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Political Authority and Local Agency: Cilicia Pedias and Syria between the Seleucid Empire and the Roman Republic

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Abstract

This paper aims to show how local civic communities, nominally subject to the Seleucid dynasts, integrated Roman magistrates into an existing framework of authority during the late second and early first centuries BCE. I argue that as Roman magistrates played an increasingly significant role in the region, cities initially framed them in quasi-regal terms, which their interlocutors consciously accepted. Through a close reading of two Roman letters to the Cilician city of Mopsuestia, dated to 87 BCE (*SEG* 44.1227), and analysis of literary, epigraphic, and numismatic evidence for the final collapse of Seleucid authority in the early 60s BCE, I reveal that this was a locally driven process. Consequently, local agents played a critical role in both legitimising Roman hegemony in local contexts and encouraging Roman intervention within the region.

Keywords

political authority – local agency – Rome – Seleucid empire

1 Introduction

At the death of Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 164 BCE, Seleucid hegemony over Cilicia and Syria was undisputed; however, less than a century later, after defeating Tigranes of Armenia, Cn. Pompeius Magnus chose not to re-establish

Antiochus XIII Asiaticus as ruler at Antioch-on-the-Orontes.¹ Henceforth, Rome would dominate the region. The literary sources present a straightforward narrative of the waning power of the Seleucid dynasty and the Roman Republic's growing reach within and interest in the eastern Mediterranean.² This reassuringly simple tale obscures much of the process by which this dramatic geo-political shift occurred. Importantly, it elides some of the most significant agents in this period, the *polis*-communities of the region. While not possessing the storied pasts of the old cities of Hellas or western Asia Minor, the communities of Cilicia Pedias and the Syrian Tetrapolis increasingly wielded considerable agency, wresting honours and privileges from competing scions of the dynasty. In the case of Antioch, this culminated in the capacity to make or break the royal aspirations of competitors. The Roman empire, though founded in part on its military prowess, also relied on its capacity to co-opt local elites in establishing its power.² This paper shows how Roman magistrates became integrated into an existing framework of authority by communities within the collapsing Seleucid empire during the late second and early first centuries. This integration explains how Roman hegemony came to displace that of the Seleucid *basileis* in a largely peaceful fashion, with far-reaching consequences for the geopolitics of the Levant. I argue that local agents played a critical role in both legitimising Roman hegemony in local contexts and encouraging Roman intervention within the region. Consequently, I seek to shift the emphasis in explaining Roman imperialism in the eastern Mediterranean from the centre to periphery.

2 Authority and Legitimacy in Syria: Seleucid and Local Frameworks

In the late second and early first centuries, *polis*-communities in Cilicia and Syria remained largely under the hegemony of Seleucid *basileis*. The relationship between monarch and city emerged in the complex interaction of several frameworks, sometimes overlapping and sometimes in competition. The 'interpenetration' of these frameworks, to use Davies' term, gave rise to a fluid, ever-changing concept of royal authority.³ Crucially, the realities of royal power existed in tension with the Hellenistic ideal of civic autarchy, favouring the emergence of institutions which constructed power and authority in ways discreetly disguising the harsh realities of military dominance. For example, Hellenistic monarchies based their territorial claims on the concept of 'spearwon land' (δορίκτητος γῆ),

¹ Hereafter, simply Antioch. All dates BCE unless stated. All translations by the author. ² Erickson and Ramsey 2011, 13-14; Ehling 2008, 13-16, 263-277.

² Burton 2004, 312-317.

³ Davies 2002.

or, more simply, the right of conquest. That said, often the paradigm of ‘surrender-and-grant’ was employed, whereby subjected cities were immediately granted back their autonomy (or elements of it) as a royal gift.⁴ Such grants were both varied in scope and inherently revocable, constructing a supra-local polity grounded in the precarious differentiation of status. The *basileus* performed the role of ultimate arbiter of civic freedom and other privileges, encouraging communities to petition or negotiate an improvement in their conditions with him. This concurrently established him as a euergetic figure and fashioned him as the sole legitimate source of local status.⁵ Consequently, this paradigm provided an ideological basis for the exercise of royal power.

However, *poleis*, as compared to alternative forms of socio-political organisation, were essential to the smooth operation of the Hellenistic state, providing educated individuals to serve as imperial officials, recruits for military operations and the most accessible source of economic resources. A tension existed between the reach of administrative and coercive structures and locally granted autarchy, whether minimal or substantial. In purely functional terms, *poleis*, as self-organised units, had a limited capacity to resist central demands for taxes or manpower. Nevertheless, the importance of *poleis* to the system granted them meaningful leverage. The realities of imperial rule fostered a mutually-beneficial dialectic that allowed for the negotiation of a middle-ground between these two worldviews and defuse potentially explosive contradictions. For example, Ma has highlighted the crucial dialogue between Seleucid royal correspondence and civic honorific decrees, the highly formulaic and limited language of which allowed each party to maintain dissonant, locally acceptable interpretations of their relationship.⁶ For their part, Seleucid monarchs were keen to emphasise the moral legitimacy of their actions vis-à-vis communities, establishing a record of benefaction for the wider ‘Greek’ community. The language and structure used extended this from past actions into the prospective future and made it conditional upon the maintenance of civic εὔνοια (‘goodwill’) towards the monarch. By contrast, *poleis*, in extending localised honours to monarchs, asserted their right to publicly judge the character of their interlocutor. By requesting benefaction and engaging directly in honorific terms, communities legitimised the Seleucid regime.⁷ Such interactions, grounded in the reciprocal exchange of benefaction for εὔνοια and honorific recognition, bound together the overt institutional and coercive elements of Seleucid

⁴ Bikerman 1938, 1939. Kantor 2014, 249-251, summarises the broader debate.

⁵ Ma 2000a, 160-165; Davies 2002, 5-6.

⁶ Ma 2000a, 194-242; 2000b; Davies 2002, 6-8.

⁷ Ma 2000a, esp. 235-242. Cf. Bencivenni 2010, 154-161; Strootman 2011, 142-145; Virgilio 2013, 243-251.

rule. The Seleucid empire lay in a complex network of continually negotiated relationships between *basileis* and *poleis*. While not denying the very real capacity of formal institutions to have a centripetal effect on the Seleucid state, the interface between ruler and individual communities was critical to its continued survival.

Alongside the hierarchical relationship constructed between the major kings and communities, interactions between *poleis* were governed by an entirely separate web of institutions. This is best theorised as a ‘peer-polity’ network spanning the Greek world, wherein each *polis*, notionally, had equal capacity to act. Shared interstate institutions, including *proxenia*, *theorodokia*, and grants of *asylia* intensified connectivity between participants.⁸ Following Mack, this peer-polity network offered communities a space within which to assert their own identity and status vis-à-vis their peers.⁹ While the framework did not operate beyond the reach of non-*polis* or supra-*polis* actors, such as *basileis* or federations, their participation was carefully negotiated as the institutions operated on the grounds of the notional heterarchy of its participants.¹⁰ The political subordination of *poleis* to larger entities did not inhibit their ability to act within this cultural and institutional network. As a result, participation within these inter-state institutions offered communities another way of establishing status and engaging with Hellenistic rulers. The example of *asylia* grants is especially pertinent: though traditionally reliant on recognition of this status by a range of peers, increasingly, in the third and second centuries, we observe *basileis* being approached to grant *asylia* to *poleis* within and outside their domains.¹¹ This peer-polity network operated in parallel with direct interactions as a medium through which individual communities negotiated their status and power vis-à-vis their rulers, neighbours and peers across the Greek-speaking world.

The emergence of Republican Rome as a power in the Hellenistic East problematised these existing frameworks of authority and legitimacy. As a powerful actor which did not share a common understanding of the rules underpinning regional inter-state institutions, problems of translation were inevitable.¹² The unusual organisation of the Roman polity posed a further problem for Hellenistic *poleis*: while not ruled by a monarch, its power was

⁸ Davies 2002, 8-10; Ma 2003; Mack 2015, esp. 201-206.

⁹ Mack 2015, 190-232.

¹⁰ On heterarchy, see Crumley 1995.

¹¹ E.g. Magnesia-on-the-Maeander in 208/207 (Rigsby 1996, no. 66.28-32) refers to τῶν βασιλέων [καὶ τῶν ἄλλων Ἑλλήνων] (‘the kings and the other Greeks’); and grants from Attalus I (Rigsby 1996, #68), Antiochus III and his son (#69-70), and Ptolemy IV are extant (#71).

¹² E.g. famously, the Aetolian League’s misunderstanding, in 191/190, of the implications of consigning themselves to the *fides* of the Roman *populus* (Plb. 20.9-10; Liv. 36.27-29). See Eckstein 1995 for an introduction to the debate.

such that it could not be considered a peer. Roman political bodies and officials participated only selectively with Hellenistic interstate institutions and this participation varied greatly depending on the individuals involved.¹³ As a result, the advent of Roman power disrupted longstanding localised modes of engaging with peers and rulers in a constructive fashion and created a new set of problems for communities to solve.

A final, vital element was provided by the idioms of Seleucid power itself. All Hellenistic monarchies straddled a line between theories of kingship demanding justice, generosity, courageousness, and moral action, on the one hand, and the necessity of extracting sufficient resources to maintain the state apparatus, on the other. From the fourth century onwards, this coalesced into a standard repertoire, including defending Greek *poleis* against external threats, financing major public buildings in allied or prominent cities, and making political grants.¹⁴ This moralising tendency emerges in the language of royal letters and the constant dialectical exchange between *poleis* and the *basileus* further nudged monarchs towards the deployment of this principled vocabulary.¹⁵ Additionally, monarchs emphasised their dynastic claim to kingship through the repetition of names and epithets across several generations. This repetition, which achieved significant distribution through numismatic material, served to associate rulers with their illustrious forebears. Hoover, Houghton and Veselý have noted that the choice of epithets displayed on coinage for late members of the dynasty echoed specific forebears, while McAuley persuasively argues that the female names Laodice, Cleopatra, and Stratonice served to transmit the collective values of the dynasty. By the second century, names themselves became ‘epithetical’, speaking to the family’s reputation.¹⁶ While direct connection to the Seleucid dynasty was an important element of securing power, it was insufficient in itself to generate authority. It has long been recognised that the Hellenistic ruler’s military exploits played a defining role in legitimating his position. Polybius’ remark that Antiochus III’s eastern expedition made him ‘seem worthy of kingship not only to the peoples of Asia but also to those of Europe’ (διὰ γὰρ ταύτης τῆς στρατείας ἄξιος ἐφάνη τῆς βασιλείας οὐ μόνον τοῖς κατὰ τὴν Ἀσίαν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς κατὰ τὴν Εὐρώπην) and the well-attested emphasis of the Attalid dynasts on their successes against the Galatians are just two examples.¹⁷ According to Gehrke, “zu beachten

¹³ E.g. the Romans employed foreign judges (see Fournier 2010, 39-46) and made grants of *asylia* (see Rigsby 1996, 28-29; Dignas 2002, 213-215, 288-299), but never participated in *proxenia* or *theorodokia*.

¹⁴ Walbank 1984; Eckstein 2013.

¹⁵ Ma 2000a, 188-190.

¹⁶ Hoover, Houghton and Veselý 2008, 212-213; McAuley 2018. Cf. De Callatay and Lorber 2011; Muccioli 2014, 355-390.

¹⁷ Plb. 11.34.16. On the Attalids: e.g. Schalles 1985.

dabei ist, daß der Prestigegewinn sich nicht allein unmittelbar in politischen Einfluß umsetzte, sondern daß gerade auf Grund der militärischen Großtat der König verdient, König zu sein, daß also darin das Herzstück der königlichen Würde lag".¹⁸ Ultimately, the capacity of contenders for the kingship to provide security by defeating outside threats or gain prestige through military victory was an essential element in persuading subject cities to accept royal authority. Nevertheless, as Chrubasik has stressed, these idioms of Seleucid rule were together grounded in the reality of the acceptance of their authority by their subjects.¹⁹

From the middle of the second century, however, internecine strife between competing claimants to the dynasty increasingly disrupted these interlocking frameworks of royal authority. For most of the century following Antiochus IV's death, the kingship was contested, forcing communities to decide between competing claims to legitimacy.²⁰ Individual aspirants based in different localities were able to exert force over regions only imperfectly.²¹ Furthermore, these internal divisions made the kingdom vulnerable to incursions by outside forces and formerly subjugated regions, most notably, the Parthians, the Maccabees, and the Armenians under Tigranes.

Against this background of contested kingship, *polis*-communities routinely exploited their leverage to secure more autonomy. The late second century witnessed an explosion in the number of Cilician *poleis* abandoning dynastic names or referring to themselves on coins as 'free and autonomous'.²² Similarly, in 109, Antiochus VIII Grypus granted Seleuceia-in-Pieria its *eleutheria*, while the adoption of a new era, accompanied by the inscription AYTONOMOY indicates that Syrian Laodiceia likely received autonomy in 81/80.²³ More dramatically, the historiographical sources assert the involvement of individual communities in the deaths of multiple rulers. In 126/125, Demetrius II, after being defeated by Alexander Zabinas, was killed at Tyre, with Justin and Porphyry emphasising the culpability of the city's governor. Intriguingly, this corresponds with the adoption of a new autonomous coinage at Tyre, replacing the royal portrait with Heracles-Melquart, the city's patron, which has been convincingly linked to the city's independence of Seleucid

¹⁸Gehrke 1982, 255.

¹⁹Chrubasik 2016, esp. 6-10, 227-233. Cf. Flaig 2019, esp. 39-74.

²⁰See generally Chrubasik 2016.

²¹ See the well-attested phenomenon of *basileis* based in Cilicia, or at Damascus, in opposition to the established ruler at Antioch, though they often held broader ambitions. Bellinger 1949, 77 n. 84; Ehling 2008, 247.

²²De Giorgi 2011, 135-136.

²³ On Seleuceia: RC 71, 72. On the eras of Syrian cities, see Seyrig 1950, 26-28 and Mørkholm 1983, 91, 103-104, both accepting that Tigranes of Armenia controlled Syria from 83/82.

rule.²⁴ In 96/95, Seleucus VI, after his defeat by Antiochus X Eusebes, met his end at Mopsuestia. Again, Josephus emphasises civic agency, stating that the citizens of the *polis*, angered by his attempts to extract materiel, burned down his residence.²⁵ In both cases, the monarch had recently suffered defeat but was attempting to continue resistance. If these reports are accurate, the communities committed to an uncertain and dangerous course, when they felt his legitimacy, or perhaps chances of success, were questionable. In another nearcontemporary incident, dated to 85/84, the garrison commander and citizens at Damascus invited Philip I Philadelphus to occupy the city, before reversing course and remaining loyal to his rival, Antiochus XII Dionysus. After the latter's death at the hands of the Nabataeans, in 83/82, Josephus claims that the Damascenes invited his conqueror, Aretas III, to rule their city, out of fear of Ptolemy of Chalcis.²⁶ Each of these examples emphasises the increasing importance of military capacity and the offer of privileges to the perceived legitimacy of royal authority in this period

Conversely, throughout this period of instability, local communities continued to conceive of and represent their choices within Seleucid frameworks of authority. At Gadara, one Philotas, together with the *polis* as a corporate entity, was involved in extending and strengthening fortifications. The use of the Seleucid era (Year 2²⁷ = 85/84) and the retention of the city's dynastic name of Seleuceia suggest strongly that, even if Philotas was making a play for local supremacy, he sought to do so in a firmly Seleucid manner.²⁸ Similarly,

²⁴ Just. 39.1.8; Porphyry *BNJ* 260 F 32 = Eusebius, *Chron.* 122.2-7 (Karst). Cf. Liv. *Per.* 60.11; App. *Syr.* 68; J. *AJ* 13.268. Hoover 2004, 493-494.

²⁵ J. *AJ* 13.367-368; Porphyry, *BNJ* 260 F 32 = Eusebius, *Chron.* 123.7-19 (Karst). Cf. App. *Syr.* 69. Appian's use of the aorist passive κατεπρήσθη ('burned to ashes') without an agent hints at civil unrest. Porphyry's claim that Seleucus' brothers destroyed the city in vengeance is highly unlikely given the city's diplomatic contact with Rome in 87 (*SEG* 44.1227).

²⁶J. *AJ* 13.387-392.

²⁷*SEG* 50.1479. Kosmin 2018, 97; Chrubasik (forthcoming).



figure 1 Map of places mentioned in text created by M. Gronow, using Ancient World Mapping Centre's Antiquity A-la-carte application, under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Licence.

the contemporary priest-dynasts of Olba, though sufficiently powerful to intervene in Seleucid and Attalid affairs in their own right, chose to present themselves in this period as the ἀδελφοὶ τῶν βασιλέων ('brothers of the kings'), doubtless in this context either Philip I or his son, Philip II Philorhomaïos.²⁸ While the Seleucids referred to were relatively weak, to the Olban dynasts, the title retained significance.

As centralised power increasingly faded into a vacuum, existing norms continued to persist. Despite the weakness of Seleucid dynasts and the increasing efficacy of local actors, ideas of legitimacy and authority evolved slowly, continuing to be based upon the same Seleucid frameworks which already existed. Even across the internecine conflicts, the Seleucids drew on recognisably dynastic iconography, cycling through the same sets of names within their family groupings.²⁹ Both within and outside the dynasty, however, military success remained a crucial currency in bidding for support. Josephus observes that the Damascenes invited Aretas to assume the kingship based on his success against Antiochus XII, while, for

²⁸SEG 26.1451-1453. Vêrilhac and Dagron 1974, 237-241.

²⁹Hoover, Houghton and Veselý 2008, 212-213.

Justin, the inhabitants of Syria invited Tigranes of Armenia to intervene on account of his military strength and his alliances with Mithridates VI Eupator and the Parthians. Accounts of Cn. Pompeius Magnus' decision to end Seleucid rule in 64 also emphasise the inability of Antiochus XIII to adequately defend his kingdom from the Armenians and Nabataeans.³⁰ In other words, the framework which the communities of Cilicia and Syria used to construct their relationships with powerful figures in the chaotic years of the early first century remained predicated upon pre-existing royal concepts.

3 Mopsuestia: A Community between Rome and the Kings

While the members of the Seleucid dynasty were preoccupied with pruning their family tree, Roman magistrates became a fixture within the Aegean and western Asia Minor. The organisation of Macedonia and Asia, after 146 and 133 respectively, as regular provinces for annual magistrates created a new locus of potential authority within the eastern Mediterranean. From 102, magistrates were also sent to a *provincia Cilicia* to combat 'piracy'.³¹ The initial setbacks and expulsion of a Roman presence from Asia Minor during the First Mithridatic War (89-85) sparked a renewed emphasis on securing hegemony within the broader region.

An inscription from the Cilician *polis* of Mopsuestia, first published in 1994, provides critical evidence on the nascent relationship between Roman magistrates and a community still theoretically subject to Seleucid authority during precisely this transitional period. A marble block, broken on all sides except the left, preserves the conclusion of a letter from one magistrate and beginning of another: the first plausibly assigned to L. Cornelius Sulla and the second explicitly from his quaestor, L. Licinius Lucullus.³² Both are concerned with Mopsuestia's request that the *asylia* of the temple of Isis and Serapis be recognised. The *editio princeps* dated the documents to 86, during Lucullus' voyage through the eastern Mediterranean gathering naval support on Sulla's behalf.³³ However, Thonemann has argued strongly that this letter should fall a year earlier, while he was still in Greece. Lucullus, in the letter, gives his own title as

³⁰Just. 40.1.1-4, 2.4.

³¹RS 12 Cnidus 2.1-11, 3.28-41. Note the complex valence of the word *provincia*, which did not imply a permanent Roman presence or the establishment of administrative institutions, even in this period: Lintott 1981, 54-57; Richardson 2008, 12-44; Díaz Fernández 2015, 31-66; Gargola 2017. On 'piracy' as a motivator for Roman action in Cilicia: Sherwin-White 1976, 4-6; Freeman 1986, 253-258; De Souza 2002, 97-115.

³²SEG 44.1227.

³³Sayar, Siewert and Täuber 1994, 118-120, with Plu. *Luc.* 2.2-3.3.

ταμίας καὶ ἀντιστρατηγός (*quaestor pro praetore*) rather than ἀντιταμίας καὶ ἀντιστρατηγός (*pro quaestore pro praetore*), as would have been constitutionally correct had he exceeded his original annual term of elected office. He notes that epigraphic sources tend to accurately reflect constitutional niceties, as seems to be the case among the numerous civic decrees honouring Lucullus during this period.³⁴ In turn, this would require reconfiguring the first editors' interpretation of the origins of the exchange: rather than an opportunistic result of Lucullus' presence in, or near, Cilicia, an embassy must have been sent west.

Quite why this distant *polis* sought, unprompted, to involve the Roman state in its affairs requires explanation. Unlike the cities of Teos and Colophon a century earlier, Mopsuestia does not seem to have had prior contact with Roman magistrates commanding forces in its vicinity.³⁵ The operations of Roman commanders assigned *provincia Cilicia* seem to have been restricted to Pamphylia and coastal Cilicia Tracheia.³⁶ Though provincial boundaries during this period were flexible, the exceptional case of Sulla himself, who restored Ariobarzanes I to power in Cappadocia, is explained through the explicit instructions of the Senate. Though Plutarch states that he met ambassadors of the Parthians on the banks of the Euphrates, this does not require that he passed south of the Taurus. Instead, it is most likely that this conference took place near the boundary between Cappadocia and Commagene.³⁷ If so, contact between Sulla and communities in Cilicia Pedias is unlikely.

Typically, the letters are interpreted as arising from a local attempt to secure the rights of the sanctuary through appeal to a more secure authority than that of the disintegrating Seleucid dynasty. Seeing the foundations of their claim slipping away, it is argued, the Mopsuestians sought to generate an alternative legitimacy by engaging with the Roman Republic as a quasi-royal authority. However, these *poleis* remained an integral part of the Seleucid empire during the 90s. Though decades of civil war had afforded them greater autonomy, the *basileis* continued to exercise power over them. The complicity of the Mopsuestians in the death of Seleucus VI should not be seen as an action against the Seleucid dynasty in the abstract, but rather a rejection of his claim to kingship. Unlike Syria—which the crushing defeat of Demetrius III had left open to Parthian raids, leading some communities to resist independently of central authority—Cilicia remained relatively secure. The suggestion that Mopsuestia was motivated by the

³⁴ Thonemann 2004, 80-82 (with references). Kreiler's argument for a date in 81 (2006, 73-82) misrepresents the circumstances in which *imperium* could be delegated by commanders to their staff: Brennan 2000, 36-37, 640-647.

³⁵ Teos: *RDGE* 34, with Piejko 1991, 24; Colophon: *RDGE* 36. See Rigsby no. 153, 172.

³⁶ Sherwin-White 1976, 4-9; Freeman 1986, 258-261.

³⁷ Plu. *Sull.* 5.3-5. Cf. Str. 12.1.2; Liv. *Per.* 70.6-7.

threat to their newfound autonomy posed by the growing power of Armenia is even less convincing.³⁸ Though earlier commentators have typically framed their interpretation around the dates implied by Justin (87/86) or Appian (83/82) for Tigranes II's invasion of Syria and Cilicia, a combination of literary, numismatic and archaeological evidence presents good reasons to downdate the conquest to c. 74/73.³⁹

First, Appian himself elsewhere states that Tigranes invaded Cappadocia, and presumably Cilicia, only after the death of Sulla in 78. Meanwhile, Josephus explicitly linked Tigranes' conquest of Syria to the reign of Alexandra Salome (c. 76/75-67/66) and the failed attempt of Aristobulus II to seize Damascus from Ptolemy of Chalcis (probably before 72/71).⁴⁰ Most compellingly, Cicero, while prosecuting Verres in 70, states that in c. 75, Antiochus XIII and his brother visited Rome in person, intending to address the Senate. According to Cicero, they did not seek confirmation or support for their rule in Syria, which he claims was uncontested (*qui venerant non propter Syriae regnum, nam id sine controversia obtinebant ut a patre et a maioribus acceperant*, '[the brothers] came not on account of the kingdom of Syria, for this they obtained without controversy, as they received it from their father and their ancestors'), but to bolster their claims to Egypt, through their mother Cleopatra Selene. The royal visitors lingered for two years, before leaving without an audience. Cicero implies that the brothers became a familiar sight to senators, describing Antiochus to the jury as *Romae ante oculos omnium nostrum biennium fere comitatu regio atque ornatu* ('[being] at Rome, before the eyes of us all, for almost two years, with his royal escort and raiment').⁴¹ This suggests, notwithstanding traditional narratives of the decline of Seleucid power, that the kings felt secure enough to be absent from their kingdom for a substantial period in the mid-70s; albeit, as it turned out, incorrectly. The low number of extant dies for coinage produced by Tigranes at Antioch, when compared with that produced by Philip I, further supports this interpretation.⁴² Finally, Wright argues persuasively that the abandonment of the Hellenistic settlement at Jebel Khalid on the Euphrates in c. 75/74 would be best explained in the context of Tigranes' invasion.⁴³

³⁸Sayar, Siewert and Täuber 1994, 123-125.

³⁹E.g. Sayar, Siewert and Täuber 1994, 124, follow App. *Syr.* 48; Kreiler 2006, 79-82, follows Just. 40.1.

⁴⁰App. *Mith.* 67; *J. AJ* 13.418-420.

⁴¹Cic. *Ver.* 2.4.61, 67.

⁴²Hoover 2007, 296-298. While Hoover 2011 retracted his earlier claim that the die counts could be used as a secure proxy for reign length, this does not invalidate his inferences regarding Tigranes.

⁴³Wright 2011, 128-130.

In any case, the process should not be seen as the simple like-for-like replacement of the Seleucids by the Romans. As Rigsby has shown, typical *asylia* claims depended on a broad basis of support from communities and other actors, not necessarily restricted to those with fame and influence. For example, in the 220s, Magnesia on the Maeander appealed to a significant number of actors and proudly displayed the positive responses along the perimeter of the agora, which the temple in question, that of Artemis, faced; while Teos, in the same period, inscribed the full responses of the kings, dynasts and cities equally magnificently.⁴⁴ Even where Rome was involved, in the early first century, *poleis* continued to advertise the breadth of the acceptance of their claim. Carian Stratonicea provides an extreme example: in addition to the *senatus consultum* confirming a variety of privileges granted after the First Mithridatic War, the city also inscribed the names of the *poleis* which had agreed with the Roman decision to grant *asylia* to the temple of Hecate at Lagina on the south side of that building in an exhaustive list.⁴⁵ In this sense, *asylia* claims could interweave elements of the peer-polity framework with a recognition of royal authority. Though, originating from an inter-*polis* institution allowing equipollent communities to construct relationships with one another based around mutual recognition and respect, monarchs could and apparently did use recognition of *asylia* claims as leverage in their own reciprocal exchanges with *poleis* under their hegemony. For example, from the 140s onwards, the imagery of civic coinage of both Cilician and Levantine communities took on an increasingly epichoric character, and explicit attestation of *autonomia* and grants of *asylia* become much more frequent.⁴⁶ This dissonance was, figuratively, a feature, not a bug, making the institution flexible enough to suit multiple purposes and offering participants a range of interpretations. In any sense, however, it offered communities an opportunity to assert their own identity and status vis-à-vis other actors.

Given this, we should not assume that Rome, in the person of Lucullus, was the only actor approached by the Mopsuestians. Though the two letters are the only extant evidence for the grant, the stone was found out of context and other inscribed evidence may not have survived. Moreover, the letters could have been inscribed at any point between their receipt by the *polis* and the mid-first century CE. The increasingly strict oversight of

⁴⁴Rigsby 1996, no. 66-131 (Magnesia-on-the-Maeander); no. 132-161 (Teos).

⁴⁵ *I.Stratonikeia* 507, 508. Rigsby 1996, 421-422; van Bremen 2010, 493-495. While the *senatus consultum de Stratonicensibus* recording all the privileges granted to the *polis*, was inscribed in full, we need not assume that the Roman decision concerning *asylia* held more weight than those of other communities.

⁴⁶ Mørkholm 1966, 125-130; Rigsby 1996, 461-470, 481-501; Meyer 2001, 506-507; Hoover 2004, 488-489.

asylia grants by the Roman Senate during the Julio-Claudian period offers a plausible context for the inscription of the letters, in an attempt to protect the privileges of the sanctuary, and, if this is so, the emphasis would have fallen on Roman approval.⁴⁷ Accepting Thonemann's date for the correspondence would put Lucullus in central or southern Greece when he responded to the Mopsuestian request. Consequently, it may be the result of a chance encounter between an embassy sent to *poleis* in this region, caught in the warzone, and a Roman magistrate. This would go some way towards explaining the odd coincidence of the grant with the nadir of Roman fortunes in the eastern Mediterranean. Why the Mopsuestians would seek to replace the authority of the Seleucid kings with that of a Rome wracked by civil war and swiftly deprived of its possessions in Asia Minor by Mithridates is left unexplained by other commentators. Instead, this should represent a canny adaptation to circumstances by both parties: the Roman magistrates were able to establish a relationship with a polity bordering on the fringes of their influence, while the Mopsuestian ambassadors could add the lustre of Roman backing to the bulk of their smaller peers' support.

The precise status of Lucullus from the perspective of the ambassadors is unclear, though it seems he acted as the representative to Sulla as a *quasibasileus*. Sulla, in his letter, cites earlier grants by presumably Seleucid dynasts, though precisely which monarchs are more difficult to determine. Mopsuestia, like several neighbouring communities, was re-founded by Antiochus IV as a *polis* with a dynastic name, Seleuceia-on-the-Pyramos, and the grant of *asylia* could be linked to this event.⁴⁸ However, the possibility of a later date, when kingship was more contested and benefactions represented an important lever for *basileis* to encourage loyalty, should also be entertained.⁴⁹ Irrespective of when the original grant took place, Sulla's choice to cite it established Roman authority in the same space as royal authority. Since the beginning of the second century, Roman magistrates had engaged in epistolary exchanges with cities and kings in the Greek East. In some letters, Roman magistrates took on the language and role of Hellenistic *basileis*. A comparison with the Roman assent to Teos' request for recognition of their *asylia*, in 193, is instructive. The letter, written by the praetor M. Valerius Messalla on behalf of the Senate and People, seems to have self-consciously imitated an earlier example. The close verbal correspondences between the letter of the Athamanian kings and this text suggest that the Teans supplied a model letter, probably

⁴⁷Tac. *Ann.* 3.60-63, with Dignas 2002, 289-294. Sayar, Siewert and Täuber 1994, 115-116.

⁴⁸Sayar, Siewert and Täuber 1994, 126-127; Zoroğlu 2004, 373-377.

⁴⁹Von Aulock 1963, 232-234, with #5-10, assumed it occurred under Antiochus X Eusebes (c. 95-88). The lengthy war between Antiochus VIII Grypus and Antiochus IX Cyzicenus offers another plausible context.

from Antiochus III. In turn, this may imply that documentary evidence supporting their claim was a key part of the process.⁵⁰ This earlier example slots neatly into the typical Hellenistic discourse surrounding the institution of *asylia*, expressing the language of royalty through a Roman interlocutor. Other early second-century letters, written from the field, also regularly employ language resembling that of Hellenistic chancelleries.⁵¹ Even so, Sulla, though citing the earlier grant, or grants, by Seleucid *basileis* as guiding his decision, makes clear that he reserved the right to choose independently, placing himself in a position analogous to his Seleucid counterparts. Though these documents had a public function, to confirm the grant in response to the Mopsuestian petition, this did not prevent the authors from using the texts to self-fashion.⁵²

Indeed, crucially, Sulla's letter emphasises the agency of Lucullus, linking his own positive decision to the *παράκλησις* ('appeal' or 'recommendation') of his quaestor.⁵³ The second text reinforces this point. Lucullus' title as *quaestor pro praetore* implies that Sulla had delegated praetorian *imperium* to him, that he was operating at a distance from his proconsular superior and that he had corresponded via letter to communicate his own thoughts.⁵⁴ This example of a quaestor's letter is unparalleled in the epigraphic record, though from a practical perspective such exchanges must have been common. However, it is directed to the institutions of Mopsuestia, rather than to Sulla and seems to assert Lucullus' own decision to speak to the matter at hand. Specifically, the quaestor states: ... [το] | ἱερὸν τῆς Ἰσιδος καὶ τοῦ Σαράπιδ[ος] ... κ[έ]κρικα | καὶ αὐτὸς καθ' ἃ καὶ οἱ π[ρ]ὸ ἡμῶν ἀ[ν]τοκρά[τ]ορες ἐπέκ[ρ]ι[ψ]αν ἄσυλον εἶναι ('... and I myself [**decided**], in accordance with those things which the *imperatores* before us decided, that the temple of Isis and Sarapis should be inviolable').⁵⁵ A parallel is found in an honorific inscription for Hegesias of Lampsacus. In early 196 he embarked on an embassy to the Massaliotes and the Romans. After meeting with the praetor, L. Quinctius Flamininus, and receiving an encouraging answer, the decree records that Hegesias and his fellow ambassadors met with a quaestor commanding a fleet in the Aegean:

⁵⁰ *SEG* 38.1227. Driediger-Murphy 2014, 116-118 *contra* Errington 1980, 279-284. Cf. Ferrary 1988, 153 n. 88; Rigsby 1996, 283 n. 19, with literature.

⁵¹ E.g. *RDGE* 35, 36, 38.

⁵² Bertrand 1985; Ma 2000a, 182-194; Virgilio 2013. Cf. Noreña 2007, 266-272 on Pliny's Bithynian correspondence.

⁵³ *SEG* 44.1227.6.

⁵⁴ Pina Polo and Díaz Fernández 2019, 189 incorrectly state there is no evidence that Lucullus held any *imperium*.

⁵⁵ *SEG* 44.1227.10-16. Though the restoration of κέκρικα is speculative, plausible alternatives are lacking.

... ἐντυχ[ῶν δὲ μετὰ | τῶν συμπρε]σβευτῶν τῶι ἐπὶ τοῦ ναυτικοῦ ταμία[ι—c. 5—|—c. 5—καὶ πείσα]ς αὐτὸν ἀεί τινος ἀγαθοῦ παραίτιον γίνεσ[θαι, | ἔλαβεν καὶ π]αρ' αὐτοῦ ἐπιστολὴν πρὸς τὸν δῆμο[ν ἡμῶν, | ἦν γνοῦς] συμφέρουσιν εἶναι κατεχόρισεν εἰς [τὰ δημό]σια ἡμῶν ὁ δῆμος].⁵⁶

... and (Hegesias), [along with his fellow] -ambassadors, meeting with the treasurer in charge of the fleet [—c. 10—and having persuaded] him always to be responsible for some good, [received] from him [too] a letter to [our] *demos* [which (the *demos*), recognizing] it to be of benefit, entered in [the public archives].

The decree frames the quaestor's correspondence as distinctive from Flamininus' own discussions with the embassy and implies that it had an independent value to the *polis*. Further corroboration may be offered by a recently published Messenian decree honouring P. Cornelius Scipio, *quaestor pro praetore*, in late 3 or early 4 CE.⁵⁷ According to the text, Scipio had the capacity to issue letters and decrees without the oversight of a promagisterial governor.⁵⁸ While these documents elucidate only three brief moments, across two centuries during which the broader institutional context changed remarkably and rendering any inferences tentative, the independence of quaestors in the provinces is a consistent theme. Taking the three texts together, we might plausibly surmise that quaestors consistently used strongly decisive language in their communiqués. This fits well with Pina Polo and Díaz Fernández' assessment that provincial quaestors, though junior figures, had the cachet of their election as representatives of the Senate and Roman People, as compared with other members of a governor's *consilium*, and wide-ranging responsibilities in the field.⁵⁹ This, in turn, may have encouraged communities to assign weight to these decisions and attempt to employ them in defence of privileges. Even so, the limited power of quaestors compared with their *imperium* holding superiors may explain the dearth of quaestorian documents from the Republican period.

Täuber's claim that Lucullus' letter chronologically precedes Sulla's is worth reassessing. Though the proconsul exercised ultimate authority in the matter, three strong inter-related reasons exist to interpret these letters as inscribed in order. First, the quaestor's letter cannot be the παράκλησις mentioned in the first text. It is addressed to the civic institutions of Mopsuestia itself and reports a positive decision. Second, the assumption

⁵⁶Syll.3 591.36-41.

⁵⁷Themelis 2015, 71-77, with Jones 2019.

⁵⁸Jones 2019, B.25-27, commentary at 39-41.

⁵⁹Pina Polo and Díaz Fernández 2019, 181-190. Cf. Johnston 2008, 8-10.

that Sulla's confirmation of the decision lay after the defeat of Mithridates during his settlement of Asia Minor is far from substantiated. As noted, Mopsuestia had never formed part of a Roman province, nor had been involved in the conflict with Mithridates. The granting of *asylia* to a shrine in such a remote *polis* had limited costs—it had no impact on Roman governance, beyond the time spent drafting the response—and would generate goodwill in the region. Most importantly, where Sulla acknowledges only earlier royal grants, Lucullus explicitly refers to the decisions of multiple Roman *imperatores*. While Rigsby suggests that the identity of these commanders is irrecoverable, by placing Sulla's letter before Lucullus', the identity becomes clear: Sulla himself, and L. Licinius Murena, then praetor in Greece.⁶⁰ Accepting this view, while acknowledging the authority of earlier decisions by Roman *imperatores*, Lucullus discursively asserts his own capacity to decide on the matter.

The central subject of the letter is also noteworthy, providing a final intriguing element of the relationship between Lucullus and Mopsuestia. After listing the virtues of Diodotus, priest of Isis and Serapis, and asserting his own desire to honour him, the quaestor states:

... ἐπεὶπερ καὶ αὐτ νν οἱ τε[ίμιόν] | τι πεποιήκατε πολλῶι μᾶλλον
κα[τάξιον] | χάριν τειμῆς καὶ καταλογῆς τῶι δῆ[μοι ἐν] | ταῖς
διαπράσσει τῶν ὄνων ποι- οὔντ[ες πα]||ραίρεσιν κεφαλῆς αὐτοῦ τε
καὶ γυνα[ικὸς καὶ | υἱ]ῶν τριῶν καὶ τῆς ὑπαρχο(ύ)σης ἀ[τῶι οὐσίας]
...⁶¹

... insofar as you yourselves have granted him an honour far worthier because of his dignity and renown with the *demos*, providing, at the time of the farming out of the sales-tax (?), that his person, and those of his wife and three sons and the property which he possesses be removed ...

⁶⁰ The ancient sources offer little evidence for Murena's constitutional position, beyond agreeing that Sulla appointed him to command in Asia in 84. Frija 2014, 84, noting that all extant honorific inscriptions refer to him as *imperator* (in translation or transliteration: *IG*. 5.1.1454; 12.1.48 ἱμπεράτωρ; *I.Kaunos* 31 and 103: αὐτοκράτωρ), argued that he was not a regularly appointed magistrate. However, Murena celebrated a triumph on his return to Rome in 81, described by Cicero as *ex praetura* (*Mur.* 15, with Memnon *FGrH* 434 26.1). This demonstrates that he held independent *imperium auspiciumque* (Vervae 2014, 93-130, esp. 120-121). Kreiler's suggestion (2006, 77-79; 2007, 123-124) that Murena initially commanded *pro praetore* in Greece, complementing and assisting Sulla is to be preferred. Murena's triumph *ex Mithridate*, then, may have been for a personal victory achieved in his own *provincia*, under the overall command of Sulla in 87, rather than his ill-fated campaign against Mithridates in 83/82.

⁶¹ *SEG* 44.1227.24-29.

Though the syntax is awkward and without parallel, Lucullus almost certainly refers to civic decrees rendering Diodotus immune from locally levied taxes. Since the stone breaks off, it is unclear what relation these had to his own honorific actions. The context might imply a grant of fiscal privileges within areas of Roman jurisdiction but raises further questions of practicality. Could Diodotus have expected to take advantage of such concessions? It is certainly possible that he or his family had business interests in Pamphylia or Asia, areas subject to Roman jurisdiction, but given the natural orientation of Cilicia towards Syria and the Levant this seems unlikely. A near-contemporary document, issued in 78, granting exemptions from Roman and local taxes to three Greek naval captains, Asclepiades of Clazomenae, Polystratus of Carystos and Meniscus of Miletus, offers a potential parallel but each of these communities was unambiguously subject to Roman jurisdiction, provincial governors, and taxation, which Mopsuestia, in this period, was not.⁶² This is true of another similar example, the grants to Seleucus of Rhosus during the triumviral period.⁶³ In these two cases, the recipients had fought on the side of victorious Romans in a moment of crisis, raising the possibility that Diodotus and his fellow-ambassadors had aided the Roman cause materially in the course of their embassy. Asclepiades and his companions served in the Social War, while Seleucus had fought for Augustus in the Actium campaign. While an enticing possibility, internal evidence renders it unlikely: Lucullus' rationale for honouring Diodotus is firmly grounded in his religious duties: his piety (εὐσέβεια), his attendance on (θεραπεία) and his devotion to (ἱεροπρεπέστατα) honouring the gods.⁶⁴ Additionally, the other examples, admittedly within a different context, are frank about their recipients' military service.

Why then were historic local honours, decreed for Diodotus at Mopsuestia, relevant to Lucullus' purpose? How did Lucullus gain knowledge of their existence and their contents? How relevant was the personal relationship between Diodotus and Lucullus to the success of Mopsuestia's *asylia* claim? The evidence does not allow firm conclusions to be drawn—the curious syntax, linking the local grant to the Roman magistrate's decision, is unparalleled—but some hypotheses may be advanced. The most plausible explanation sees Lucullus' apparently intimate knowledge of the priest's civic tax exemptions as deriving from Diodotus himself. In the context of the letter they serve only to further justify Lucullus' own honorific actions, which do not survive. Two possibilities suggest themselves: first, that the section was predicated on the quaestor's services to the city. It may indicate that Lucullus, a noted

⁶²*CIL* 40890, with Raggi 2001.

⁶³Raggi 2006, with earlier editions listed at 19-23.

⁶⁴*SEG* 44.1227.16-24.

Hellenophile, was choosing to commence a reciprocal honorific exchange with Mopsuestia and its leading citizens, engaging explicitly in well-worn modes of civic and *interpolis* discourse. Second, more plausibly, that the list of virtues elides a series of personal services performed by Diodotus for Lucullus or the Roman state while in Greece. What these may have been is irrecoverable, though, for example, Roman authorities were known to re-employ civic ambassadors to deliver documents and messages to third parties.⁶⁵ During the turmoil of Mithridates' invasion of Greece and the revolt of several *poleis*, including Athens, one might expect the sacred ambassadors of a distant community had less restriction on their mobility than Roman messengers. In either case, Lucullus' honorific action, unpreserved though it may be, asserted his personal involvement in the civic affairs of Mopsuestia, despite the *polis*' distance from Roman hegemony.

In summary, these documents reveal significant details about the relationship between Mopsuestia and Rome. Given the geopolitical context, wherein the *polis* was not part of the Roman sphere of influence but was steadily asserting its autonomy vis-à-vis the Seleucid dynasty, it seems best to view the interaction attested as resulting from a chance encounter. The Mopsuestian embassy sought to take advantage of Rome's diplomatic weight alongside more traditional peer-polity networks to reinforce the claims of their temple to *asylia*. Conversely, the letters' authors drew on both Roman and royal discursive traditions to assert their own authority within the exchange. Sulla and Lucullus act as arbiters on a par with earlier Seleucid *basileis*, rather than the agents of a peer polity, framing their actions as part of a hierarchical relationship. Overall, the Mopsuestia letters imply a complex negotiated position between Romans and Cilicians, with both groups using the dialogue to assert their position. While we only see the Roman side, this shows clearly that Sulla and Lucullus framed themselves as pseudo-royal actors. From the Mopsuestian perspective, the approach to Rome drew on traditional modes of authority to bolster their own status.

4 Local Agency in Late Hellenistic Syria and Cilicia

Evidence concerning the core Seleucid territories around the Syrian Tetrapolis further emphasises the critical role of local agency in legitimating and encouraging Roman intervention. As noted above,

⁶⁵Compare the use of Rhodian ambassadors to communicate with the Hellenistic kingdoms in the *lex de provinciis praetoriis* of 100 (RS 12.Delphi.b.12-18); the use of Aphrodisian ambassadors by Q. Oppius (*IAph2007* 8.3); and the role of Magnesians in 29 (*IPriene2* 13.6-8).

Antiochus XIII and his brother were present in Rome for nearly two years, beginning in c. 75. Cicero's remarks strongly imply that, at the time of his speech in August 70, Seleucid rule in Syria was deemed uncontroversial by Roman jurors. Thereafter, the invasion of the region by Tigranes of Armenia and the renewed machinations of their dynastic rival Philip II in Cilicia rapidly destabilised the situation. By the summer of 66, Cicero could state outright that Pompeius had, 'on the 49th day after he had set out from Brundisium, added all of Cilicia to the *imperium* of the Roman people' (*ut Brundisio profectus est undequinquagesimo die, totam ad imperium populi Romani Ciliciam adiunxit*) and the latter definitively ended Seleucid rule in Syria in 65/64.⁶⁶

The narrative sources, though fragmentary and conflicting, consistently emphasise the influence exercised by individual Syrian *poleis*, most notably Antioch, throughout the conflict, specifically in recognising and denying royal authority. Justin notes, for example, that Tigranes of Armenia was invited to assume the kingship of Syria by its inhabitants. Even if a 14 or 18 year Armenian interlude should be rejected, numismatic evidence demonstrates Tigranes' control over both the Antiochene and Damascene mints for a short period in the late 70s.⁶⁷ The Roman invasion of Armenia under L. Licinius Lucullus, however, allowed Antiochus to return to Syria. Appian claims that, with the consent of the people of Antioch and without pre-emptively seeking Roman approval, he re-established his kingdom, though Justin suggests that Lucullus himself lent his support.⁶⁸ Shortly afterwards, Diodorus emphasises that subversive elements among the Antiochene elite failed to oust Antiochus, before encouraging a rival candidate, Philip II, to invade Syria.⁶⁹ Moreover, a confused passage in Malalas' *Chronicon* suggests that Q. Marcius Rex, commander in Cilicia in 66, did not oppose this change in regime, though did seek to extract 'tribute'.⁷⁰ Finally, we learn that after Cn. Pompeius Magnus had defeated Tigranes and re-established him as king in Armenia, he was enthusiastically greeted by the inhabitants of Syria.⁷¹ By this point Philip disappears from the narrative in Syria, but Antiochus sought to be re-installed as *basileus*. Pompeius refused, with the sources highlighting, not uncritically, his claims that he had acquired the right to decide by virtue of defeating Tigranes. Even so, Dio, Justin and Porphyry all emphasise that local actors resisted Antiochus' reinstatement: Dio states that the kings of

⁶⁶ Cic. *Leg. Man.* 35. On the end of Seleucid rule: Bellinger 1949; Magie 1950, 360, 375-377; Ehling 2008, 256-277.

⁶⁷ Hoover 2007, 296-298.

⁶⁸ App. *Syr.* 49; Just. 40.2.2.

⁶⁹ D.S. 40.1a. Hoover 2007, 299-300.

⁷⁰ Malalas *Chron.* 225. Though problematic, Malalas was well-informed on Antiochene history specifically. Ehling 2008, 262-263.

⁷¹ Plu. *Pomp.* 40.1-3; Str. 16.2.8; Fest. 16.4; Eutrop. 6.14; Malalas, *Chron.* 211.

Syria had already been deposed; Justin hints that the Syrians were unwilling to take Antiochus back; and Porphyry states that the Antiochenes bribed Pompeius for a grant of autonomy.⁷² While the historicity of any single episode is questionable—and Pompeius' own desire to overturn Lucullus, his predecessor and opponent's, decision to re-establish Antiochus should not be overlooked—the overall narrative of civic agency is compelling.⁷³ In view of Pompeius' successes in bringing order to the region, it would be reasonable to see the *poleis* of Syria choosing to lobby for inclusion under Roman hegemony and against a return to the status quo. Even so, according to the sources, this transition from Seleucid to Roman rule was framed within existing structures of authority and legitimacy: Antiochus' lack of military prowess and the exigencies of the surrender-and-grant model.

Evidence from Cilicia reinforces this impression. According to Plutarch, during the early 60s, Lucullus, at that time proconsul responsible for the war against Mithridates, was honoured in royal terms by multiple *poleis*. The context was provided by the depopulation of the region, as a result of Tigranes' forced migrations to his new city of Tigranocerta, in the northern reaches of the Mesopotamian plain. According to Strabo, twelve 'Greek' cities were affected, including, specifically, Soloi and Mallus.⁷⁴ After Lucullus defeated the Armenian monarch and took the city in 69, Lucullus allowed the inhabitants to return to their original homelands, with Plutarch stating that he assisted them with provisions and funds. For this reason, he claims Lucullus was honoured widely as εὐεργέτης and κτίστης.⁷⁵ The generic εὐεργέτης originally implied admission to a category of non-citizens with privileged status within a civic community, akin to πρόξενος.⁷⁶ From the fifth century already, however, it was consistently employed as an honorific title.⁷⁷ By contrast, κτίστης was originally ascribed to semi-divine or legendary founders. Both titles came to be applied to Hellenistic rulers in an honorific capacity.⁷⁸ Accepting Plutarch's claim, the Cilician communities chose to honour Lucullus in ways traditionally appropriate for their Seleucid monarchs. In this case, given Lucullus' distance from the communities in question—the narrative sources imply he did not personally visit Syria or Cilicia—and his attempts

⁷² D.C. 37.7a; Just. 40.2.3-4; Porphyry, *BNJ* 260 F 32 = Eusebius, *Chron.* 123.26-30 (Karst). Cf. Plu. *Pomp.* 39-40.

⁷³ On Pompeius' attitude towards Lucullus' decisions: D.C. 37.49.3-50.1; Tröster 2005, 102106; Yarrow 2012, 174-177.

⁷⁴ Str. 11.14.15; Plu. *Pomp.* 28.4; *Luc.* 26.1; App. *Mith.* 67.

⁷⁵ Plu. *Luc.* 29.4.

⁷⁶ Gauthier 1985, 22-24, 33-39, 134-136; Domingo Gyax 2016, 111, 230-231.

⁷⁷ Gauthier 1985, 141-143; Domingo Gyax 2016, 51.

⁷⁸ Mortensen 2015, 231-233.

to reconstitute the communities affected by Tigranes' actions made the analogy more potent.

During the latter stages of Lucullus' command, in summer and autumn 67, Pompeius was active off the coast of Cilicia Tracheia, campaigning against pirates. After the capitulation of the major base at Korakesion, Pompeius demonstrated his *philanthropia* by settling his defeated adversaries in depopulated regions, with Cilicia again prominent in the sources.⁷⁹ Despite Lucullus' support for the erstwhile denizens of Tigranocerta's return, Ziegler plausibly explains how natural attrition and the generation of new ties would have taken its toll on the population. The relative closeness of Cilicia Pedias to the site of the final act of the campaign and the region's close concentration of *poleis* near the coast likely also proved enticing.⁸⁰ The power vacuum in Cilicia caused by Tigranes' withdrawal into the Caucasus and the conflict between Philip II, Antiochus XIII and their respective backers around the Syrian Tetrapolis may also have commanded his attention. Certainly, Cicero, as noted above, claimed that Pompeius had added *all* Cilicia to the Roman *imperium*.⁸¹ While allowing for rhetorical effect—Cicero sought to persuade his audience of Pompeius' capabilities—the force of *totam Ciliciam*, in light of the traditional division of the region between Tracheia and Pedias, seems telling. That former pirates were settled in Cilicia Pedias might imply an assertion of Roman hegemony and the definitive end of Seleucid pretensions to control the region.

Furthermore, the decisions of at least five Cilician cities to begin new civic eras, replacing the dominant Seleucid era, should be related to Pompeius' actions. The dates at which different *poleis* made the change varied. In this period the calendars of Cilician communities following the Macedonian calendar, began in autumn. Mopsuestia and Epiphaneia were early adopters, taking year 1 as 68/67; Mallus, the following year; and Soloi, began a new era in autumn 66. This era-change should be taken to illustrate the subtle divergences in the attitudes, preferences, and worldviews of decision-making bodies in the different communities. In the case of the last, this should be connected to the formal refoundation of the *polis* as Pompeiopolis, perhaps taking in the first 'full' calendar year as a renewed community. However, cities could choose to acknowledge the calendar year in which an epochal event occurred, resulting in a 'short' first year. As Leschhorn has stressed, the adoption of new eras was driven by local agents, responding to a significant change in the community's situation. Ziegler contends that the perception of when this change occurred

⁷⁹Str. 8.7.5; 14.3.3, 5.8; Vell. 2.32.4-6; Plu. *Pomp.* 28.1-4; App. *Mith.* 96, 115; D.C. 36.37.4-6.

⁸⁰ Pompeius' *imperium* was valid on the ocean and 50 Roman miles or 400 *stades* (c. 75 km) inland. Vell. 2.31.2; Plu. 25.2; D.C. 36.36.4.

⁸¹Cic. *Leg. Man.* 35. Pace Pulci Doria Breglia 1972, 349-366.

could also vary, especially when not based on a single datable event, as for instance in the processes return of citizens from Tigranocerta or settlement of defeated pirates.⁸² Both of these actions seem to have revitalised local economies and demonstrated the capacity of Roman commanders to protect *poleis*' interests.

In light of the adoption of a new era at Antioch beginning in 66/65, another possibility is worth entertaining.⁸³ While popularly known as the 'Pompeian era', it should be noted that the literary sources do not suggest that Pompeius entered Syria until the following year.⁸⁴ Alongside scattered hints that the Antiochenes expelled either or both of Antiochus XIII and Philip II prior to Pompeius' involvement in Syria, it might better be taken as an era of liberation, subsequently confirmed by the Roman commander in person during 65/64. A similar phenomenon may have taken place in Cilicia, after the expulsion of Tigranes' agents. If so, the decision of many Cilician cities to begin new civic eras in 68-66 could imply the rejection of Seleucid authority by individual *poleis*. Nevertheless, though this process of 'liberation' was decentralised, emerging over a period of time through imitation and competition, the widespread adoption of new eras institutionalised the authority of Pompeius and the Roman state within local political cultures.

Finally, an honorific inscription from Pompeiopolis-Soloi sheds further light on the process. The text, which must be associated with Pompeius, reads: [Γνάϊον Πομπήϊον] | [Γναΐου υἱὸν] | [Μέγαν] | τρις αὐτοκρά[τορα.] | Πομπηϊοπολιτῶν | τῆς ἱερᾶς καὶ ἀσύλου | καὶ ἐλευθέρας | καὶ αὐτονόμου | ὁ δῆμος τὸν κτίστην | καὶ πάτρωνα τῆς | πόλεως.⁸⁵

The *demos* of the Pompeiopolitans, sacred, inalienable, free, and autonomous, (honours) Gnaeus Pompeius, son of Gnaeus, Magnus, three times *imperator*, founder, and patron of the *polis*.

This inscription is an odd compromise of a document, integrating two separate honorific registers, as well as showing some innovation. As noted, κτίστης was a typical royal Hellenistic title, and appropriate to Pompeius, given his role in the refoundation of the community.⁸⁶ It also fits with Pompeius' reputation as a (re)founder of *poleis*, which itself engages with Hellenistic ideas of kingship.⁸⁷ By contrast, the title, transliterated from

⁸²Leschhorn 1993, 418-432; Ziegler 1993, *passim*, esp. 208-209.

⁸³Seyrig 1950, 5-15; Bellinger 1952, 56-57; Butcher 2004, 312-320; McAlee 2007, 60-64.

⁸⁴E.g. Nurpetlian 2010, 13.

⁸⁵IGR 3.869.

⁸⁶Compare later uses of the title in honorific contexts in Cilicia: *OID* 45, Dagron-Feissel 87, 121 with commentary at Pilhofer 2006, 151-153.

⁸⁷Str. 12.3.28-31; Plu. *Pomp.* 45.2; App. *Mith.* 105, 115; D.C. 37.20.2. Magie 1950, 1232-1234; Dreizehnter 1975; Dench 2018, 68-69.

Latin, of *patron* was not, originally, honorific. Neither Greeks nor Romans viewed the term as synonymous with existing Greek labels. This represented the deliberate deployment of a Roman concept to honour Roman magistrates.⁸⁸ *Ipso facto*, this amalgamated civic honorific practice and Roman social institutions in a novel way. Though having numerous or noteworthy individuals in one's *clientela* demonstrated one's worth and influence within the political community, the patron-client relationship was often a formal consensual agreement. This was equally true of patronage exercised over civic communities. Here the language of patronage was co-opted into a new conceptual framework, drawing on the Classical and Hellenistic institution of *προξενία*, to construct a Roman-specific honorific relationship.⁸⁹ By the 60s, this terminology had become a familiar sight in the honorific register of the Aegean and western Asia *poleis*. However, aside from a single, later, example from Mallus for an unidentifiable Valerius, this is the only attested occurrence in Cilicia proper.⁹⁰ Though this may be a function of the limited epigraphic material from the region, it might also indicate a less developed familiarity with Roman culture. Finally, the term *τῆς αὐτοκράτορος*, translating the Latin *imperator III*, is another rare form, parallels are attested elsewhere only at Mytilene and Miletropolis, each time for Pompeius. In this context, it seems to be used in an attempt to highlight the unparalleled achievements of the commander;⁹¹ and, perhaps more importantly, it speaks to the key royal virtue of military success, emphasising his capacity as a defender of civic freedoms in a personal capacity, beyond the security offered by the Roman state. Overall, this inscription seems to integrate a Roman commander into a localised, if flexible, honorific framework, assimilating him to previously royal values, in an attempt to authorise and legitimise his actions.

5 Conclusions

The dissolution of the Seleucid kingdom in 65/64 represented the culmination of the process whereby Syrian and Cilician communities transferred their allegiance from their existing dynasts to Roman figures.

⁸⁸Ferrary 1997, 208-212; Eilers 2002, 110-112; Bloy 2012, 181-183.

⁸⁹*Proxenia*, though rooted in similar concepts of benefaction and reciprocity, was an *interpolis* institution. While involving the grant of specific privileges, *proxenia* did acquire an honorific aspect. Mack 2015, 22-25, 81-89; Domingo Gyax 2016, 109-114.

⁹⁰*IGR* 3.888. Pilhofer 2006, 153 n. 126.

⁹¹Mytilene: *IG* 12.2.202. Cf. *ILS* 9459 *αὐτοκράτορα τὸ τρίτον* at Miletropolis. While earlier Roman commanders had celebrated three triumphs (and M. Furius Camillus allegedly celebrated four), the latest attested precedent was Q. Fabius Maximus Rullianus, whose third triumph fell in 295 (*Fasti Triumphales*, Beard 2007, 14-15).

The establishment of Syria as a routine provincial command from 61 would swiftly demonstrate the practical consequences of this choice. No longer was the state apparatus suspended at a remove from local considerations, as under the Seleucids: the governor was invoked both by Roman citizens transacting business and locals appealing against abuses.⁹² The comparative security promised by Roman arms also proved illusory—the defeat of Crassus at Carrhae in 53 saw the Parthians grow as an active threat, while the civil wars of the 40s affected the *poleis* of Syria and Cilicia greatly.⁹³ However, the negative consequences ultimately arising should not detract from the agency of communities in facilitating the beginning of Roman administration.

Before the advent of the Roman magistrates in the region, civic communities and Seleucid dynasts constructed legitimacy and authority through numerous complex, overlapping systems. The ‘surrender-and-grant’ paradigm served as a foundation of royal authority but the increasing leverage of *poleis*, both in practical terms and within the dialectic of honorific and euergetic exchange, steadily eroded its power across the late second and early first century. Meanwhile, cities in the region were making increasing use of peer-polity networks to assert their own agency and identity. The appearance of Roman actors created disruption on two fronts. First, straightforward misunderstandings rooted in cultural differences; and second, the difficulties in finding institutional correspondences between the Roman state and either its Seleucid counterpart or individual peers.

Roman hegemony within the Greek-speaking world, in a general sense, was nothing new. Flamininus had proclaimed the ‘freedom of the Greeks’ generations earlier, Macedonia received a regular governor from the 140s, the cities of western Asia from 133. *Poleis* subject to Roman hegemony had obvious incentives to construct new frameworks of legitimacy and authority to accommodate Roman magistrates and institutions—establishing a *modus vivendi* was crucial to the well-being of their inhabitants. The social-embeddedness of such institutions inherently limited the speed of this transformation, causing communities to start from existing frameworks.⁹⁴ As such, where the communities considered in this paper, which stood outside Roman influence until the end of the period of study, had already made moves to engage with Roman magistrates, they integrated them into existing value-systems as equivalent to royal actors.

⁹² E.g. Gabinius’ actions against the *publicani* in Syria in 58 (Cic. *Prov. Cons.* 10-13); petitions to Cicero in 51/0 by Cilician *poleis* (Cic. *Att.* 5.16.2-3, 21.7, 6.1.6-7, 16). Compare Thonemann 2013, 4, 12.

⁹³ Börm 2016.

⁹⁴ On the embeddedness of social and political frameworks: Steinmo and Thelen 1992, esp. 18-26. In an ancient context: Mackil 2013; Mack 2015.

At Mopsuestia, we see a *polis* approaching a junior Roman magistrate to support their claim to *asylia*, an inter-*polis* institution which had been extended to include monarchs. Both Lucullus, a lowly quaestor, and Sulla, a considerably more powerful commander, responded by framing themselves as equal (or even superior) to Seleucid *basileis*. More generally, the sources emphasise across this period that individual communities were increasingly bold in asserting their autonomy as traditional markers of dynastic authority faded during the first century. Concurrently, they stress the suitability of Roman magistrates for filling this role as militarily successful, morally respectable, and beneficent leaders. Civic authorities openly celebrated these virtues and integrated Pompeius and Lucullus, *inter alios*, within these established frameworks.

Crucially, this was a locally driven process. Casting Roman magistrates as pseudo-monarchs, responding to the same values and dynamics of legitimacy and authority as the Seleucids, allowed cities to define themselves as autonomous agents and assert their independence vis-à-vis the competing *basileis*. As the Roman presence became more regular, it seems that the cities of the region, notably Antioch-on-the-Orontes, were increasingly cognizant of the potential benefits of Roman hegemony in place of dynastic rule. Chief among these was the greater security offered by the Roman state, both from warring members of the dynasty and external actors, but also significant was the likelihood that the Roman state would at least regularise exactions of men, materiel, and money more than the *basileis*. As a result, Roman rule came to be seen as a viable and preferable alternative by civic leaders, who integrated Roman magistrates easily into their existing political frameworks. Local actors in Cilicia and Syria played a critical role in both legitimating Roman hegemony in their regional contexts and encouraging the establishment of Roman rule.

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