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PATRONS OF PROVINCES IN THE EARLY PRINCIPATE: THE CASE OF BITHYNIA

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INTRODUCTION

The history of patronage of provinces in the Roman Empire is most uneven. During the middle and late Republic we do find cases of individuals who might be described as such. For example, Cicero indicates that the Claudii Marcelli were the patrons of Sicily, a claim that was probably generally recognized by 100 B.C.; Verres made the same claim to the province in 70's; Caesar notes that Pompeius Magnus had *magnae clientelae* in the *Hispania citerior*. Some families were thought to have, or at least to share, the patronage of provinces, e.g. the Fabii and Domitii in the *Narbonensis*. By 28 B.C., Nonius Balbus is recorded on an inscription as patron of the *koinon* of Crete.¹

The concept of *patrocinium provinciae* was quite amorphous in the Late Republic. In part this is true because not every province had an organization which might confer the title and in part because terms like 'Sicilians' and 'Achaean' could be interpreted narrowly (as for example, *natio*) or broadly (as the province as an entity). Hence, several varieties of this form of patronage may be observed:

1. More *maiorum* the conquerer of a *natio* or *populus* became the patron (Cic. *de off.* I, 35). The classic case is Claudius Marcellus and his descendants in respect first to Syracuse but eventually including the whole province.

2. The senate, through the *leges de repetundis*, gave to provincials (*civitates*, *nationes*, *populi*) a *patronus* to prosecute governors accused of extortion and maladministration, e.g., Caesar claims the *patrocinium* of *Hispania Ulterior*, *BHisp.* 42 and Cicero that of Sicilians, *Att.* 14.12).²

3. The *koinon* or commune of a province might ask a governor to admit the province into his *clientele*. Nonius Balbus exemplifies this format (C. X 1430 = 2405).

The title, *patronus provinciae*, might then be acquired by simple ascription (*more maiorum*) with or without formal application by the clients, it might be also be assigned to a province by the Senate, or it might be the consequence of a formal request of a provincial assembly.

With the 'Restoration' of the Republic, there is a marked change in this pattern. Most notably, the title virtually disappears from the evidence for a good 150 years (until the

¹ The republican material is collected and discussed by M. Gelzer, "Die Nobilität der römischen Republik" (1912), now in *Kleine Schriften*, Wiesbaden, 1962, I, 89ff., E. Badian, *Foreign Clientelae*, Oxford, 1958. On Nonius Balbus, see Appendix B.

² On this subject, J. Touloumakos, "Zum römischen Gemeindepatronat im griechischen Osten", *Hermes* 116, 1988, 304-324.

principate of Hadrian) and does not become common at all until the very late 2nd/early 3rd century, A.D. Moreover, when this form of patronage re-appears in the 2nd century, it does so in the western provinces of the Empire and is regularly associated with the provincial flamine.³

Two cases appear to build striking exceptions to this pattern. L.Mindius Pollio and C.Cadius Rufus were proconsuls of Bithynia under Claudius. Under their authority, it is claimed, the koinon of the province struck coins. As both of these governors are described not only as, 'proconsul' ('anthupatos'), but also "patron" on these coins, both would also appear to be the official patrons of the province.

These cases are exceptional for several reasons. First, as noted, they are inconsistent with the pattern associated with the patronage of provinces in the post Augustan Empire. Second, as I have argued elsewhere, Augustus issued a regulation which denied to peregrine communities (cities and provincial assemblies) the right to claim their senatorial governors as patrons.⁴ It will be demonstrated here that the so-called patrons of Bithynia were not patrons of the province, but patrons of the leading city of the province, Nicomedia.⁵

We are relatively well informed about the history of the Bithynian koinon.⁶ A temple to Roma and Augustus at Nicomedia had been completed and was the center of the provincial cult. Throughout the 1st Century, A.D., the Bithynians had been active in prosecuting their governors for maladministration. It is not, however, clear to what degree reference to "Bithynians" in the literary evidence can be equated with the "Koinon Bithyniae". Note that Pliny only once refers to the provincial consilium (ep. 7, 6.1). To complicate matters, factional strife was rampant in the province at all levels, even within the provincial assembly.⁷

THE NUMISMATIC EVIDENCE FROM BITHYNIA

At the beginning of his description of the coins of the province of Bithynia, Waddington, et al., write:

"Les monnaies frappées par le commune Bithynia, depuis Claude jusqu'à Hadrien, l'ont été probablement à l'occasion des jeux fédéraux. L'atelier est sûrement Nicomédie, et il

³ Appendix B. This is not to suggest that provincial assemblies did not confer public honors during this period. The case of Claudius Timarchus, who claimed that he alone determined whether a governor would receive the thanks of the koinon of Crete, is well known (Tac. Ann. XV 20). On this case, P.A.Brunt, "Charges of Provincial Maladministration in the Early Principate", *Historia* 10,1961,215 and J.Nicols, "Die Verleihung öffentlicher Ehrungen in der römischen Welt", *Chiron*, 9,1979,248-9.

⁴ "Patrons of Greek Communities in the Early Principate", above p. 81ff.

⁵ On the status of the Bithynian cities on this question, see the above mentioned article.

⁶ J.Deininger, *Die Provinziallandtage der römischen Kaiserzeit*, Munich, 1965, discussed at many points, especially 17-19, 60-64; on patronage in the province, Nicols, op.cit.

⁷ The factional strife is mentioned at all levels, note especially Plin. epp. III 9.31; IV 9.3 and 5; VII 6, and the many references in the speeches of Dio of Prusa. Sherwin-White, *Letters of Pliny*, ad loc., and Brunt, *Charges*, 212-3, discussed the effects of the strife on the working of the koinon.

existe des pièces de cette ville (reconnaissables au monogramme) qui sont identiques de tout point à celles du koinon. On a souvent rangé une partie de ces dernières à Nicomédie. Cependant, nous nous sommes fait une règle de classer au koinon toutes les pièces qui ne portent pas de nom de ville, à plus forte raison celles où figure le nom BITHYNIA."⁸

The argument is not compelling: As the coins of Bithynian cities regularly refer to themselves on their coinage, it "follows" that coins without such references should refer to the koinon. There are six coins in this group without a "monogramme" (described in Appendix A), all can be securely dated to the principate of Claudius. It should be noted that the first coins to make explicit reference to the koinon (as COM BIT on silver and KOINON BEIΘYNIAS on bronze) were struck under Hadrian.⁹ Recueil offers no explanation for the koinon's highly differential treatment of itself under Claudius and under Hadrian. Nonetheless, the argument has never been challenged and the most recent prosopographical studies routinely repeat the claim that these two governors were indeed patrons of the province.

On the obverse of these coins, one finds the titles and portrait of Claudius (Nos. 1-5, see Appendix A for full description) and of Britannicus (No. 6). The reverses bear a number of different images, but they also include a reference to the proconsul of the province, by name and title, and to the fact that the latter was also patron (the abbreviations vary between "ΠΑΤΡ" and "Π". If these coins were struck by the koinon, then we should reckon the two proconsuls, Mindius Pollio and Cadius Rufus as the patrons of the province. Indeed, they are usually described as such (App. B).

There are, however, good reasons to reject the assignment of these coins to the koinon of Bithynia and to attribute them to Nicomedia. In this case, the two men become patrons of that city.

1. To begin with, it is difficult to generalize about pattern of coin types in Bithynia at the beginning of the reign of Claudius. Immediately after the departure of Pompeius for Rome in about B.C. 63, eight Bithynian cities in a coordinated but nonetheless independent way, issued coins to "Roma".¹⁰ After Octavian had re-established the koinon in 29 B.C., the proconsul Thorius Flaccus authorized at least one major issue at various cities. Between 27 B.C. and A.D. 41 there had been small and very irregular issues at Apamea, Nicaea and Nicomedeia.¹¹ In sum, there is no indication that coins were regularly struck either by the koinon, or by the two leading cities of the province before the principate of Claudius.

⁸ Recueil général des monnaies Grecques d'Asie Mineure, Paris 1910, I, 2, 234-5.

⁹ Recueil, 239; C.Bosch, Die kleinasiatischen Münzen der römischen Kaiserzeit, Stuttgart, 1935, II, 172, Deininger, 63, Magie, RRAM II, 1485, n.48. Some doubt has been expressed about whether these coins can indeed be attributed to the koinon, Deininger 52, n.5 and 63, N.7.

¹⁰ R.Mellor, Thea Roma: The Worship of the Goddess Roma in the Greek World, Göttingen, 1975, 84-5, and n.372, collects the evidence. Also, Magie, RRAM I, 400.

¹¹ Recueil, 251, n.38, 516, 12ff.

2. Even Recueil admits that the so-called Koinon series were struck at Nicomedia. Indeed, they are in every technical way equivalent to the coins of the city which bear the civic monogram.

3. There is nothing in the iconography that could be interpreted to refer unambiguously to the Commune (see Appendix A for the types). Indeed, Recueil refers to the female head with a towered crown once as "Bithynia" (No. 3) and once as "Tyche urbaine" (for Nicomedia No. 8). It is, in fact, difficult to see how the province might be personified by the "turreted crown".

4. The so-called Koinon coinage looks very much like earlier issues of Nicomedia.

Bithynia 1 and 2 (woman's head, helmetted Pallas? Roma?) = Nicomedia 5 (cf. plates 35.1 and 88.22).

Bithynia 3 (woman's head with turreted crown) = Nicomedia 8 (cf. plates 35.2 and 88.23).

Bithynia 4 (head of Zeus) = Nicomedia 1 (cf. Recueil Plates 35.3 and 88.17 and 18).

Bithynia 5 is not clear and Recueil does not illustrate it.

Bithynia 6 (bridge or aqueduct over GEU DOS with capricorn) has no apparent provincial content (see Appendix A).

5. If these coins (nos. 1 through 5, especially) were recognizable, as I believe they must have been, as referring to earlier Nicomedian issues, would it be necessary to add a reference to the name of the city? Alternatively, why would the koinon strike coins at Nicomedia that were identical to earlier Nicomedian coins and not make its own authority clear?

6) The size of the issues also speaks against the proposition that these coins were issued by the commune. Single examples may have been known to Waddington, et al., but only "Bithynia 1" is in Aulock, otherwise, not one appears in the SNG of Aulock or Copenhagen or in the BM.¹² The assumption here is that bronze coins struck by the koinon would have been struck in sufficient numbers to serve the fiscal needs of the province. They may, however, have been intended only as medallions. As Grant has shown, medallions and commemorative coins were especially valued by the antiquarian Princeps, Claudius, and were not intended for general circulation.¹³

7. As noted above, the Koionon did issue coins in its own name under Hadrian. To accept the argument of Recueil that it also issued coins under Claudius, we must also accept the improbable notion that it struck its first coins without referring to itself, and then ceased to strike any more for ninety years.

¹² D.R.Sear, *Greek Imperial Coins and their values: The Local Coinages of the Roman Empire*, London 1982, No.437, assigns "Bithynia 1" a moderately high value for bronze of that time and place of £ 40, suggesting some rarity. That the others are still rarer is indicated by the fact that Sear does not even mention them.

¹³ M.Grant, *Roman Anniversary Issues*, Cambridge, 1950, 21-4; 70 and 76.

8. Finally, if the coinage was issued by the *koinon*, then Pollio and Rufus would have to be reckoned as patrons of the province, but there is no other evidence for provincial patrons between 27 B.C. and the reign of Hadrian (Appendix B).¹⁴ There is however numismatic and epigraphical evidence indicating that at least Nicaea and Nicomedia acquired two of the proconsuls as patrons in this period.¹⁵

In general, the evidence suggests that the issues of Pollio and Rufus which do not have an explicit reference to a community should be referred to Nicomedia and not to the *Commune*. The patrons on those coins are properly patrons of Nicomedia.

PATRONS OF PROVINCES IN THE SECOND CENTURY

Between A.D. 90 and 140, we have two cases in which senators appear to have become patrons of provinces. There is no doubt about the fact that the younger Pliny was the patronus cause of the Baetici. Less certain is whether the *patrocinium* he describes in ep. III 4, is to be understood narrowly as a reference to his role as advocate appointed by the Senate, or more generally as the result of a formal cooptation by the provincial assembly. Because Pliny's language is so ambiguous and because he would represent the first known case of the phenomenon in the Principate, I now tend to favor the second alternative.¹⁶

The first definitive epigraphical reference to the phenomenon is the dedication of the provincia Britannia to its patron, M.Vettius Valens. He served as *legatus iuridicus* there in about 137. Nonetheless, he, too, may have been a *patronus causae* (note that he and Pliny had legal expertise). The reason for this conclusion is simple enough. During these two centuries, cities proudly recorded on stone and bronze the names of their senatorial patrons, so did patrons mention the names of their clients on inscriptions of a more private character. Provinces shared this tradition and honored their flamines and other benefactors. It is then remarkable, if the title were regularly conferred, that no other province or patron mentions the honor. Hence, I do not believe that senators became patrons of provinces by a process of cooptation in the pre-Severan period.

Three other cases may reasonably be dated to the end of the 2nd century and all involve men of only local and provincial importance. As they are also known to be flamines of the province and one is celebrated for his eloquentia, it would appear that legal and rhetorical skills were essential benefactions.¹⁷

¹⁴ L.Harmand, *Le patronat sue les collectivités publiques*, Paris, 1957,411-2. The first securely attested patron of a province after 20 B.C., is M.Vettius M. f. Valens, CIL XI 383 = PIR¹ V 344 = Birley, *Fasti Britan.* p.215. The fact that senators do not become patrons of provinces may be connected to the Augustan edict of A.D. 11/12, discussed by me in Chiron, 9,1979, and forthcoming in ZPE. Note, however, Vehilius/Vilius discussed in Appendix B.

¹⁵ Nicols, *Greek Patrons*.

¹⁶ Hermes, 108,1980,370-4, and "Greek Patrons", *op.cit.*

¹⁷The details are given in Appendix B.

In sum, senatorial patrons of provinces during the early Principate were probably *patroni causae*, that is, they were appointed by the senate to prosecute a governor accused of provincial maladministration. During the very late 2nd Century, the assemblies of the western provinces began to assign the title to individuals of provincial importance. There is some reason to believe that eloquence at the bar may also have been a decisive benefaction of all these patrons.¹⁸

Appendix A: The Numismatic Evidence for Bithynia

1. L.Mindius Pollio. PIR² M 598; RE XV 1773;6; Laterculi I 243. Nicols, Chiron, 9,1979,256, and Greek Patrons, op.cit. Not in Harmand. Proconsul of Bithynia under Claudius, probably before 48.

Recueil I, 2 "Bithynia" 1: Obv: Claudius with his titles. Rev: Helmetted woman, Roma or Athena, with legend ΕΠΙ ΜΙΝΔΙΟΥ ΠΩΛΛΙΩΝΟΣ ΑΝΘΥΠΙΑΤΟΥ ΠΑΤΡΩΝ(ΟΣ) (Plate 35,1). Examples: one illustrated in Recueil, Plate 35.1 and SNG (Aulock) 271.

"Bithynia" 2: Obv. Claudius with titles, now including P.M., trib. pot and pat. patriae. rev. same as 1, but "patr" not visible. Examples: None published.

"Bithynia" 3: Obv: Claudius with titles. Rev. Tyche (plate 35.2), name and titles of Mindius as in Bithynia 1, only "[pa]tro". Examples: Babylon, 213 (with variant reading in Claudian titulature, addition of AVTO at beginning. Recueil, plate 35,2. Not in BM or SNG Aulock of Copenhagen.

"Bithynia" 4: Obv: Claudius, as in 3. Rev: laurelled head of Zeus, name and titles of Mindius, but "p" for patron. Examples: Recueil, plate 35.3.

"Bithynia 5: Obv. Claudius as on 4 (??; legend not clear). Rev: Mindius with titles and patron; uncertain figure going right and turning head. Examples: Recueil, plate 35.4.

2. C.Cadius Rufus. PIR² C; RE III, 1170; Laterculi, I 244. Proconsul of Bithynia-Pontus at sometime between 43-8, Nicols, Greek Patrons, op.cit. CIL VI 1508, a monument in honor of a Rufus, dates to the late republic and cannot refer to Cadius, Eck, Chiron 14,1984,201ff. Tacitus notes (Ann. XII, 22), that Cadius was prosecuted on the complaints of the Bithynians and convicted under the *lex repetundarum*. There is, however no specific connection made between patronage and the conviction.

Recueil I, 2: "Commune Bithyniae" No. 6. Obv: Britannicus Caesar (head laurelled to the right). Rev: arch or a bridge supported by two columns above the word "Geu dos"; capricorn above; ΕΠΙ ΓΑΙΟΥ ΚΑΔΙΟΥ ΡΟΥΦΟΥ ΑΝΘΥΠΙΑΤΟΥ ΠΑΤΡΩΝΟΣ Bosch believes the reference is to a bridge built over the Geudos river (Plin. NH 5,148) on the west coast of Bithynia.¹⁹ But, as the location of the river is not known, it cannot be claimed that the reference is to a structure of provincial or civic significanc. If, however, it is an

¹⁸ This problem is currently being studied by Angel Ventura Villaneuva of Cordova.

¹⁹ Op.cit. II, 197.

aqueduct, then that might suggest Nicomedia in particular, note Plin. ep. X, 37, on the history of this project.

Appendix B: Provincial Patrons 27 B.C. A.D. 200

M. Nonius Balbus, ca. 27 B.C. Patron of Crete

C. X 1430 (= 2405).

L. Mindius Pollio, Claudius (41-48?).

Evidence discussed here at length. He was probably patron of Nicomedia, not Bithynia.

L. Cadius Rufus, Claudius (41-48?).

It is here argued that he was patron of Nicomedia, not of Bithynia.

Vehilius(?) Late Republic/Augustus? = [T.] Vilius Milionius (?) Nero, Patron of Cyprus
Mitford, *Opus. Arch.* 6, 1950, 28-31 = *AE* 1953, 167; also *ANRW* II 7.2, p. 1301. The text and date are very uncertain, the nomen and cognomen rare. Moretti, *RFIC* 109, 1981, 264-8, questions a number of elements in Mitford's re-constructed text and dates it to the Late Republican or Augustan era. Regardless of the identity, the provincial patron appears to be the brother of the governor or former governor. If the text is indeed datable to the period after A.D. 11/12 (which seems to be improbable), then we would have a clear attempt to circumvent the legislation of Augustus which forbade peregrine communities to honor their senatorial governors. Also, Eck, *Chiron* 13, 1983, 193, n. 522.

C. Plinius Caecilius Secundus, 93-99. Patron of Baetica?

Pin. ep. III 4; Nicols, *Hermes* 108, 1980, 370-4. Although his language is ambiguous, he was probably *patronus causae* and not *patronus provinciae*.

M. Vettius Valens, ca. 137. Patron of Britannia

C. XI 383; *PIR*¹ 344; *RE* VIIIA 1869, No. 52; A. Birley, *Fast. Brit.* 215. The inscription concludes with the words: "...provincia Britannia patrono". This appears to be the first clear case of provincial patronage since Nonius Balbus. Valens did serve as *legatus iuridicus* in the province, as such it is possible that he too should be reckoned as *patronus causae*.

M. Julius Serenianus, ca. 190. Patron and flamen of Tarraconensis.

EE VIII 199 = Alföldy, *RIT* 284 and *Flamines provinciae Hispaniae citerioris*, Madrid, 1973, p. 15 and No. 35. Alföldy notes the many unusual qualities of this inscription.

[---] Val[erius ---], 2nd century. Patron and flamen of Alpes Maritimae.

AE 1924, 61 = *Insc. lat. Gaule*, no. 3 (better reading).

C. Subrius Secundus, late 2nd or possibly 3rd Century. Patron and flamen of Alpes Maritimae. His *eloquentia* is mentioned in the inscription.

C. V 7917.

[---]lus Albinus.

D. 6871 = *AE* 1902, 15. No indication of rank; date is also uncertain, could be in 3rd Century.

Ignotus.

C. VIII 9368. Probably 3rd Century.

For the period 180 to ca. 300, Ventura lists nine cases; for the 4th century, another nine.

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