

Colonial Geopolitics and Local Cultures in
the Hellenistic and Roman East
(3rd century BC – 3rd century AD)

Géopolitique coloniale et cultures locales
dans l’Orient hellénistique et romain
(III^e siècle av. J.-C. – III^e siècle ap. J.-C.)

edited by

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To the memory of
Anton Powell (1947-2020) and Alexandru Avram (1956-2021)

Introduction

The contributions published in this volume in the main constitute the proceedings of a panel entitled ‘Colonial geopolitics and local cultures in the Hellenistic and Roman East (3rd century BC – 3rd century AD)’ which was held during the *Celtic Conference in Classics 2014* (Edinburgh, Scotland, June 25-28th 2014), but the editors have taken the opportunity to also incorporate a number of papers given previously at the panel ‘Les relations entre les Balkans et l’Asie Mineure, de l’époque classique à la période byzantine (V^e s. av. J.-C. - V^e s. ap. J.-C.)’ which convened at Mamaia (Romania, September 23-27th, 2012) under the aegis of the *Symposium international Le Livre. La Roumanie. L’Europe. 5^e édition*. Due to various reasons, the final publication of both these panels has, alas, been delayed, but it is now a pleasure, at last, to produce a thematic volume incorporating all these papers. We wish to thank all the contributors for their patience, hoping that this volume will answer their expectations. The text which follows is by Hadrien Bru and is taken from the Introductory Panel of the *Celtic Conference in Classics*.

Hadrien Bru, Adrian G. Dumitru, Nicholas Sekunda



To begin, I would like to thank you sincerely for coming to be here with us in Edinburgh, in these northern territories and *eschata*, which will become central for us for a while. I am above all grateful to those who came here at their own expense, manifesting their interest in coming to this meeting despite the financial difficulties involved. Many thanks are of course due to Douglas Cairns and to Anton Powell for organizing such a huge event including no less than seventeen panels, as you know. Regrettably my former PhD advisor Maurice Sartre has not been able to attend.

The Context of this Conference

Another reason for thanking you for attending is the necessity of informing you, if you are not aware already, that you are heroes, as specialists in ancient history, a kind of person that is soon bound to disappear, because the neoconservative, liberal and authoritarian governments which we are facing, have decided to end the financial support for the Humanities and Social Sciences we used to benefit from in the past, especially in Europe. This is mostly because we do not produce any direct added value which can be measured in financial terms. Obviously the big companies or corporations are not interested in the social criticism

which arises from our studies. Consequently they deny the importance of Humanities and Cultural Studies as a whole, representing an incredible threat almost imperceptible to us, even if we have heard about certain twentieth century ‘régimes’ able to destroy the cultures. Most scholars have been surprised by this quite recent and violent attack against Humanities, which have been the basis of western culture for four hundred years, and people who thought that the University was an eternal institution are about to be highly disappointed, although we already saw clear signs of the trend fifteen years ago. I am referring to the programmatic disappearance of the University we used to know, open to the world and to universal knowledge and cultures. As concerns us, the sciences of Antiquity are of course considered useless for modern societies, and the way in which we have practiced our art since the nineteenth century has been brought into question. I fear that after a few decades, there will be very few of us left to study ancient societies officially, first because of a lack of political will, second because we need a lot of time to work on the historical or archaeological sources, and third because our studies or topics are often misunderstood and despised.

But we are still here, in the field or in the libraries, to describe, to analyse and to write on Ancient History which was the basis of what has happened up to the present day. This is all in our hands. There is no more time for division and dispersion. If we want to survive, I am convinced that we have to work together closely, historians, archaeologists, epigraphists, specialists in numismatics, linguistics, etc. We have to do this, on the one hand, because it is technically necessary, and on the other hand because we have no other choice. We have to combine our energy, our knowledge, and our technical know-how, for both scientific and personal reasons.

It is essential to find new dynamics, in the first place if we wish to carry on with Ancient studies, and second in order to publish new things together according to the highest standards. On this point, I think that we have to work with huge international publishing houses, but also with local university presses, trying to find a balance. In my opinion, we have to bear in mind that our books and articles will perhaps be discovered by potential readers much later on, maybe within one or two centuries, but at that time, I would like to think or to believe that our writings will be useful to build, or rebuild, other, better societies. That is why in my opinion we have two main missions: to write documented

synthesizes, and to propose new studies opening to future research angles for the next generations.

Right now, together with Adrian Dumitru and Nicholas Sekunda, I have chosen to question the connection between Colonial Geopolitics and Local Cultures on a quite long timespan running through the Hellenistic and Roman periods. But before we deal with the research tasks directly, a few words on language. In which language should we communicate within our field? We obviously know that this significant choice is driven by social, sociological, cultural and political issues. Should we favour English as the vehicular language, eliminating the other languages as vernacular dialects bound to disappear, 'vouées à disparaître'?

Of course not, because it would be absurd to promote a sole and unique dominating language, and at the same time to study cultural diversity in Antiquity. As General Editor of the *Historical and Archaeological Atlas of Ancient Asia Minor*, I have defended the need and the right of writing history in English, but also in German, in French and in Italian. It is naturally a cultural choice. Maybe there is a connection between this choice and my present work on Hellenistic and Roman Phrygia Paroreios, where the Greek language overwhelmed the Phrygian and Pisidian languages, although it took time, as the native languages were spoken in this region since the Bronze Age.

The organizers of conference series the *Celtic Conferences in Classics* have chosen that the second conference language is French. The conferences have been organized from the beginning in the 1990s onwards, and significantly the first continental CCC was held in 2004 at Rennes 2, in France, which was my former university. It confirms the wisdom of the founders of the series, among them Anton Powell, and I thank him for that. But I do not have any illusions, because I am convinced that, for example, French, Italian, German will probably disappear as spoken languages within one or two centuries. English and Spanish will probably last a little bit more. On my side, I have chosen to give you an introduction in English, then a more personal contribution tomorrow in French. Concerning your papers, you have made your own choices.

Just a last note of clarification about our panel before we go any further. Its recent background has to be understood as the third of three meetings held over the last year. The first was a meeting devoted to 'Spaces and Territories of the Roman Eastern Colonies' held at Besançon university and organized by myself in October; an international symposium was held in November at the university of Strasbourg and organized by Cédric Brélaz on the Greek culture in the Roman Eastern Colonies, and now this panel of the CCC.

So, in order to introduce this panel, I would like to focus briefly on three connected considerations, which are Geopolitics, Acculturation and Cultural Identities.

Geopolitics

Geopolitics deals with populations living on a territory but subject to political forces or institutions, mainly States, which are often city-states, kingdoms, or empires. Therefore we have to consider the nature of the States involved in the act of colonization. Often, the local or native populations faced a royal State whose behaviour could rather be described as Imperial. Of course I am thinking primarily about Alexander the Great and the Seleucid Empire, and to a lesser extent about the Ptolemaic State. This latter state was less involved than the others in continental affairs, but we can find exceptions like Arabian Philadelphia which became Amman, the present capital of Jordan. Later on we encounter the Attalids and then the Romans. We know how the Achaemenid empire influenced Alexander and the Seleucids, them, but are we able to establish what precise influence the Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian, or Hittite empires had on Greek or Roman colonization?

This concerns considerations such as the deportation of populations, enslaved or not, upon the foundation of urban centres, and the creation of networks of roads designed for (and sometimes constructed by) armies, and later used by merchants. What was the way in which the state watched over and administrated the colonized territories? Was it by patrols, watch-towers, garrisons, strongholds and so on? We have to map the relationship between plains and mountains. I am thinking, for example, about the communications between Pamphylia and Pisidia, or elsewhere. In every case, we have to determine whether the populations were involved or not in the new ways of managing territories. Just to take a quick example, in the mountainous range of the Sultan Dağ, in Phrygia Paroreios, we know that around the third century AD an *orophylax* responsible for patrolling the heights and *eschatiai* of the Killanian plain which was obviously colonized as a Roman Imperial estate, was murdered by bandits. We learn from an inscription that this man was called Sousou, which was a typical Phrygian local name.

Another question well worth asking is what changes in the material culture can we observe, when a State is overwhelming a local population with soldiers, *katoikoi*, and civil officials or merchants? This question is common for archaeologists, who study artefacts, statues, tools, ceramics and architecture, but we need to take these aspects into account as historians, as was done, for example, in Afghanistan at Aï Khanoum by Paul Bernard because of the lack of inscriptions there. Moving forward chronologically, it is absolutely

necessary to study how the Romans were influenced by Royal Hellenistic practices in the way to colonize new territories and populations, in spite of the narrow specialities well-known among scholars.

Of course, we have to analyse systematically the precise role played by the local political, economic, social and religious élites facing the new power in the area. Was the collaboration fast? Was it long running? Where did it happen at the beginning, and where later on? Regularly we find cities or people ready to collaborate, and deep inaccessible valleys refusing to make any compromise for decades or more. In northern Pisidia, for example, people from the local city of Prostanna (close to the Eğirdir lake) deposited on the Greek island of Delos a dedication to a Roman official of the province of Asia (to the father or grandfather of Mark Antony) as early as 113 BC, but close to this city, another one called Tymbrida was reluctant to accede to Roman domination, and had a lot of troubles at the time of Mark Antony, losing three important and valuable tracts of territory to the powerful inhabitants of Apollonia in Pisidia. We are informed of this thanks to an inscription found by the American epigraphist J.R.S. Sterrett at the end of the nineteenth century.

The crucial topic in Antiquity was the ownership of agricultural land, mentioned in the inscription cited above. One of the main concerns of local geopolitics was the central question of how was the agricultural land distributed to the Greek or Roman colonists after it had been seized from the native population? Most of time the local indigenous populations were pushed out towards the *eschata*: mountains in the case of the Phrygians and Pisidians, or the steppe lands of central Phrygia where Galatian tribes were displaced, or to the Syrian *badiya* in the case of certain Iturean Arab tribes. Were there land-surveyors among the colonists? This was regularly the case from Alexander and his *bematistai* onwards down to the Roman colonists and governors with their *gramatici*. We learn this on the one hand from inscriptions, and on the other hand from the *Libri coloniarum*. In those latter technical texts, we can find advice given to the Roman colonists on how to divide up the allotments given to veterans, and also ways to fix the boundaries between a Roman colony and another city belonging to a rural local community, or to a Greek *polis* for example. For instance it could be a local river, a road, a milestone or the crest of a mountainous range. It goes without saying that the opinion of the local natives is not taken into account.

A connected theme which has to be studied is concerned with slaves, who were mainly present in order to work in the fields of the colonists. Do these slaves (and later freedmen under the Roman Empire) mainly come from elsewhere (enslaved as a result of war, trade or piracy), or were they captured in the area at the time of the

colonial conquest? In most cases onomastics can help us decide on this question.

Slavery and enslavement drive us to a wider social approach: what changes in personal status were created by the irruption of colonists onto a regional landscape? We must be aware of the geopolitical mess caused by military colonization in the form of the arrival of *katoikoi* or veterans in a specific place. What were the exact social, legal, cultural and political relationships between the natives and the newcomers? As far as the changes affecting local geopolitics are concerned, did the indigenous communities systematically become *kōmai* of the Graeco-Roman colonies or not, and when? Sometimes the rural communities of Phrygia became *poleis* or *civitates* in their own right, but this was a very late development, at the beginning of the fourth century AD under Diocletianus or Constantine, a long time after the *Constitutio Antoniniana*. The Phrygians wanted citizen status anyway, even if by that time it was politically hardly worth having, because they wished to be respected, rather than dominated and despised by the colonial cities, which was a very common thread in the Graeco-Roman and colonial mentality.

Last but not least, leaving to one side the epigraphic and literary sources, the coins struck by the Greek Hellenistic rulers and by the Roman colonies under the control of the central power, played an important role in the local economy. The eastern Roman colony of Pisidian Antioch (in fact in Phrygia Paroreios on the Pisidian border) diffused an enormous volume of bronze coins all over the region, thanks to its major hegemonic position as head of the Augustan colonial network in the southern Anatolian Taurus mountains, but also as *caput viae* of the *Via Sebaste*, the road which connected several regional colonies enabling the swift movement of Roman troops in the case of a Pisidian or Isaurian uprising. Of course the coinage of the other Hellenistic and Eastern Roman colonies has to be studied carefully for the role it played in the local economy, and also in terms of religious and political propaganda it displayed.

The contacts between native people and colonists lead logically to a phenomenon called acculturation.

Acculturation

One of the few positive points to arise as a consequence of colonization is its effect on the local culture of the area, because such cultural contacts give the birth to new cultures, or at least to new cultural features. So we could ask several questions such as:

Did the language of the colonists overwhelm the local vernacular language or not, and in what way? Did it happen quickly or slowly?

Do we find bilingual families, and was it frequently the case, or not? When? Who?

What were the mutual influences between the native and the colonial languages? We are able to deduce these from the inscriptions thanks to a careful linguistic study based on lexicology and grammar.

As concerns social structures, it might be worth evaluating the composition of the families living in the colonized area. Epitaphs can be highly useful in this field. Very often we can observe that the women use vernacular or indigenous personal names, and that they are regularly married to a Graeco-Roman colonist, as seems only logical. This is another kind of domination which completes the political submission. The names given to the children is an important consideration. The decision on whether to give them vernacular or colonial names could be linked to the social status of the mother, and so on the actual influence she had in the household.

Onomastics plays a central role in this study, because the choice of which personal names to give the children is a central cultural feature. Some personal names continue to be used over centuries and even millennia. They can be the only trace left by a local language centuries after its disappearance. To give a few quick examples, names like Ouanaxos survived until the third or fourth centuries AD in Asia Minor although their origin dates back to *wanax*, a word meaning king, found on Linear B tablets dating back to the second millennium BC. In Romania, we are still able to find thousands of Hadriani and above all thousands of Traiani, commemorating the conqueror of the Ancient Dacia. But onomastic studies are not so simple. Although a Jewish presence is detectable in the Graeco-Roman cultural milieu since the times of Alexander, most Jews took Greek names, so that we are not able to distinguish them in the inscriptions of Syrian or Pisidian Antioch. In this case onomastics inform us about the degree of Hellenization.

The place and the role of the slaves among the colonial milieu give us clues as to the sociological situation, and this study allows a completion of the regional description including more traditionally an approach of the colonial and indigenous élites whose attitudes are responsible for a cultural fusion or not. Whatever the cultural blend resulting from colonization, we are more or less completely reliant on epigraphic documents to give us any clue of the cultural identity being expressed.

Cultural identities

The arrival of colonists naturally creates deep changes in the local culture, and then in the representations that social and political groups create about themselves. These representations must be analysed because they

can teach us a lot about how the communities regarded themselves.

What is the language of expression of the colonized communities?

What are the naming practices, native or colonial, adopted visible in the inscriptions?

Which cultural identities did they claim?

In Phrygia Paroreios and Northern Pisidia, we can find native communities called Tymandeis or Pliennoi (Phrygians) on the territory of Apollonia, and one called Moulasseis probably on the territory of Tymbria, but the colonists of Pisidian Apollonia and of Neapolis of Phrygia in the Killanian Plain, around the Beyşehir lake called themselves 'Lycian and Thracian colonists' on their civic coins and official inscriptions alike during the Roman imperial era, in Greek, but using the Roman word *kolōn/kolonōn*, and not *katoikoi*, although their presence in the area dates back to the 160s BC. In fact they were settled by one of the Attalid kings after the treaty of Apameia, precisely Eumenes II, in order to defend the inner part of Phrygia Paroreios, and its wealthy agricultural plains against the Galatians. Because they were later jealous of the reputation of the powerful Roman colonists settled by Augustus in Pisidian Antioch, they adopted the Roman word *kolōn* between the end of the first century and the third century AD.

This peculiar period between the first and the third centuries AD witnessed an explosion of the cultural identities claimed by the communities of the Eastern Roman Empire in response to the cultural and political homogenization in progress over the *longue durée*. What were the reactions of the local communities when faced with the challenge posed by the dominant Graeco-Roman social strata? Generally we observe a complete assimilation, but sometimes there was cultural resistance, or a mixed situation.

When there was a common assimilation, we can trace it in onomastics, religious cult, dress and social habits. Here the study of funerary monuments can teach us a lot, because these documents reflect everyday social conformity. During the second and third centuries AD, we are for the most part unable to distinguish between natives and others any more, except when we find typical indigenous names in the inscriptions.

But we can find strong cultural resistance too. In this case, the subjugated populations expressed themselves through their native language and cults. In Phrygia Paroreios, the local Phrygian people accessed their written language again, and they continued to speak Phrygian at least until the sixth century AD. More incredibly the Pisidians, who were a Luwian speaking

people, whose language dated back at least to the Bronze Age, recovered their written language just before the disappearance of their own culture.

The local native cults changed their form over time. The famous Phrygian cult of Kybele was influenced by Ionian mystic practices during Roman times, because a lot of the immigrant colonists during the Hellenistic period came from Ionia. That is the reason why we find a cult of *Gē Kataphugē*, symbolizing the call of an underground shelter, in Northern Pisidia. I will show you tomorrow the importance of traditional clothing practices on unpublished Phrygian and Pisidian funerary monuments: dress being, of course, sociologically another refuge for cultural identity, in the case in question connecting Phrygian and Pisidian shepherds.

The last case in point is the mixed acculturation that we can meet in the so-called Indo-Greek kingdoms, showing a cultural fusion, or sometimes only a colonial culture with a local veneer. If the colonial presence was not reinforced by a stable State, and several waves of colonists, as was the case in Syrian Antioch or elsewhere, we can observe a fading of the colonial cultural elements, because the local culture remained strong, admitting few traces of the colonizing culture.

With these few words I have tried to mention few possible trails to follow, in order to take our discussion further. Anyway I wish you an excellent conference, thank you again for coming.

Hadrien Bru, Edinburgh, June 26th, 2014.