards their patrons.

For the Flavian period, entrance fees seem to be attested for the γερουσίαι of Chios and Kos as well.[77] The problem of admission is further elucidated by an inscription from Pergamon of Hadrianic date which has been found in the gymnasium of the νέοι, but has normally been understood to be the regulation of a club of elders because members were allowed to introduce their sons for 50 Denarii, provided that they had passed the δοκιμασία and their fathers had been members for at least five years.[78] It can be assumed that new members normally had to pay an entrance fee of 100 Denarii; they were probably limited in number. All this points to a closed elite circle with a tendency towards hereditary membership – very much like the ὑμνῳδοί, where the entrance fee was also 100 Denarii, and where we know at least some of the members, such as the wealthy Castricii. That the actual age was rather irrelevant is sug-

76 *IG* II² 1337 (Athens, 57/6 BCE); *I. Délos* 1520 (153/2 BCE); cf. for other parallels Giannakopoulos 2013: 17-18.

77 *I. Ephesos* 13 ii ll. 8-9, 16; cf. Zimmermann 2007: 1527.

78 Hepding 1907: 293-96 no. 18 b/c ll. 7-10: ὁμοίως δὲ εἰσέρχεσθαι τοὺς υἱοὺς τῶν μετεχόν|των, δοκιμασθέντας μὲν καὶ αὐτούς, διδόντας δὲ εἰση|λύσιον 50, εἴ γε αὐτῶν οἱ πατέρες πρὸ πενταετίας με|τεῖχον τοῦ συστήματος. Hepding already argued that the regulation stems from the local πρεσβύτεροι or γερουσία (295); cf. Feyel 2009: 372-73. Certainty is impossible; this could also be a different association with more vague links to the gymnasium. But the terminology (σύστημα, συνέδριον) supports Hepding's assumption, as it seems to occur more often in the context of age groups.

gested by the fact that fathers and sons could apparently enter the association at the same time (but would then not profit from the reduced rate).

The 'old' appear, at least in the cities discussed, as another example of a formalization and institutional elevation of late Hellenistic structures through Romanization. The organizational form most often chosen was the γερουσία, although we do see γερουσίαι and πρεσβύτεροι co-existing for some time. As should be expected for elite corporations without a traditional place in the institutional makeup of Greek cities, the creation of such groups could depend on private initiative, which brings us to the issue of foundation.

A good example comes from early imperial Metropolis. A list records the contributions of members "for the Augusti and the πρεσβύτεροι"; as some members have contributed κλῖναι rather than money, the reference seems to be to the building or renovation of the πρεσβύτεροι's meeting place.[79] Through the inclusion of the imperial household, this very act is framed as a contribution to the Roman imperial order. The members come from distinguished families who were already prominent in the Hellenistic period, but the group in this form came into being only recently; the list refers to its "new founder" Papylos.[80] The strong Roman orientation of the Metropolitan πρεσβύτεροι is further illustrated by the fact that they erected a partial copy of the Augustan calendar decree in their meeting place, most likely as a symbolic attachment to the ideas of peace and prosperity so enthusiastically expressed in that document.[81]

79 *SEG* 49 1522.

80 Ll. 9-10: Πάπυλος Ἀπολλωνίδου καὶ αὐτὸς τῶν πρεσβυτέρων | νέος κτίστης. Engelmann 1999: 142 and Dreyer 2015: 141 think that νέος κτίστης was an honorific title conveyed upon Papylos by the city, but this would make Papylos the only one in the list who is actually a member of the πρεσβύτεροι – a rather improbable suggestion. We should rather understand: "who is himself the new founder of the πρεσβύτεροι", as does Fröhlich 2013: 64-65. On the members recorded in the list, cf. Engelmann 1999: 142 ("Die Stifter kamen meist aus alteingesessenen Familien, die seit hellenistischer Zeit in der Stadt belegt sind"), and the additions by Rigsby 2007: 134. It is not entirely clear how the πρεσβύτεροι relate to the γεραιοί who honored a gymnasiarch at some point in the first century CE (ed. pr. Dreyer 2015: 140, who also points out the almost identical wording in *SEG* 58 1339, a decree of the πρεσβύτεροι).

81 Dreyer & Engelmann 2006.

In a later period, a well-known inscription from Sidyma shows how Roman law could frame the process of founding a pro-Roman organization. The Sidymeans had decided to create a σύστημα γεροντικόν, because the current situation created by the emperor Commodus and his proconsul was just so brilliant and joyful.[82] The γερουσία is thus presented in the most obvious way as an integral part of the Roman order. The city of Sidyma sent a prominent citizen, the Lykiarch Tiberius Claudius Telemachus, to the proconsul, who replied that such an intelligent decision deserved praise, not confirmation.[83] This interesting discourse on the relevance or irrelevance of Roman law seems to disguise the fact that the σύστημα γεροντικόν did in fact undergo a ratification procedure like the νέοι of Cyzicus, or the οἶκος ναυκλήρων of Miletus.[84] Whether or not that was a necessary step we can hardly know. For Sidyma, the answer depends on our willingness to read between the lines of the proconsul's rhetoric, and in all cases mentioned, the cities may simply have been interested in establishing or maintaining diplomatic contacts. A more fruitful understanding may be reached by focusing, again, on the legal conception of *collegia* as an incentive rather than a set of merely prohibitive measures.

In Sidyma, the first members of the γερουσία were named in a list, distinguished by their status as βουλευταί or δημόται – a nice example for the relevance of a basic understanding of *ordines* even inside elite corporations.[85] At the same time, the very presence of δημόται suggests that this was at least in part an attempt to enhance the number of people who could be counted among the local elite by virtue of their membership in the σύστημα γεροντικόν – an unusual strategy of elite reproduction, presumably motivated by the growing financial pressure that local elites had to face in the late second century. The distribution of βουλευταί to

82 *TAM* II 175 ll. 3-6: ἐπεὶ διὰ τοὺς [εὐ]τυχεστάτους καιροὺς τοῦ θειοτάτου Αὐτοκράτορος Καίσαρος | ... περὶ τὰς πόλεις αὔξησιν καὶ ἡ ἡμετέρα | πόλις ἐψηφίσατο σύστημα γεροντικὸν κατὰ τὸν νόμον.

83 Ll. 10-12: Πομπώ(νιος) Βάσσος ἀνθύ(πατος) Σιδυμέων | ἄρχουσι βουλῇ δήμῳ χαίρειν· τὰ καλῶς γεινόμενα ἐπαινεῖσθαι μᾶλλον προσ|ήκει ἢ κυροῦσθαι.

84 Cf. already Benndorf & Niemann 1884: 73. De Ligt 2001: 353 emphasizes the voluntariness of the procedure, taking the proconsul's words at face value. Does κατὰ τὸν νόμον in l. 6 perhaps point into a different direction?

85 *TAM* II 176 ll. 2-4: οἱ πρώτως καταταγέντες ἰς τὴν γερουσίαν.

δημόται is 51:49. Given that 100 is a plausible number for ratification purposes,[86] this seems to suggest that the Sidymeans included as many δημόται as was possible without compromising the character of the group as an elitist institution. We do not know how the βουλευταί were chosen (there were certainly more than 51 in Sidyma),[87] but, if this reconstruction is correct, we see the interests of the elite behind a foundation that might at first sight appear to be a democratic innovation.

A similar process of foundation, perhaps with a stronger involvement of a private person, may have occurred in Phrygian Apameia, but the evidence is difficult to interpret.[88] A more instructive case takes us back to Lycia. The γερουσία of Patara was established at some time in the 120s by a wealthy individual, Gaius Iulius Demosthenes. His personal initiative was duly acknowledged in a later honorary decree for his son issued by βουλή, δῆμος and the recently created γερουσία.[89] As no Gaius Iulius Demosthenes is known from Patara through other inscriptions, his identification with the famous Gaius Iulius Demosthenes of Oinoanda, best known through the long inscription recording his foundation of the Demostheneia, is virtually certain.[90] Demosthenes belonged to the fraction of Lycian elites that not only gained influence locally, but also achieved a career in Roman military service; he was also involved in Roman administration on a regional level, as he became high priest of the emperors in the Lycian κοινόν. He thus participated in a translocal network of

86 Pliny's *fabri* would have consisted of 150 members (*Ep.* 10.33). The *centonarii* of Hispalis had 100 members according to Mommsen's reconstruction of *CIL* II 1167 ll. 8-10 (this is evidently insecure). Membership of the *Augustales corporati* in Misenum was likely fixed at 100, cf. d'Arms 2000: 133. The *collegium fabrum dolabrariorum* in Trier seems to have had 100 members: the 50 names of the first *decuria* are partially preserved, and there is room for only one other *decuria* (*CIL* XIII 11313; cf. Waltzing 1909). The 93 *centonarii* of Solva may also have been 100 at the time of the official registration of the group (which is firmly established through the very topic discussed in Septimius Severus' rescript *AE* 1983: 731).

87 Habermann 2014: 236 n. 46 thinks that the 51 were distinguished by age; in view of the other evidence discussed here, the relevance of one's actual age for entering a *gerousia* needs to be questioned.

88 *IGR* IV 783; cf. Giannakopoulos 2008: 39-43.

89 Engelmann 2012: 191-92 no. 11 ll. 7-8: καὶ συστησαμένου τὴν γερουσίαν.

90 Demostheneia: Wörrle 1988. Identification: Lepke, Schuler &Zimmermann 2015: 365 ("An der Identität … ist kaum zu zweifeln").

elites, and his offspring was later married to elite households in several Lycian cities, of course including Patara.[91] We know that the Lycian ἀρχιερεῖς specifically cared for gymnasia of their home cities, and that the γυμνασιαρχία was one of the liturgies that were occasionally taken over by these super-elites.[92] The foundation of a γερουσία in Patara seems to have been one small part of the translocal networking that someone like Demosthenes from Oinoanda had to engage in. He became the first gymnasiarch 'of all age classes' at Patara, a title regularly attested in later inscriptions. The office could also be held by women; one of the attested office-holders is in fact Julia Verania, most likely Demosthenes' daughter.[93]

The γερουσία of Patara appears as an official civic institution in the formula introducing civic decrees, which regularly mentions ἡ βουλὴ καὶ ὁ δῆμος καὶ ἡ γερουσία. But not only do we now know that it was founded by an individual (unlike βουλή and δῆμος); we can also observe slight differences. Claudia Anassa, wife of the great benefactor Tiberius Claudius Eudemos and herself benefactor with a special interest in the γυμνασιαρχία, was honored for her financial engagement with a statue. The decree was issued by βουλή, δῆμος and γερουσία, but the approval for setting up a statue could be given only by βουλή and δῆμος.[94] For all the γερουσία's official appearance and political influence, which inevitably followed from its character as an elite club, a distinction was still drawn when it came to awarding the privilege of marking local civic space.

The political significance of γερουσίαι has been controversially discussed. It is true that specific competences cannot be identified,[95] but

91 Cf. Wörrle 1988: 55-65.

92 Cf. Bönisch & Lepke 2013: 499-500.

93 See the inscription published by Engelmann 2017.

94 Lepke, Schuler & Zimmermann 2015: 357-61 no. 9 ii ll. 14-15 (*SEG* 65 1486): τὴν δὲ τοῦ ἀνδριάντος ἀνάστασιν ἐκύ|ρωσεν ἥ τε βουλὴ καὶ ὁ δῆμος.

95 Cf. Quaß 1993: 418-20, who argues against overestimating the γερουσίαι's political relevance. The terminology chosen is reminiscent of the debate on νέοι: "[Es] darf als sicher gelten, daß die kaiserzeitlichen Gerusien keine politischen, sondern soziale Institutionen waren" (419). Contrast Zimmermann 2007: 1527, who emphasizes that due to their elitist character, γερουσίαι were political rather than gymnasial institutions.

this may lie in the very nature of an institution that may best be compared with the resident Romans (κατοικοῦντες Ῥωμαῖοι etc.). In both cases, a circle of influential Romanized (or simply Roman) people assumed a corporate identity, often based on private initiative. Their combined influence and network effects, which could be used to the good of the city, made it desirable for βουλή and δῆμος to include these newly formed groups in political decisions, although they did not have a traditional role to play in them. The fact that both resident Romans and the γερουσίαι appear as partners of βουλή and δῆμος in civic decrees therefore should not distract from the efforts of private persons to create these corporations, or from the character of these groups as official embodiments of essentially private networks formed by influential persons. In several cities especially in the hinterland, Romans and γερουσίαι are the spearheads of Romanization; professional associations then follow with a delay of about fifty years.[96] Nor was that process necessarily limited to the urbanized areas. Village γερουσίαι that appear to have been founded as private clubs are known from a number of inscriptions.[97]

The proliferation of decrees jointly issued by βουλή, δῆμος and γερουσία may also overshadow possible conflicts between the γερουσία and the civic government. The γερουσία of Ephesos is a well-known, but debated case. A series of letters from Roman emperors and the proconsul of Asia, ranging from approximately 29 BC to 32 CE, shows how the γερουσία had to negotiate its privileges with the Roman administrators in charge.[98] The last letters (by the proconsul Publius Petronius) were sent in three successive years, which has been taken to imply a necessity to seek annual renewal of the privileges. But the more likely interpretation is that the γερουσία needed reassurance and clarification of the privileges in the light of some unknown conflict.[99] The other party in that conflict must have been the city itself. The clarification (or addition) in

96 Cf. Eckhardt 2016: 149-52.

97 Cf. Schuler 1998: 227-29. A nice illustration is an inscription of late Hellenistic or early imperial date from Attea in Mysia, recently discussed by Jones 2014 (*SEG* 63 1017): the κάτοικοι Ῥωμαῖοί τε καὶ Ἕλληνες and the γερουσία honor a hero. Neither a δῆμος nor a βουλή are involved in this village decree, but the trend towards developing corporations that fit into the Roman order is already visible.

98 *SEG* 43 757-72.

99 As is convincingly argued by Lewis 2000.

one of the letters that the γερουσία was allowed to prosecute its debtors according to its own laws points to one of the sources of conflict.[100] We do not know for sure how the γερουσία had originally received its privileges. Registration as an official *collegium* is not the only possible explanation, but it is a likely one, and perhaps supported by the frequent occurrence of the term σύστημα both here and in other early examples of interaction between Roman authorities and newly formed γερουσίαι.[101] The main point is that Rome actively supported the creation and maintenance of an elitist corporation that could be distinguished from the civic governing bodies – and was prepared to maintain that distinction even where it led to conflicts.

Admittedly, the evidence adduced in this section has rather often been taken from regions which are not normally at the core of debates on the Romanization of institutions. However, special cases are needed to get a clearer view on the realities often hidden behind a consensual and official rhetoric. We might add that this is not the only example where Phrygia and Lycia provide early and unambiguous evidence for the social processes which are generally believed to characterize Roman Asia Minor – like the transformation of civic βουλαί into aristocratic bodies, so clearly reflected in the praise for Quintus Veranius in the *Stadiasmus Patarensis* and other documents from Lycia, or the role resident Romans could play in the early first century CE, remarkably visible in Phrygian Apameia.[102] Sometimes, people at the periphery may be more excited than others about change, and record it in forms that are easier to decipher for us.

100 *SEG* 43 765 (29/30 CE) ll.17-18: πρός τε τοὺς ὀφείλοντας ὑμεῖν | καὶ πράξεις γείνεσθαι κατὰ τοὺς ὑμετέρους νόμους.

101 Cf. the γερουσία of Kos in a letter of Claudius (*IG* XII 4 1 254, 47/48 CE), or in Greece the old men of Argos and Agrippa (*RDGE* 63). Σύστημα is unattested as a designation for associations before the Roman period (but see already Pol. 21.13.11 on the Salii). In terms of both etymology and meaning, it is the closest match for *collegium* one could imagine. Cf. the passage from Vitruvius quoted above, n. 69.

102 Lycia: *SEG* 51 1832 A ll. 25-30 (*stadiasmus*); *SEG* 51 1824bis: The first βουλευταί of Gagai according to the new reading by Schuler & Zimmermann 2012: 616, cf. *ibid.*, 609-18 for the publication of a new bouleutic list of Patara and discussion of the transformation of civic βουλαί. Romans in Apameia: Terpstra 2013: 203-7.

4. The Blessed

It is a truism that all group life in antiquity had a religious dimension; to some extent, all associations were cult associations.[103] There are nevertheless notable differences in the way this aspect is stressed in their designations and in the records of their activities. Roman Asia Minor offers ample testimony for the spread of associations named after professions – a phenomenon virtually unattested in the region before the imperial era. At the beginning of this article, it was suggested that the desire to become part of a Romanized social order could lead to the formation of corporate organizations that could claim a place in that order, at the expense of other forms that had been established at an earlier period. Professionalization is one plausible test case. In Ionian cities like Ephesos and Smyrna, the evidence for associations with a deity in their name crumbles against the large number of professional associations. In these cities, Romanization apparently led to changes in the associational culture, or at least in the publicly visible part of that culture. The nature of these changes does not seem coincidental given the fact that the Roman conception of legitimate *collegia* left little to no room for private religious activities as the stated purpose of an association.[104]

The one phenomenon that seemingly militates against this conclusion is the remarkable spread, in the second and third centuries CE, of μύσται throughout Ionia and the rest of Asia Minor. It surely demands a better explanation than the one offered by Poland, who argued that these μύσται adhered to indigenous Anatolian traditions thinly veiled in

103 Frequently noted in the early days of scholarship: e.g. Wilamowitz-Moellendorf 1881: 274; Ziebarth 1896: 12-13; Poland 1909: 5-6.

104 Among the dossier of inscriptions recording official recognition procedures, religion figures prominently in the case of a) the *symphoniaci* who performed during *sacra publica* at Rome (*CIL* VI 4416); b) the *dendrophori*, who were civic personnel in the cult of Mater Magna (*CIL* VI 29691; X 3699, 3700); c) the *Augustales*, who were official institutions for emperor worship (*CIL* V 4428; *AE* 2001, 854), d) the *cultores Dianae et Antinoi* of Lanuvium (*CIL* XIV 2112), who do not seem to fit the pattern on first sight, but seem to have received legal recognition only after they added Antinoos to their name and should hence be regarded as a loyalty cult (as argued by Bendlin 2011).

a Greek cloak.[105] The following remarks are an attempt to show that for many groups of μύσται, the νέοι and γερουσίαι of Roman Asia Minor provide a more plausible analogy than private cult associations.[106] They, too, spread widely because of their capacity to express elitism, and can therefore be tied to the transformation of Greek cities into building blocks of the Roman empire. It is clear that 'initiates' do not, on first and perhaps also on second sight, operate on the same institutional level as the age-classes. Their very designation not only points to a different scope of action, but also to elective social formation – one does not choose to be 'young' or 'old', but initiation is usually a choice. These differences of representation (not necessarily in content) make this case study all the more pertinent in our context. Not only does it help to integrate religion – the most prominent associational context in the Hellenistic period – into our picture of transformations under Rome. It may also serve to confirm the impression that the process in view here was a two-way street: civic institutions could assume more private characteristics over time (like the young men), but they were met halfway by others that assumed a more civic character than they used to have (like the elders).

Mysteries were of course not a Roman innovation, but an age-old Greek form of worship. This very fact makes it all the more interesting that the many inscriptions mentioning μύσται in Asia Minor are almost entirely of Roman date.[107] This distribution fits a general trend of the period: intellectuals of the imperial era reinterpreted cultic and philosophical traditions, contributing to what has been labelled the 'mysterization' of religion.[108] The reasons for this new taste are of course difficult to pin down, but what we can say is that mysteries and Roman imperial ideology were a rather fitting match. Emperors publicly underwent initiation in Eleusis and supported new mystery cults and "mystical contests".[109]

105 Poland 1909: 37.

106 A fuller discussion of μύσται and μυστήρια, also extending to the Hellenistic roots, is provided by Eckhardt & Lepke 2018.

107 Justly noted by Poland 1909: 38; inexplicably denied by Sommer 2006: 182.

108 The term ("Mysterisierung") is taken from Auffarth 2013: 433; cf. now also section 2 in Belayche, Massa & Hoffmann 2021.

109 New mystery cults: *IG* XII 2 205 (Mytilene 14-37 CE); ἀγῶνες μυστικοί: *I. Ancyra* 141; *I. Side* 130.

Especially in Asia Minor, the cult of the emperor could be fused with mystery concepts, which led to a neologism like σεβαστοφάντης.[110] This discursive background needs to be kept in mind in discussing groups of μύσται. Their very name made them a rather obvious candidate for integration into an order based on loyalty and privileges.

The most famous group from Smyrna is the σύνοδος of τεχνῖται and μύσται of Dionysos Breiseus πρὸ πόλεως. It is attested in several inscriptions from the reign of Titus onwards; the latest piece of evidence is a bronze seal showing either Philippus Arabs or (less likely) Gallienus with their imperial households.[111] The μύσται and τεχνῖται had a very prominent position in Smyrna.[112] They were in regular contact with emperors and Roman governors, and took care to document these contacts in inscriptions which seem to have functioned as a kind of archival records. The association even specifically asked for copies of documents to be sent from Rome, thus ensuring both authenticity of the documents and another occasion for diplomatic contact.[113] The μύσται celebrated the birthdays of the emperors, but also the Panathenaia and "the festivals decreed by the city".[114] Apart from the lists of members, not a single one of the eleven documents pertaining to this association lacks a reference to Rome or to people who represented the Roman order. The information provided by the lists is also revealing. New members paid an entrance fee and were listed as "those who have paid the fee";[115] also in the lists is the designation πατρομύσται, which seems to suggest that those whose fathers had already been μύσται paid less – a structure well-known from the groups discussed above.[116]

The μύσται and τεχνῖται of Dionysos Breiseus must have played an important and institutionally defined part in local religion and, through

110 Cf. Pleket 1965; Bremmer 2016.

111 Inscriptions: *I. Smyrna* 598-601, 622, 639, 652, 706, 731-32. For the seal, see *I. Smyrna* 729 and Klose 1983.

112 Cf. Hirschmann 2006.

113 *I. Smyrna* 598, 731; cf. Petzl 1974: 81-82.

114 *I. Smyrna* 598 ll. 24-25: [Π]αναθηναίοις καὶ ταῖς ὑπὸ τῆς πόλεως ἐψη|φισμέναις δημοτελέσιν [ἑορταῖς]; cf. Petzl 1974: 83-85.

115 *I. Smyrna* 706 l. 6; 731 ll. 14-15 (οἱ πεπληρωκότες τὰ ἰσηλύσια).

116 *I. Smyrna* 731 ll. 17-18; 732 l. 1. Cf. Tod 1915: 2: "A hereditary member of the guild, one whose father is, or has been, a member".

their diplomatic contacts with Rome, in local politics. In that sense, they can hardly be regarded as a private association, although participation was certainly voluntary. Similar conclusions can perhaps be reached for another group from Smyrna, the σύνοδος τῶν μυστῶν τῆς μεγάλης θεᾶς πρὸ πόλεως θεσμοφόρου Δήμητρος.[117] The association, mentioned with its full name in a rather uninformative inscription, is most likely identical with the 'σύνοδος of μύσται of the goddess', which joined βουλή and δῆμος in honoring female θεολόγοι.[118] The latter are praised for having provided everything pertaining to general piety towards the goddess and the festival of the μύσται. In all probability, the whole context is a civic festival.[119] So again, a group of μύσται with the attribute πρὸ πόλεως cooperates with the city in the organization of civic religion. At Ephesos, οἱ πρὸ πόλεως Δημητριασταί καὶ Διονύσου Φλέω μυσταί and the πρὸ πόλεως μύσται of Dionysos should be regarded as similar institutions.[120]

117 *I. Smyrna* 655.

118 *I. Smyrna* 653, 654.

119 Considered also by Suys 2005: 206-7. The θεολόγοι were probably serving the city, not the association; cf. Harland 2014: 310 for parallels from Ephesos; contrast Sommer 2006: 217; Schipporeit 2013: 441-42 ("In Sitzungen der smyrnäischen Synodos referierten 'Theologen' rituelle Texte und Mitglieder führten rituelle Tänze auf"). In my view, the σύνοδος of the μύσται of the goddess is identical with the σύνοδος of μύσται of Demeter, and not with the Κόρης μύσται σηκοῦ καὶ ἐνβαταί οἱ ἐν Σμύρνῃ (*I. Smyrna* 726). Ziebarth 1900: 511 and Keil 1908: 553-54, n. 3 instead connect the θεολόγοι-inscriptions with the σύνοδος of Kore; Poland 1909: 38 rejects both identifications; Schipporeit 2013: 198-99 seems to tend towards the connection with Demeter. I regard it as more likely that the goddess could drop out of the name (because it was self-evident in context) than that a qualification like ἐνβαταί would be left out.

120 *I. Ephesos* 1595 (οἱ πρὸ πόλεως Δημητριασταί καὶ Διονύσου Φλέω μυσταί), 4337 (οἱ πρὸ πόλεως Δημητριασταί), 275, 1268, 1595, 1600-2 (οἱ πρὸ πόλεως μύσται). Again, the identification of the groups is difficult, especially because they seem to have merged at some stage. The Δημητριασταί seem to be the earliest group, attested already in the time of Tiberius; *I. Ephesos* 1595 shows that it was combined with the μύσται of Dionysos Phleus. That group is perhaps the one designated in earlier documents as πρὸ πόλεως μύσται, founded in the time of Trajan or Hadrian by Marcus Antinius Drusus (*I. Ephesos* 1601; cf. *I. Ephesos* 275, where he is ἐπιμελητὴς τῶν μυστηρίων). *I. Ephesos* 1270 seems to show that the cults of Demeter and Dionysos Phleus were closely connected already in the late first or early second century CE;

A hint to the public function of these groups lies in the attribute πρὸ πόλεως. Scholarship on μύσται πρὸ πόλεως is unanimous in taking the designation to refer to associations that met or resided 'before (i.e. outside) the city'. For the Ephesian groups, this has been connected with ritual processions known from other Dionysiac contexts.[121] This interpretation dissociates the groups from their respective cities and emphasizes their private character. But, as is well-known, πρὸ πόλεως could have two meanings.[122] The topographical one is most clearly phrased by Pollux: τὰ πρὸ πόλεως means τὰ ἔξω πόλεως.[123] Wherever a sanctuary is mentioned as being πρὸ πόλεως without any further indication, there is a likelihood that it was located 'before the city', meaning outside the city walls. But the many priests πρὸ πόλεως are much better explained if we take them as 'official' priests, acting 'on behalf of' the city.[124] As regards the μύσται, at Smyrna the designation πρὸ πόλεως is at times tied to the deity, which would leave some room for the argument that the cult took place before the city. But the situation is more complex: in the inscriptions from the second century, the attribute is grammatically tied to the god, while in the seal from the third century, the μύσται themselves carry the attribute πρὸ πόλεως.[125] In Ephesos, πρὸ πόλεως always qualifies the μύσται. Μύσται are people, not buildings; the most plausible analogy are priests πρὸ πόλεως, not sanctuaries ἔξω πόλεως. For Ephesos, this interpretation is further strengthened by the fact that the ἱερονεῖκαι, who are treated like a priesthood in several inscriptions, also receive the attribute πρὸ πόλεως, and that the only building that has ever been identified as a meeting place of the Dionysiac μύσται is the house of Caius Furius Aptus, which is clearly not located 'before the city'.[126] So until evidence to the contrary is adduced, μύσται πρὸ πόλεως have to be

the merging of their respective groups of μύσται πρὸ πόλεως may thus have appeared as a logical step.

121 E.g. Merkelbach 1979: 151.

122 Cf. the classic discussion by Robert & Robert 1983: 171-76.

123 Pollux 9.14; cf. Hasluck 1912/13: 92.

124 Cf. Schuler 2010: 74-75.

125 Contrast *I. Smyrna* 622 (οἱ τοῦ μεγάλου πρὸ πόλεως Βρεισέως Διονύσου μύσται) with *I. Smyrna* 729 (μύσται πρὸ πόλεως Βρεισεῖς).

126 For ἱερονεῖκαι πρὸ πόλεως, see *I. Ephesos* 27F ll. 456-57; cf. *I. Ephesos* 650 ll. 12-14 (honors for an ἀγωνοθέτης τῶν πρὸ πόλεως ἱερέων καὶ ἱερονείκων). On the house

interpreted as 'initiates acting on behalf of the city', and even where πρὸ πρόλεως does qualify the god – as in a new inscription from Kyme where μύσται of Dionysos Kathegemon make a dedication to a Roman *procurator* – a case would have to be made for his sanctuary being located outside the city.[127]

This means that at least in a number of cases, the private character of μύσται-groups needs to be heavily qualified. Calling them a kind of priestly college might go too far,[128] but at the very least, they seem to belong into the same ambiguous category as νέοι and γερουσίαι.[129] The very term μύσται suggests exclusivity, a special category of religious practitioners. Μύσται could thus be wealthy people who joined a club with an elitist name and henceforth had their place in civic religion.[130] They could demonstrate their superiority in religious matters, but at the same time functioned as a network and an additional communication channel to Roman governors and even emperors. Corporations of μύσται (or people celebrating mysteries, such as the ὑμνῳδοί of Pergamon) contributed to elite reproduction in providing a context for the performative display of symbolic capital, while also fulfilling all the other functions discussed above.

We should then not be surprised to find μύσται regularly and publicly emphasizing their relations with the emperors and their participation in the imperial cult. In Ephesos, οἱ τοῦ προπάτορος θεοῦ Διονύσου Κορησείτου σακηφόροι μύσται φιλοσέβαστοι make this clear enough in

of Caius Furius Aptus (Unit 6 in the Hanghaus 2) as meeting place of the μύσται, cf. Schäfer 2007: 163-66.

127 La Marca 2015 published a photo and a somewhat ambiguous translation ("*mystai* di [Dioniso] *Kathegemon* e *pro poleos*"). The publication of the text by Bru & Laflı 2021: 344-47 no. 5 has a better photo that clearly establishes the reading [Διονύσ]ọυ Καθηγεμόνος | [μεγάλου θε]οῦ πρὸ πόλεως | [ο]ἱ μύσται; the iota before μύσται is certain.

128 The possibility is considered already by Poland 1909: 40-41.

129 Cf. already Poland 1909: 532 ("halboffiziell[e] munizipal[e] Vereinigungen").

130 Cf. Belayche 2013 : 33-34: "Les cités se peuplent de ces confréries d'agents cultuels qui assument la fréquence et la sophistication nouvelle des démonstrations et constituent autant de 'vornehme exklusive Klub[s]' de (futurs) notables". The quotation is from Keil.

their very name.[131] Another example is the letter of one Apollonios to Lucius Mestrius Florus, which begins with the assurance that "mysteries and sacrifices are celebrated every year in Ephesos for Demeter Karpophoros and Thesmophoros and the Divi Augusti by μύσται with great purity and according to custom".[132] The text goes on to relate a financial conflict with the archon of the city; Apollonios in fact seeks Roman support for his group's demands. There are three similar documents from Roman Asia Minor, two from Sardeis and one from Miletus.[133] In each case, Rome is urged to intervene because civic magistrates have not fulfilled their financial obligations towards the cult. In Ephesos and in the documents from Sardeis, the terms μύσται and μυστήρια are explicitly mentioned, in Miletus, it is the priest of the Kabeiroi who writes the letter. All four cases have been argued to show private associations in conflict with the cities.[134] But the situation seems not dissimilar to the conflicts surrounding the γερουσία of Ephesos, so here again, a better explanation might point to the existence of corporate bodies of Rome-friendly elites, situated on the boundary between civic and private organization, with their own communication channels that could (and normally were) used for the good of the city, but could also lead to conflicts.

There are other cities in Asia Minor where all epigraphic references to μύσται and mysteries have to be understood in the context of elite representation, the most obvious case being Stratonikeia in Caria.[135] In some cases where we do not have enough information, there are at least indications that μύσται operated under similar circumstances, as in the case of Lydian Philadelphia.[136] This is not to say that all μύσται-groups in

131 *I. Ephesos* 293.

132 *I. Ephesos* 213 (88/89 CE).

133 *SEG* 49 1676 (Sardeis, 188/189 CE); 59 1396 (Sardeis, 221 CE); *Milet* VI 1 125-26 + 214 (80-82 CE).

134 Petzl 2009.

135 Cf. Belayche 2013: 31-32.

136 A group called οἱ περὶ τὸν Καθηγεμόνα Διόνυσον μύσται is responsible for setting up the honorific decree for the son of a former ἀρχιερεύς and λογίστης of the βουλή; the son himself is qualified only as a μύστης ἐκ τῆς διατάξεως (*TAM* V 3 1462; second century CE). The honors were apparently conveyed by βουλή and δῆμος. Διάταξις hardly refers to the statutes of the association (*TAM* ad loc.), but rather to a civic decision; perhaps the famous father had taken care to have his son

Asia Minor can be explained along these lines. However, we should be aware of the possibility that a number of groups where we have only the name either belong to the category of semi-private institutions fostering elite reproduction or were influenced by this phenomenon so clearly visible in the larger cities.[137]

5. Conclusion

For the reproduction of elite status, simply being born into an elite family is insufficient. Institutions are needed where habitual dispositions can be acquired, and where visible distinctions can be made between the noble few and the common people. I have argued here a) that Roman rule had an interest in such institutions, because it relied on the reproduction of Rome-friendly circles of some local standing, and b) that in Roman Asia Minor, organizations uniting the young, the old and those who claimed to be blessed by initiation were such institutions. None of these types of organization can be said to have been exclusively reserved for the elites, but even where the participation of lower social ranks is attested, this only enhanced these groups' potential for the reproduction and representation of elite status, as was perhaps most clearly visible in the curious case of the Akmoneian γερουσία. In each case, we have also seen legal proceedings that connected the organizations with the representatives of the Roman imperial order – the official recognition of groups of the νέοι of Kyzikos or the γερουσία of Sidyma, the privileges for the γερουσία of Ephesos, the support for the μύσται of Ephesos and Sardeis in their conflicts with the respective cities.

Going back to the model discussed at the beginning of this article, νέοι, γερουσιασταί and μύσται all had their strategies of "embedding the

inscribed into a local body of corporate elite reproduction against common custom (e.g. regarding minimum age?) – the example of Karpos the freedman from Akmoneia comes to mind. The ἱεροφάντης of Dionysos Kathegemon was honored by βουλή and δῆμος in an inscription from the third century CE; the same person had also held a couple of (other) civic offices (*TAM* V 3 1497). The restoration of μυστήρια in the well-known inscription regulating the household cult of Dionysius (*TAM* V 3 1539) is too insecure to be taken into consideration.

137 Cf. for an argument on μύσται in Phrygian villages Eckhardt 2016: 162-63.

local in the imperial".[138] For all we know, they – or their cities – did not act under direct pressure but chose to interact with the Roman order and the social and legal categories that came with it. Their obvious success made them all the more relevant as examples of integration, then to be imitated by the many professional associations in their attempts to gain status and recognition.[139]

For scholars interested in the history of 'private' associations, this approach creates significant problems of categorization. The term private and its potential antonyms are, of course, debatable in themselves. A group that maintains contacts with the state and acts in the public sphere may still be regarded as private in the sense that it does not operate under direct state control. We have also seen that the status of γερουσίαι as essentially civic institutions may rather often result from an accumulation of influence by what was originally a private network. One solution, occasionally hinted at above, would be to classify the groups discussed here as 'semi-public *collegia*', a category proposed by Luuk de Ligt based on his interpretation of Roman legal regulations.[140] However, the logic of the process described here would force us to include not only νέοι, γερουσίαι or *Augustales* in this group (the examples chosen by de Ligt), but also μύσται, professional associations (explicitly excluded *ibid.*), hymn singers and village corporations. At least for Roman Asia Minor, this means that the majority of associations could be classified as neither private nor state controlled.

We may deduce from this that 'private associations' were a useless category from the outset, but that assumption, although perhaps endorsed by some recent treatments,[141] would lead us to miss what may in

138 Ando 2010: 45.

139 On which see van Nijf 1997.

140 De Ligt 2001.

141 E.g. Last & Harland 2020: 12 reject the category of 'private associations' because "the commonly employed categories of 'private' (or related concepts of 'individualistic' or 'personal religion') vs 'public' have often been misleading in the study of social life in the ancient Mediterranean". The argument appears to be that calling an association 'private' implies that it does not act in 'public', a notion that would indeed sit oddly with the fact that many of the groups in question are known from public inscriptions. But while this betrays the authors' own use of terminology, as historians they cannot be unaware of the fact that 'public' is by no means the only

fact be the whole point of Romanized (or 'imperial') corporate identities. The boundary between private and state-controlled organization was blurred to an extent that we do not find in the Hellenistic period. Our problems in categorizing associations in Roman Asia Minor with the tools applicable to earlier epochs are indications of an actual change. With the transformation of cities into Rome-oriented oligarchies, the nature of private organizations changed as well, in a process that was facilitated, but not in detail supervised by the Roman administration and its legal framework.

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possible antonym to 'private' (see only Winterling 2005). Their own proposal to call the groups in question 'unofficial associations' adds nothing to what was already encompassed by the term 'private association' as defined by Gabrielsen & Thomsen 2015, solves none of its potential problems, and is factually wrong in some of their own case studies (e.g. the officially recognised *cultores* of Lanuvium (*CIL* XIV 2112).

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