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FROM DEMOCRACY TO OLIGARCHY – THE ROLE OF THE CIVIC ELITE WITHIN THE COMMUNITY IN ROMAN DELPHI

Abstract: Oligarchization was a widespread phenomenon that had similar features throughout the Greek world. The differences and variants, however, should not be overlooked. My goal is to present the Delphic version of oligarchization — a task that has not been undertaken so far. The article aims to present how the leading families of Delphi accumulated power and how they operated within a wider Roman world-system. I use the epigraphical and literary sources to assess the degree to which the illustrious families of Delphi entered the wider provincial and imperial elite, and indicate whether careers were of a more local nature. I conclude the paper by analyzing the relationship between the city and its elite and focus on the benefactions recorded in the epigraphic material.

Keywords: Delphi; Imperial period; oligarchization; civic elite

Gauthier' studies on governance at Delphi indicate that at least throughout the entire 2nd century BC, and perhaps even already in the 3rd century BC, Delphi had a democratic system where all the citizens where equal, entitled to the same prerogatives, and the meeting of the assembly was opened to everyone (Gauthier 2000, 109-139).[1] Further studies on public documents

[1] Gauthier analyzes Delphic democracy in the 2nd century BC. He discusses Delphic civic institutions and the phrase *ἔδοξε τᾶι πόλει τῶν Δελφῶν ἐν ἀγορᾶι τελείωι σὺν ψάφοις ταῖς ἐννόμοις* which is attested in full pattern decrees spanning from the first half of the 3rd century BC (e.g. *Fouilles de Delphes* 4.414, 276/5 BC) until the '80s of the 1st century BC

from that period reveal that the Delphic assembly (*ἁ πόλις τῶν Δελφῶν*) was the ultimate civic body with legislative prerogatives. The council, recorded in sources from the 4th century BC onwards, acted most probably only as an advisory board, as any *bouleumatic* or *probouleumatic* decrees are attested before the end of the 1st century AD. Phrases used in the *proxeny* decrees demonstrate the equality of all Delphians and their privileged position within the sanctuary.[2] Pace Gauthier, Kyriakidis is more cautious in calling the Delphic system of the Hellenistic period fully democratic. He claims that although the performing of civic duties within the city was never the work of a narrow minority, it was never fully egalitarian either (Kyriakidis 2014, 124-128). Here, however, it must be remembered that even if not all citizens performed all functions, this is not necessarily the mark on an oligarchy, since full political equality (or at least, greater political equality) in office-holding could be only achieved by payments for office-holders, as in Athens. Even short of this, however, a system could be democratic, so long as the assembly had power and, crucially, office-holding was not explicitly limited to those above a certain income threshold (*timêma*). According to Kyriakidis, the process of the 'aristocratization' of certain social practices began in Delphi already in the mid-2nd century BC and it is reflected in a significant rise in the number of offerings and honorific statues funded by the leading families, and their attempts to occupy a central place within the civic structures by holding prominent offices and priesthoods (Kyriakidis 2014, 129). These social changes seem to pave the way for the political transitions which took place in Delphi in the Imperial period.

A significant change took place sometime between the mid-1st century BC and the mid-1st century AD and the Delphic democracy gradually took

(e.g. *Fouilles de Delphes* 2.55, *c.* 80 BC.). He concludes that the meeting of the assembly was open to everyone and that the Delphic system was democratic. In the following article all *Fouilles de Delphes* citations refer to the third volume of *Fouilles de Delphes, III. Épigraphie*.

[2] In many honorific decrees foreigners were granted privileges that were reserved for all native Delphians without any exceptions. This proves the equality of all citizens: e.g. *ἀτέλειαν πάντων καθάπερ Δελφοῖς* (Weil 1895, 393, *c.* 340 BC; Homolle 1899, 520, no. 6, 350-300 BC; *Fouilles de Delphes* 4.411 II, 262/1 BC; *Fouilles de Delphes* 4.427 A I, 205/4-203/2 BC; *Fouilles de Delphes* 4.402 II 1, 2nd century BC); *ἀτέλειαν πάντων ὡς καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις πολίταις* (*SGDI* 2607, 240 or 239 BC; *SIG*^{3} 481A, 239 BC?); *ἐπιτιμὰν καθάπερ Δελφοῖς* (*Fouilles de Delphes* 1.391, *c.* 360-355 BC; Bousquet 1940/1941, 94, 330-320 BC; *Fouilles de Delphes* 1.14, *c.* 234/3 BC; *Fouilles de Delphes* 1.120, *c.* 220 BC); *θύειν πρώτοις μετὰ Δελφοὺς* (*Fouilles de Delphes* 2.18, 300-200 BC; *Fouilles de Delphes* 2.21, 300-200 BC) and *θύειν πρώτοις καθάπερ Δελφοὺς* (*Fouilles de Delphes* 2.20, 178 BC); *ἰσοπολιτείαν καθάπερ Δελφοῖς* (*Fouilles de Delphes* 1.454, 169-81 BC).

an oligarchical turn. The honorific decree granted to Telesagoros of Abai bears witness to the fact that already in the mid-1st century AD, the citizens of Delphi were no longer equal and entitled to the same prerogatives.

Fouilles de Delphes 4.442 (mid-1st century AD). Cf. Larsen 2005, 82-84, no. 13; Jacquemin *et al.* 2014, 407-408, no. 224.

[θεός· τύχαν ἀγαθ]ά[ν]
[ἄρχοντος Λυ]σιμάχου τοῦ Νεικάνορος, μηνὸς Ἀπε[λλαίου ὀγδόῃ]
[ἱσταμένου, ἐν ἐν]νόμωι ἐκκλησίαι, βουλευόντων δὲ τῆς πόλε[ως Ἐπινίκου]
[τοῦ Νικοστρά]του, Κλεάνδρου τοῦ Φίλωνος· Δάμων Πολεμάρχ[ου εἶπεν· ἐπειδὴ]
[Τελεσάγορ]ος Ἄρχωνος, ἄξιος εἶναι κριθεὶς ὑπὸ Διοδώρου τοῦ Ὀρέσ[του Δελφὸς γί]-
[γνεσθαι καὶ τ]ῆς αὐτοῦ θυγατρὸς Εὐτελήας ἀνὴρ εἶναι, συνεγράψατο πρὸς [Δι]όδωρον Ε[ὐτέληαν γα]μήσειν, ἔδοξε τῆι πόλει τῶν Δελφῶν, Διοδώρου πάντα παρε[σ]χημένου τῆι Ε[ὐτελήαι καὶ εἶναι] ἄξιον κεκρικότος Τελεσάγορον Ἄρχωνος ἄνδρα τῆς ἰδία[ς] θυγατρὸς Εὐτ[ελήας, δεδόσθ]αι αὐτῶι πολειτήαν, οὐ τὴν κοινήν, προξενίας ἢ τιμ[ῆ]ς εἵνεκεν ἣν ἄ[ν τις τῶν ἄλλ]ων <ν>ομιμώτατα λάβοι παρὰ Δελφῶν, εἶναί τε αὐτὸν καὶ δαμιουργὸν κ[αὶ μετέχει]ν ἀρχῆς καὶ ἱερω{ω}σύνης {[26]ἱερωσύνης}[26] ἁπάσης, ἧς οἱ εὐγενῖς Δελφῶν μετέχουσι· [πεμψάτω δ]ὲ τὸ ἀντίγραφον τῆς πολειτήας ὑπὸ δημοσίαν σφρ[α]γεῖδα καὶ πρὸς [τὴν τῶν Ἀβ]αίων πόλιν Δάμων Πολεμάρχου ὁ ἱερεὺς τοῦ Ἀπόλλων[ο]ς τοῦ Πυθίου.

The decree reveals that the citizen body was divided into two hierarchical groups: the *damiourgoi*, described as '*οἱ εὐγενῖς Δελφῶν'* (*well born Delphians*), who had exclusive access to the highest civic offices and priesthood (*μετέχειν ἀρχῆς καὶ ἱερωσύνης ἁπάσης*), and the rest of the common inhabitants who were unable to perform these prestigious functions.[3] Furthermore, the inscription identifies two levels of citizenship: the upper level (*politeia*) and the lower one (*koine*); the latter is granted '*for the sake of honor or proxenia*' (*[δεδόσθ]αι αὐτῶι πολειτήαν, οὐ τὴν*

[3] *Damiourgoi* are attested in Delphi already in the mid-2nd century BC in one manumission inscription, however nothing can be said about their functions, organization or prerogatives. *SGDI* 2189, 150-140 BC; Vatin 1961, 236-255; Vatin 1970a, 259-263; Ferrary and Rousset 1998, 297-299; Hamon 2009, 373-378. For *damiourgoi* in other Greek poleis see Veligianni-Terzi 1977, 51-55 and 90-96; Zoumbaki 2001, 90-95.

κοινήν, προξενίας ἣ τιμ[ῆ]ς εἵνεκεν ἣν ἄ[ν τις τῶν ἄλλ]ων <ν>ομιμώτατα λάβοι παρὰ Δελφῶν) (Vatin 1961, 239).

This article is an attempt to characterize the process of oligarchization at Delphi in the Imperial period. The term oligarchization is understood here as a process of moving towards oligarchy, a system in which the few hold power (Simonton 2017). The paper aims to present not only how the leading families of Delphi accumulated power but also how they operated within a wider Roman world-system. In what follows, I trace the growing influences of *homines novi* within Delphic society arguing that the influx of men of foreign origin into the Delphic elite was already possible in the first generation, and not only by their descendants in the next generations. I use the epigraphical and literary sources to assess the degree to which the illustrious families of Delphi entered the wider provincial and imperial elite, and indicate whether careers were of a more local nature. I conclude the paper by analyzing the relationship between the city and its elite and focus on the benefactions recorded in the epigraphic material.

Interest in a local upper class is nothing new as it goes back to the nineteenth century (e.g. Toepffer 1889). Despite the years of scholarly effort, the matter is still far from being exhausted. Musielak (1989) devotes her work to the Delphic *polis* in the 4th century BC. Daux (1936, 440-472) discusses the Delphic society in the 2nd and 1st centuries BC, however his studies do not include many new inscriptions discovered after 1936. Kyriakidis (2014, 103-129) focuses on Hellenistic Delphi. Oligarchization was a widespread phenomenon that had similar features throughout the Greek world. The differences and variants, however, should not be overlooked. My goal is to present the Delphic version of oligarchization — a task that has not been undertaken thus far. Due to the absence of funerary monuments from Delphi, knowledge must be drawn mostly from the honorific inscriptions, decrees and literary *testimonia* (Fraser 2000, 141). The term 'elite' can be interpreted in many ways, therefore it is necessary to state that by the Delphic civic elite, I understand successful individuals belonging to a limited number of wealthy families who had succeeded in monopolizing the key political and religious offices (Woloch 1969, 503; Habicht 1997, 326-328; Cébelliac-Gervarsoni and Lamoine 2003; Muñiz Grijalvo 2005, 255-282; Aleshire and Lambert 2011, 559-560; Camia 2014, 139-140).

Governance at Delphi shifted to an oligarchic format but the available evidence does not allow us to be precise about when this happened. The critical period between the mid-1st century BC and the mid-1st century

AD provides us with a limited number of sources, in contrast with earlier periods (Pl. 1: 1). Moreover, decrees typical of Hellenistic times were largely replaced by very brief *tituli honorarii* in the Imperial era. The decisive factor for this changing nature of evidence must have been the growing preference for monumental honorary forms among the ruling class, a trend widely attested among the municipal elites of the West and the East (Gschnitzer 1994, 281-284). The study of formulae on Delphic honorific decrees offers few insights. The only noticeable fact is that somewhere at the turn of the 1st century BC and 1st century AD, full decrees of the Delphic *polis* became more concise, a form common in the later periods. This may be a sign of change in the wider system (Documents with a new type of formula: *Fouilles de Delphes* 4.59, AD 1-17; *Fouilles de Delphes* 4.118, AD 50-100; *Fouilles de Delphes* 3.233, *c.* 80-95 AD; *Fouilles de Delphes* 4.47, AD 98).

The decree honoring Telesagoros (*Fouilles de Delphes* 4.442) reveals not only hierarchies at Delphi but also two further interesting tendencies. The first trend concerns the problem of the depopulation of Delphi in the 1st century AD. Euteleia, who was part of the Delphic elite, was about to marry a foreigner. Her husband, to maintain the social status of the family, would need to have a special grant of citizenship, not just an ordinary one (Larsen 2005, 82-84, No. 13).[4] Diodoros wanted citizenship for his future son-in-law, not least (*Fouilles de Delphes* 4.286, AD 52; Sartre 1991, 233-237; Alcock 1993). Delphi solved the problem by granting citizenship on an unprecedented scale (Pl. 1: 2). The old families died out or left Delphi, and new ones took their place. It is likely that with the increase in the numbers of citizens, the significance of awards of citizenship declined. The process of devaluation of Delphic citizenship began. From the 1st century AD onwards, citizenship alone was not sufficient to qualify a citizen to hold office, and a further level of qualification was introduced. Family origin and wealth became additional qualifications, which is perfectly demonstrated in the case of Telesagoros.

The second point that the Telesagoros decree demonstrates concerns regards the award of Delphic citizenship to *homines novi* at the midpoint of the 1st century AD. The majority of the *homines novi* came from Nicopolis (*Fouilles de Delphes* 1.312; *Fouilles de Delphes* 4.60; Bourguet 1905, 50, inv. no. 2429) and Corinth (*Fouilles de Delphes* 4.88; IG XII,7 *4), the most

[4] It is worth underlining that on the same day as this decree was passed, the *polis* of Delphi also passed and erected a decree for Telesagoros' father awarding him citizenship (presumably the regular level of citizenship). *Fouilles de Delphes* 4.443. Cf. Larsen 2005, 84-85, No. 14.

populous cities of Greece at that time, and from the neighboring Phocian *poleis*, Abai (*Fouilles de Delphes* 4.442 and 4.443) and Tithorea[5] (for Roman Corinth see Wiseman 1979, 438-548; Spawforth 1996; 167-182; Pawlak 2013, 143-162. For the population of Nicopolis see Purcell 1987, 71-90). The epigraphic material reveals that at least four new inhabitants held a variety of high civic offices already in the first generation, and that their descendants had not only intense local, but also provincial and imperial careers. Hyginos, a native of Corinth, came to Delphi *c.* 50 AD and was granted Delphic citizenship shortly afterwards (*Fouilles de Delphes* 4.88). He must have reached high social standing as he is attested in later documents as *bouleutes* (*Fouilles de Delphes* 4.114), while his son acted as a *gymnasiarch* (*Fouilles de Delphes* 3.233). Another example illustrating how quickly *homines novi* developed local and supra-local careers is the family of Theokles, the son of Eudamos, from Nicopolis (Pl. 2: 1).

Theokles served as *epimeletes* of the Amphictyony under Tiberius (*Fouilles de Delphes* 1.530, AD 14-37). He gained Delphic citizenship probably in the late '30s (*Fouilles de Delphes* 1.312). It is not known from the documents if he performed any services in the city, however his son is attested as archon, and his granddaughter, Memmia Leontis, can be identified with the Leontis mentioned by Plutarch who held the prominent post of *archeis* — the priestess of Dionysus (Plut. *De mul. vir*. 242F. For *archeis* see Jannoray 1946, 254-259). It is Publius Memmius Kritolas Theokles, however, the son of Leontis, who had an intense imperial career. The *cursus honorum* shows that he was not an ordinary person. Kritolaos held military commands in Germania, served as *tribunus militum, strategos*, and probably as *praetor* in at Rome (Kapetanopoulos 1966, 119-130, *c.* 85 AD). The cases of these families demonstrates how quickly *homines novi* and their offspring undertook civic duties upon entering the Delphic upper class. Telesagoros was considered worthy of becoming a member of the *damiourgoi* by marrying a daughter of a prominent Delphic citizen, while Theokles and Hyginos' families joined the Delphic aristocracy through the offices they performed, material status and, most probably, by benefactions (although these are not preserved in available sources). The depopulated Delphic elite of the early Imperial period was not homogeneous, but socially flexible, which facilitated not only the integration of outsiders, but also the rise of new people to higher social strata. However, there were some

[5] *c*. 90 AD Titus Flavius Soklaros, the citizen of Tithorea, is attested as Delphic archon which indicate that he was granted Delphic citizenship before that time. *CID* 4.147 and 148; *Fouilles de Delphes* 4.47 and *Fouilles de Delphes* 3.232.

apparent obstacles to such social mobility. For newcomers did not hold the Delphic priesthood, and only their descendants in subsequent generations took up that position. The evidence therefore suggests that only native Delphians were able to hold the priestly offices, in contrast to non-cultic magistracies. There was however one exception: Plutarch of Chaeronea, served as a *ἱερεύς* in the sanctuary (*Fouilles de Delphes* 4.472). To my knowledge this is the only example of a foreigner who held the privileged office of the priest of Apollo.[6]

By the end of the 1st century AD the separation of ordinary citizens from the privileged upper class had deepened. Apart from the *damiourgoi*, another elite group emerged within Delphic society. A law of AD 135-138 regulating the allocation of land mentions *bouleutai* as a separate class (Ferrary and Rousset 1998, 277-342).[7] Their relation to *damiourgoi* is however not clear. Where the *bouleutai* above the *damiourgoi* in the social hierarchy or not? Were they a sub-group of the *damiourgoi* or *vice versa*? From the end of the 1st century AD onwards, 42 honorific decrees attest *bouleuteia* as a new privilege allowing individuals both to serve as a councilor and belong to the ruling class.[8] Through the entire Hellenistic period up to the late 1st century AD, the assembly was the exclusive civic body with legislative prerogatives at Delphi. The *boule*, attested in sources already in the 4th century BC, actedmost probably only as an advisory board, as any *bouleumatic* or *probouleumatic* decrees are testified (Daux 1936, 427-430; Roux 1970, 124-125; Roux 1976, 71-76; Salviet 1984, 743-760; Rhodes and Lewis 1997, 135). This situation changed in the late 1st century AD, as 13 documents reveal the legislative activity of the *boule*, mostly in the acts of granting honorific statues.[9] The legislative activity of the *boule*, *bouleuteia*

[6] Plutarch was granted Roman citizenship under the name of Mestrius Plutarch, as gathered from epigraphic evidence (*Fouilles de Delphes* 4.472). Nothing is known about his Delphic citizenship. Cf. Barrow 1967; Puech 1992, 4860; Sirinelli 2000.

[7] *Bouleutai* as a separate upper class are attested also in Sillyon in Pamphylia (*IGR* III, 800 and 801) and Poglia in Pisidia (*IGR* III, 409). Cf. Sartre 1991, 141-142; For transformations of the council and of the social status of *bouleutai* see Hamon 2005, 121-144.

[8] The earliest documents are dated to the end of the 1st century AD (*Fouilles de Delphes* 2.98; *Fouilles de Delphes* 4.114 and 115). There are 19 texts from the 2nd century AD, two – from the 3rd century AD (*Fouilles de Delphes* 1.469 and *Fouilles de Delphes* 2.109), and 18 that can be dated only to the Imperial period.

[9] *ἔδοξε τῇ βουλῇ καὶ τῷ δήμῳ* - *Fouilles de Delphes* 4.47, AD 98; *Fouilles de Delphes* 2.102, AD 129 and *Fouilles de Delphes* 2.103, AD 129. *ἐν ἐννόμῳ [β]ο[υλ]ῇ τε καὶ ἐκκλησίᾳ* – *Fouilles de Delphes* 2.118, *c.* 200 AD. *ψ(ηφίσματι) β(ουλῆς)* – *Fouilles de Delphes* 1.539, AD 121; *Fouilles de Delphes* 4.86, mid-2nd century AD; *Fouilles de Delphes* 4.272, mid-2nd century AD; *Fouilles de Delphes* 4.272, mid-2nd century AD; *Fouilles de Delphes*

attested as a new privilege, and the *bouleutai* recorded as an upper echelon within the elite, all document the increasing role of the council within the civic structures. The transition to greater *bouleutic* powers marked not only the institutional and political shift, but also the social difference between the 'people/*demotai*' and the members of the (noble) town council (Quass 1993, 389; cf. Pleket 1998, 204-216; Zuiderhoek 2009, 53-70). A similar accumulation of power and land in the hands of the wealthy local families can also be seen also in other Greek regions, especially in Athens, Olympia, and Asia Minor (for the Roman Athens see Geagan 1967, 32-61; Woloch 1969, 503-510. For Roman Olympia see Zoumbaki 2001, 65. For Asia Minor Sillyon *IGR* III, 800 and 801; Cnidos *SGDI* 3549; Argos *SEG* 11.314. Cf. Quass 1993, 349; Ferrary 1987-1989, 203-216; Vatin 1961, 237; Zuiderhoek 2009, 53-70).

Oligarchization at Delphi reached its apogee during the 2nd century AD and is illustrated by several features. Firstly, the *boule* transformed from an advisory board into the effective governing institution. Secondly, the *damiourgoi* were numerous enough to constitute an assembly or council (*synedrion*) in their own right, which met regularly on a fixed date and had the ability to confer citizenship (*Fouilles de Delphes* 4.440. The phrases '*ἐν ἐννόμῳ δαμιουργίῳ and ἔδοξεν τοῖς δαμιουργοῖς*' were used in the preserved sources: *Fouilles de Delphes* 4.440 and *Fouilles de Delphes* 4.98. Vatin 1961, 244; Ferrary and Rousset 1998, 297-298). The Delphic assembly lost its supreme position as an exclusive legislative body, while the *boule* and council of *damiourgoi* gained legislative prerogatives at the expense of the assembly. Thirdly, the Delphic society underwent an increasing hierarchization expressed by the division of the citizen body into three groups: *damiourgoi*, *bouleutai* and the rest of the citizens (*demotai*). Lastly, prosopographical studies reveal the domination of several prominent families, whose the members of which often held priesthoods and civic magistracies, simultaneously or successively, both, men and women.

The *Memmii* family over four generations held important priestly (*archeis* and priests) and civic offices (*archon*, secretary of the Amphictyony, *xystarches*) (Pl. 2: 2). Gaius Memmius Euthydamos served in the sanctuary at Delphi together with Plutarch (Plut. *Quaest. conv*. VII 2 = *Mor*. 700E. For Euthydamos' archonship: *Fouilles de Delphes* 3.233; *Fouilles de Delphes* 4.100; *Fouilles de Delphes* 4.113; *Fouilles de Delphes* 4.132;

4.473, *c.* 212 AD; *Fouilles de Delphes* 1.200, Imp.; *Fouilles de Delphes* 1.201, Imp.; *Fouilles de Delphes* 1.214, Imp.; *Fouilles de Delphes* 1.215, Imp.

Fouilles de Delphes 4.133). Memmia Lupa, the *archeis*, seems to have made a large enough benefaction to receive the reserved seats in Delphi's theatre in where her name was inscribed (*Fouilles de Delphes* 6.2; Bommelear and Laroche 2015, 255). Neikandros must have been very generous in outlaying money for public purposes to receive the highest honor ever granted by the Delphic *polis* — heroic worship — and to became the only known example of a Delphic local hero (*Fouilles de Delphes* 1.466[2]. For heroic worship at Delphi see Grzesik 2015, 281-285).[10]

During the Imperial period, the illustrious Delphic families monopolized not only the most important civic offices and priesthoods, but also the post of Pythia. According to the tradition, the Pythia was supposed to be chosen from among the women of Delphi who were neither well born, nor rich (Parke and Wormell 1956, 35; Connelly 2007, 73-75). We know a very few names of the women who held the post, and the majority of these are attested in myth rather than in historical sources. Epigraphic material provides the name of only one Pythia, Theoneike. She is referred to as '*Πύθια τοῦ θεοῦ*' in a memorial for her homonymous granddaughter. Theoneike was part of the Delphic elite. Her husband and son served as priests of Apollo at the Delphic sanctuary (La Coste-Messelière 1925, 83, no. 10, 2nd/3rd century AD; *Fouilles de Delphes* 2.118). Marcus Iulius Mnaseas was a descendant of a Pythia and many other priests *Πυθίας ἔγγονος καὶ ἄλλων πολλῶν ἱερειῶν ἀπόγονος* (*Fouilles de Delphes* 1.553, AD 175-225). These two inscriptions bear witness to the fact that, at least by Roman times, the post of Pythia may have become concentrated in the hands of a few prominent families, and that she was chosen from among elite women, and was no longer being chosen from among ordinary citizens.

It seems that in the 2nd century AD the elite of Delphi took full control of Delphic civic life. Power was concentrated in the hands of a few families who cooperated (through marriage) or competed with each other. The natural consequence was the internal stratification of the Delphic society. The highest positions among the upper class were achieved by those who possessed wealth. There was, however, one more factor needed — successful offspring. Memmius Neikandros, unluckily for his family, left no descendants, as none of his children are

[10] Tiberius Claudius Saethida Caelianus (I) of Messene, high-priest and *helladarches* of the Achaean League (*SEG* 51.2001, 458B, l.36 and *SEG* 63.291) is a parallel example. He contributed to the restoration of the proscenium of the theatre of Messene (*SEG* 51.2001, 458A). He also descended from the very prominent family, which is known from at least the end of the 3rd century BC (Rizakis 2007, 190-192). In all probability, he is the man referred to by Pausanias (4.32.2) to be granted with heroic worship after his death.

mentioned in his posthumous inscription, nor in any other documents. The *Gellii* were more fortunate (Pl. 3: 1). They were, demographically speaking, 'lucky winners', as they enjoyed several successive generations. Surviving offspring lived long enough to replace the older generation and to accumulate wealth, power and position. Consequently, the *Gellii* had a far longer time span than any other Delphic elite family, and naturally they became an elite within the elite (Mrozewicz 1989, 176; Jongman 2003, 181-196; Zuiderhoek 2009, 63). The process of stratification of the city's upper class also took place also elsewhere (e.g. Olympia: Zoumbaki 2001, 65-66). For Athens, Woloch distinguishes four leading families that became the top households during the 2nd century AD and who can be at some extent compared with the Delphic *Gellii* (Woloch 1969, 503-510).

Other members of the *Gellii* included Lucius Gellius Menogenos, the leader of the *damiourgoi* (*SIG*^{3} 901A, AD 312-315) and Gellia Babbia (Bousquet 1963, 202-203, *c.* 250 AD).

Lucius Gellius Xenagoras (I) was the leader of *damiourgoi* (*προστάτης δαμιοργῶν*) at the end of the 2nd century AD (Bousquet 1963, 199). The same post was held by his descendant in the fourth or fifth (?) generation, Lucius Gellius Menogenos at the beginning of the 4th century AD (*SIG*^{3} 901A, AD 312-315; Bousquet 1952, 653-660). Xenagoras' career clearly shows his high social standing: he served as ambassador sent to Rome three times, a priest of Apollo, and *agonothetes* twice. He was also a citizen of Athens where he held the office of *eponymous* archon (Bousquet 1963, 199). The *Gellii* achieved extraordinary positions at Delphi and Athens, and through marriage they merged with another influential Delphic family — the *Babbii* (for Gellia Babbia see Bousquet 1963, 202-203. The *Gellii* at Athens see Oliver 1950, 161-164).

We are unable to trace the development of the Delphic elite after the mid-3rd century AD, as the number of preserved sources (notably the inscriptions) fell rapidly (Pl. 1: 1). The private family portraits, the most important category concerning the local elite of Delphi, became a rarity after Alexander Severus, and public statues were granted almost exclusively to Roman emperors (Grzesik 2019). The only certain fact is that the *damiourgoi* were still active at the beginning of the 4th century AD for they appear as a financial commission, when Lucius Gellius Menogenos was the leader of *damiourgoi* (*SIG*^{3} 901A, AD 312-315. Vatin 1961, 246-250 compares the *synedrion* of *damiourgoi* to the Roman *curia*. Delphic *curia* is also mentioned in *Codex Theodosianus* 15.5.4).

Now it is time to consider whether the members of Delphi's prominent

families constituted only a local upper class, or whether they entered into the provincial and/or imperial elite? When approaching this question, it must be remembered that for centuries the Amphictyony was a 'fast track' towards the supra-local careers for Delphic citizens. High-ranking posts within the Amphictyonic structures were held by Titus Flavius Soklaros and his grandson Titus Flavius Eurydikos who both acted as *epimeletai* (*Corpus des Inscriptions de Delphes* 4.147 and 4.148; *Fouilles de Delphes* 4.47; *Fouilles de Delphes* 3.232. There are also some dubious cases, the whose origin of which is not certain). Moreover, Eurydikos held the office of *xystarches* (*Fouilles de Delphes* 2.118; *Corpus des Inscriptions de Delphes* 4.164). The supreme functions within the League were achieved also by Memmius Neikandros (*xystarches* and secretary of the Amphictyony, *Fouilles de Delphes* 1.466[2]), Marcus Iulius Mnaseas (secretary of the Amphictyony, *Fouilles de Delphes* 1.533,) and Lucius Gellius Xenagoras (I) (*agonothetes* twice, Bousquet 1963, 199). Surprisingly, no Delphic citizen is attested as helladarches or, a bigger puzzle, as priest of the imperial cult (Sánchez 2001, 441-442).[11] One could expect more Delphians to have performed services within the Amphictyony than the evidence suggests. Their small number could be explained by the fact that the League in the Imperial period was dominated by officials hailing from Nicopolis and Hypata and so the citizens of these two cities were especially likely to rise to a position of prominence at the sanctuary due to the emperor's fondness.[12] The principal figures of the Amphictyony, like the *epimeletai*, were appointed by the emperors, and therefore the first five *epimeletai* hailed from Nicopolis, not Delphi

[11] Some scholars (Pouilloux and Roux 1963, 100-101, and Lefèvre in lemma of *CID* 4.141) claim that Titus Flavius Megaleinos described as *ἀρχιερεὺς τῶν Σεβαστῶν καὶ ἐπιμελητὴς τῶν Ἀμφικτυόνων* (*CID* 4.141, AD 87-91) came from Delphi, as his name is inscribed without *ethnicon*. The prosopographical studies, however, do not support this theory, as the name Megalinos or Megaleinos is not very common in Mainland Greece and is not attested in Delphi at all (it occurs twice in Tanagra, six times in Eretria, and twice in Athens). Cf. Jacquemin *et al*. 2014, 421-422, No. 236. Moreover, Tiberius Claudius Spartiatikos, the son of Tiberius Claudius Brasidas (*Fouilles de Delphes* 1.543, AD 130) was also inscribed without *ethnicon*, while it is known that he hailed from Sparta, not from Delphi: Spawforth 2002, 197; Camia 2008, 30-41.

[12] Seven out of 13 known *agonothetai* came from Hypata, while six out of 19 *epimeletai* — from Nicopolis. Sanchéz 2001, 437-442 and 529. Weir (2004, 66-70) also includes Antigonos and Kleomachidas as *agonothetai*, however their Delphic origin is very dubious. Antigonos most probably hailed from Argos (cf. West 1928, 258-261 and 267). Theokles of Delphi (No. 4 in Weir's catalogue) is not attested in sources as *agonothetes*, but as the receiver of *ornamenta agonothetica* (cf. Pleket 1957, 141-143). Weir incorrectly interprets his family members, as Leontis was not Theokles' sister, she was his mother. Cf. Kapetanopoulos 1966, 119-130.

(Weir 2004, 56-57). There is, however, another way to view the situation. The function of *agonothetes*, the master of the ceremonies during the Pythian festival, was a very costly liturgy undertaken only by the wealthiest members of the League, and only a few Delphic noble families had sufficient money and status to undertake such a position (Weir 2004, 64). The relatively small number of outstanding provincial or imperial careers indicates the rather weak position of Delphic aristocracy within the wider Roman world-system. If we add to that the fact that most of the offices performed by the most notable Delphians had an honorific, not a political meaning, then it is almost certain that Delphi was of a little importance and wealth in the Roman period. Perhaps that is the reason why no Delphic citizen became the priest of the imperial cult. The post was financially very demanding and even the wealthiest Delphians could not afford it. So only individuals with the necessary economic means could undertake these expenses. Furthermore, the function of the priest of the imperial cult had strong ideological and political implications with regard to the Roman authority and in Athens and Thessaly it was held by individuals who had already reached a prominent social and political position (Camia 2011, 145-154). Camia mentions several (interconnected) factors which played a role in defining one's social position: family origins and relations; wealth; possession of the Roman citizenship; and ties with the Roman empire (Camia 2011, 140). The Delphic ruling elite had proper provenance and Roman *civitas*, however they lacked sufficient fortunes and connections with Rome, *in primis* with the emperors.

Three families climbed into the provincial aristocracy in more than one city: the *Flavii* at Delphi and Tithorea (Puech 1981, 186-192), the *Babbii* at Delphi and Corinth (Spawforth 1996, 169), and the *Gellii* at Delphi and Athens (Oliver 1950, 161-164). Publius Memmius Kritolaos Theokles was the only citizen of Delphi of whom we are aware who managed to reach the imperial elite. His functions of *tribunus militum, strategos*, and *praetor*, and the fact that he was honored with *ornamenta agonothetica* leave no doubt that he belonged to the *ordo senatorius* (Kapetanopoulos 1966, 119-130). These studies highlight the extraordinary position of the *Flavii*, *Memmii*, *Babbii* and especially *Gellii* at Delphi. Only members of these, most probably the wealthiest families, achieved supra-local careers. They were an elite within the elite proving the further stratification within the Delphic upper class during the Imperial period.

The last issue worth further discussion concerns the relationship between the city and its elite. What did noble benefactors do for their community? What types of generous donations are recorded in epigraphic material?

Can we investigate the internal hierarchization of the upper class based on the types of gifts they gave? (Honors for *senatores* and *equites* on Peloponnese see Pawlak 2011, 266-272). These questions cannot be answered easily, if at all, due to the fact that only three Delphic documents provide specific types of benefactions:

1) Vatin 1970b, 691, No. 6 (end of the 1st century BC) Diodoros, the son of Philonikos, was granted a statue set up in the gymnasium by the local athletic association probably for providing oil.

2) *Fouilles de Delphes* 3.233 (AD 80-95) Archelaos, the son of Hyginos, also provided oil during his service as a *gymnasiarch* (For honors for gymnasiarchs in the Hellenistic period see Curty 2009 and 2015).

3) *Fouilles de Delphes* 1.466[2] (AD 125-150) Memmius Neikandros adorned the city and the Pythian Games probably acting as *xystarches*.

The remaining inscriptions mention only general reasons (most often *ἀρετῆς ἕνεκα*), or they refer to honorands' posts which might implicate that they held offices or performed benefactions during their service to have gained such privileges. The city awarded a statue to Lucius Gellius Xenagoras (I) together with his wife Dikaiagora probably for services rendered (Bousquet 1963, 199, 2nd century AD). This dossier of documents is nonetheless sufficient to investigate examples of munificence made by the civic elite or internal stratification of the Delphic aristocracy. What we can state with a high degree of probability is that Diodoros, Neikandros, and Archelaos were among the wealthiest people in the community as they held the most expensive civic offices (Curty 2015, 239-248). They all undertook high expenses in order to meet their duties. In return, they were granted honors by their co-citizens which were reserved for outstanding individuals.

In Roman Delphi one more change in a honorific habit took place that indicated the general transition within the city. Privileges granted to foreigners are attested in nearly 1000 Delphic decrees spanning from the early 4th century BC up to the late 4th century AD and constitute 99% all of voted decrees. In contrast, honors awarded to Delphic citizens were not recorded until the turn of the 1st century BC/1st century AD.[13] Before then all Delphians were equal and were entitled to the same prerogatives: no Delphic citizen was favored or distinguished with a statue before the late Hellenistic period. The award of honors to Delphi's own, typically elite citizens, demonstrates the gradual stratification of the entire community.

[13] The earliest document: *Fouilles de Delphes* 4.250 (1st century BC/1st century AD), plus four examples date back to the 1st century AD, and seven date back to the 2nd century AD.

Honorific portraits were voted after a generous donation, or the erection of images may have prompted a local aristocracy to bestow benefactions on the city. Each case, however, demonstrates the increased activity of the Delphic upper class and the differences between the local notables and the rest of the population in the Imperial period.

Conclusion

The picture which emerges from this study is of a city which in the Imperial period was dominated socially and politically by a small number of wealthy families operating under strong hereditary principles. These families managed to accumulate power by monopolizing access to the highest posts and by taking control of governance. The Delphic elite experienced internal stratification, though even the wealthiest families considered as 'the elite of an elite' did not manage to develop outstanding provincial or imperial careers proving the rather weak position of the Delphic aristocracy within the wider Roman network. Similar weak contacts of the local elite within the Achaia province are attested on Peloponnese (Pawlak 2011, 185-186). The degree to which the Delphic elite failed to penetrate the internal world of the Roman notables should not be surprising. The people of Delphi in earlier periods did not enter the wider political stage most probably due to a lack of proper economic and financial background (Daux 1936, 440-472). The *polis* incomes were rather poor in the Roman times and few Delphic inhabitants were able to undertake the financially very demanding supra-local duties upon, fulfilling only the local obligations of their own *polis* (Migeotte 2014, 148-152, 300-302). Moreover, the creation of the Panhellenion by Hadrian and the addition of another four new festivals celebrated in Athens onto the ancient circuit diminished the international role of both the Pythian festival and Delphi as the intellectual culture, and had impact on the important imperial support for the city (Jacquemin 1991, 230). The elimination of *honoraria* for artists performing at Delphi during the time of the games and rewarding them only with honorific titles is another demonstration of the weak economic situation of the city in the Imperial period (Robert 1929, 37). The appearance of outside notables as office-holders however, marks a significant step in the integration of Delphi into the surrounding world. The over-representation of a foreign element reflects the ability of descendants of ordinary new citizens to break into the upper class of Delphi and reveals the heterogeneity of the Delphic

elite in this period.

At the end is must be stressed that the process of oligarchization was a widely observed phenomenon in Greece. The role of Rome in it is generally accepted. The process had the support of the Roman authorities, because as it contributed to the creation, and the consolidation, of a system of mutual support between Roman authorities and Greek local elites. The Romans could rely on the provincial notables much more then on the democratic system of the *poleis*: the strengthening of the position of the *boule* and the diminished power of the assembly was welcomed by the ruling classes all over Greece. Assemblies long continued to elect the magistrates, but their choice was from now on limited to men of property (Deininger 1971; Brunt 1976, 161-173; Quass 1982, 188-213; Alcock 1993; Madsen 2002, 87-113; Rizakis 2008, 269-270). The oligarchization is attested in other cities including Athens, Olympia, Eretria as well as many Achaean and Asian *poleis*. Delphi was not an exception here, and rather followed the common Imperial period pattern (Heller 2009, 341-373; Hamon 2009, 373-379; Schubert, Ducrey and Derron 2013).

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CID – *Corpus des Inscriptions de Delphes*
IG – *Inscriptiones Graecae*
IGR – *Inscriptiones graecae ad res romanas pertinentes*
SEG – *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*
SGDI – *Sammlung der griechischen Dialekt-Inschriften,*
***SIG*^{3} –** *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum*, ed. Wilhelm Dittenberger. 3rd edn

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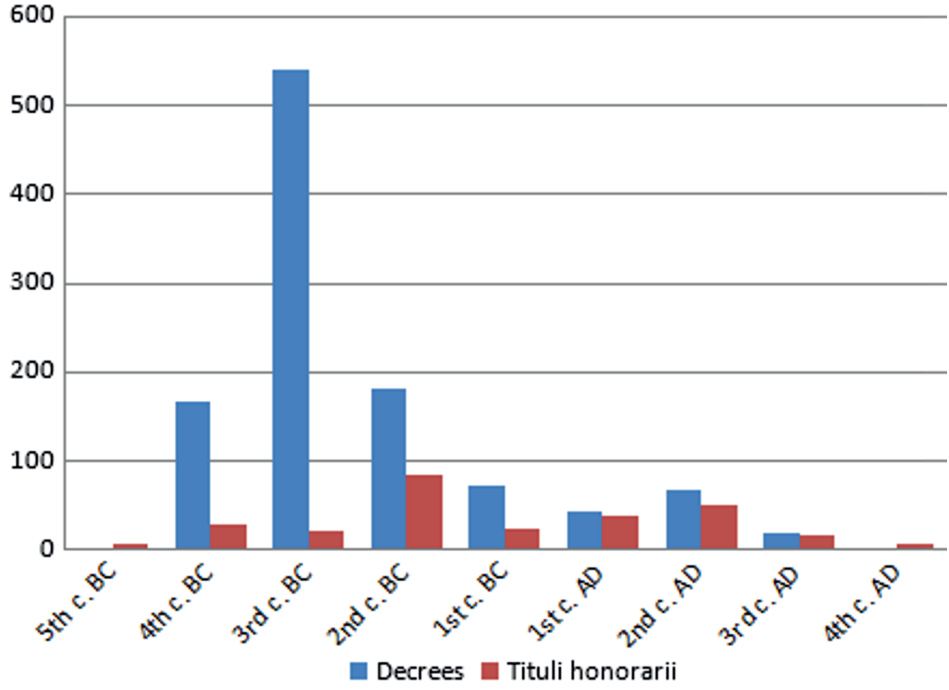

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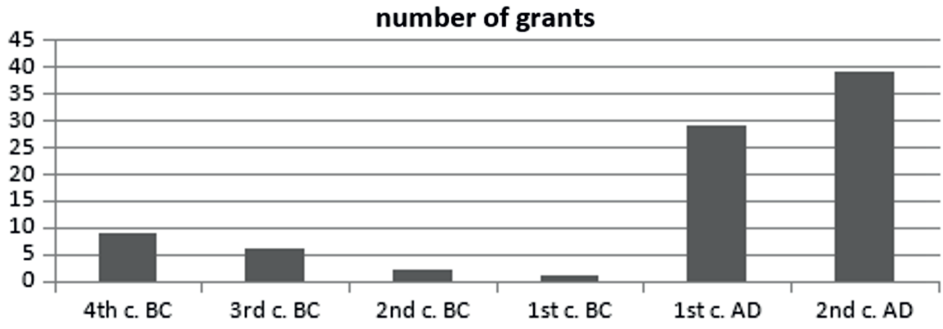
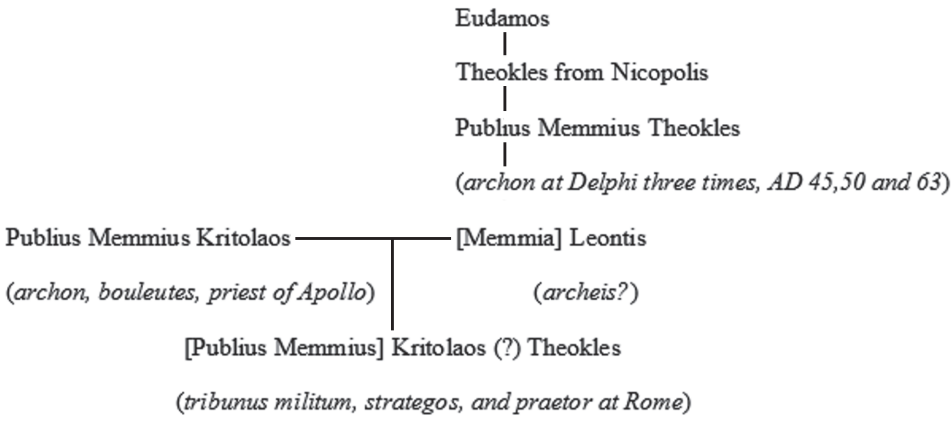


2

Pl. 1: 1. The number of decrees and honorific inscriptions
(5th century BC – 4th century AD)
Pl. 1: 2. The number of grants of citizenship (4th century BC – 2nd century AD)



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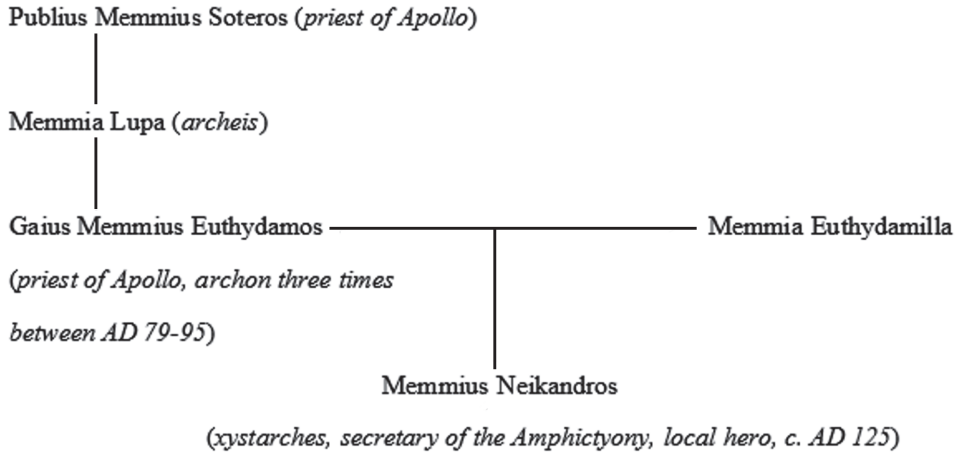
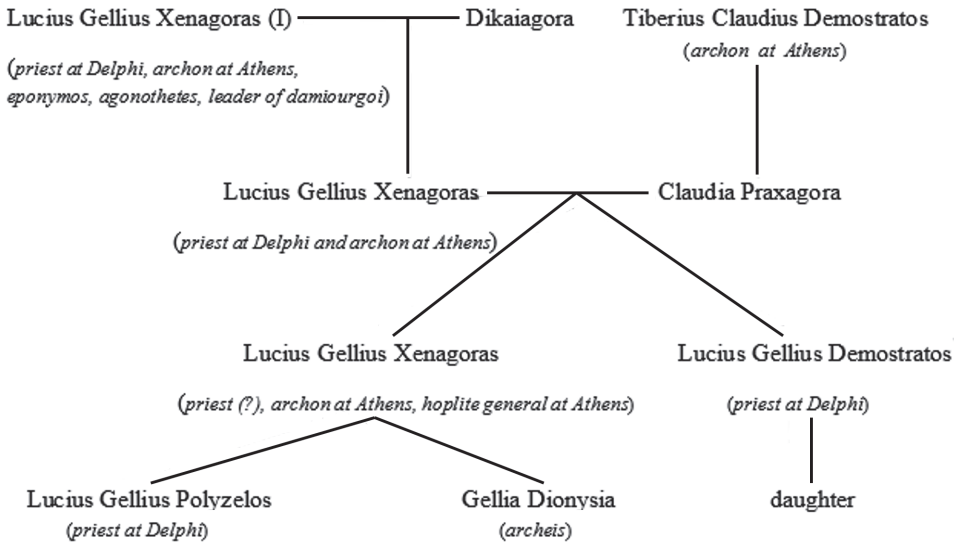


2

Pl. 2: 1. Family Tree of Theokles, the son of Eudamos, from Nicopolis
(based on: Kapetanopoulos 1966, 119-130 (*c.* 85 AD)
Pl. 2: 2. The Memmii (based on *Fouilles de Delphes* 1.466[2])



Pl. 3: 1. The Gellii (Bousquet 1963, 202)