The Bosporus: Gateway between the Ancient West and East (1st Millennium BC–5th Century AD)

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IMITATIO PRINcipIS: BETWEEN EUERGETISM AND SELF-CELEBRATION. JULIO-CLAUDIAN STATUARY GROUPS FROM THE BLACK SEA, HELLESpONT AND BospORUS

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Important new contributions have helped our understanding of the phenomenon of Julio-Claudian dynastic statuary groups in the last 20 years. In the present study I intend to deal only with the Julio-Claudian dynastic statuary groups attested in cities along the coasts of the Black Sea, the Hellespont and the Bosporus, leaving aside the archaeological evidence for certain or possible statuary groups in cities away from the coasts.

Julio-Claudian dynastic statuary groups consist of two or more statues erected in the same location to honour those members of the Julio-Claudian imperial family involved in the succession to the throne. Apart from belonging to Domus Augusta, as in the case of the Ara Pacis Augustae, males must be emperors or heirs to the throne, and females must be associated in the transmission of the power, as wives, mothers or daughters. These statuary groups represent a synthesis of time: the present power legitimised by the past power and projected into the future power (Table 1). The statues of these groups could be erected in different periods of time.

I would like to underline the social phenomenon of the Julio-Claudian dynastic statuary groups. In fact, the early imperial Roman urban society and the imperial cult were characterised by this social phenomenon. The imperial cult rose and developed into a civil religion in which the gods were the princeps and everyone involved in the succession to the throne; the sanctuaries were the buildings at the centre of city life, and every citizen could be a priest.

I believe the Julio-Claudian dynastic statuary groups were present in every city of the Roman empire. However, we can only consider the groups that are validly documented and proven. For this, the presence in the same place of at least two statues associated certainly with Julio-Claudian princes and princesses have to be proved by plastic and epigraphic evidence.

Regarding Julio-Claudian statuary groups from the Black Sea, Hellespont and Bosporus, we can prove the presence of one group at Phanagoria, the city of the Bosporan kingdom located on the Straits of Kerch, opposite the ancient capital, Panticapaeum. Three other groups are documented at Ilium and one at Cyzicus, the free cities of the Roman province of Asia; and the last group was found at Amisus in the province of Bithynia et Pontus (Fig. 1).

This paper does not consider two statues incorrectly classified by many scholars as belonging to a Julio-Claudian dynastic statuary group. Of these two statues we have recovered only dedicatory inscriptions (IGRR I 821), dedicated to Agrippa and Julia, at Sestus in Thrace; Chersonesus, dated most probably between 16 and 13 BC, when Agrippa was the governor of the East. In these years Agrippa and Julia were honoured according to Hellenistic tradition as representatives of the power, without dynastic references to their membership in the Domus Augusta. In the statuary group at Sestus there is no reference to Augustus’ power as princeps. On the contrary, in the bronze statuary group from Thespiae in Boeotia, in the sanctuary dedicated to the Muses, datable between 15 and 13 BC, dynastic connotations exist. In fact, besides Agrippa and Julia, their children are honoured as well. Caius, Lucius and Agrippina Maior represent the dynastic future of the power of the princeps, and the statue of Livia refers precisely to the source of power, Augustus. In the Sanctuary of the Muses, a statue of Augustus, dated before 27 BC, was dedicated to Augustus by the people of Thespiae.

3 Rose 1997, 149-51; Hanson and Johnson 1946, 390, n.3; Plassart 1926, 447-51, nn. 88-89.
Table 1: The synthesis of time in a typical *Claudische Galerie*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The past</th>
<th>Divus Augustus + Diva Livia</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tiberius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Drusus Maior + Antonia Minor (niece of Augustus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Germanicus + Agrippina Maior</td>
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<tr>
<td>The present</td>
<td>Claudius + Messalina or Agrippina Minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The future</td>
<td>Britannicus, Claudia Antonia, Claudia Ottavia, Nero</td>
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Fig. 1: Map of the Black Sea and Asia Minor
In this period, Dynamis ordered the coinage of golden staters with the portraits of Agrippa and Augustus. Moreover, the name of Phanagoria was changed to Agrippia and most probably Dynamis ordered the erection of statues representing Augustus and Livia at Phanagoria. Dynamis called herself Philoromaia and Augustus and Livia saviours and benefactors. In addition, Dynamis dedicated another statue to Augustus at Panticapaeum (IGRR I 875).

At Ilium, Dörpfeld conducted excavations in the bouleuterion and discovered inscriptions engraved on two statuary bases dedicated to Augustus and Tiberius (IGRR IV 203, 207). The former was written by Melanippides, a prominent local, in 12/11 BC, while the latter was written by the Boulë and Demos in AD 32/3. These two inscriptions cannot be associated with the portraits of Augustus and Tiberius (Fig. 4)12 preserved currently in Berlin, since both were found in an unknown location at Ilium. Another portrait representing Agrippina the Elder was found in the same place as the former (Fig. 5); it is now located in Philadelphia (USA).13 The three portraits were erected in different periods and belonged to a larger statuary group.14 Agrippa and his son Caius Caesar were honoured by the inhabitants of Ilium as benefactors, patrons and relatives, but we cannot associate the inscriptions on the bases of the statues because of the lack of excavation data (IGRR IV 204, 205).

On the contrary, another Julio–Claudian statuary group of Claudian age has been certainly documented at Ilium.15 Dedications to Claudius’ children, Claudia Octavia, Claudia Antonia, Britannicus and Nero, were engraved on two fragments belonging to the same inscription (IGRR IV 209).

According to Rose, the inscription to Nero was added later, between the time Nero was adopted by Claudius (in AD 51) and his succession to the throne (in AD 54).16

One statuary group honouring Augustus, Tiberius and Claudius was most probably on the top of the honorary arch erected by the Cyziceni and the Cives Romani of Cyzicus at Cyzicus in order to celebrate Claudius’ victorious war in Britannia.17 This arch was an echo of the one voted for by the Roman senate in Rome on the Via Lata. In 20 BC, the Cyzicenes acted violently against the Romans (Tacitus Annals 4. 36. 2; Dio Cassius 54. 7. 6), and in AD 25 Tiberius deprived them of their freedom as a consequence of their neglect of the imperial cult. It records that incuria caerimoniarum divi Augusti the temple of Divus Augustus (Dio Cassius 57. 24. 6; Suetonius Tiberius 37. 3) was not completed.

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12 Polacco 1955, 120, pl. XV.2.
13 Vermeule 1964.
14 Vermeule 1968, 183, 190-92, 216, 381, n.17, 385, n.11, 386, n.3, 458, fig. 122.
15 Rose 1997, 171-72.
In the time of Claudius, devotion to the imperial family was demonstrated by the creation of this arch. According to Roman custom, the Cyzi cenes honoured Claudius with this triumphal arch and legitimated his Principate through the continuity among him, Tiberius and Augustus, omitting Caligula, condemned to damnatio memoriae.

Finally, the last group was found at Amisus, in Pontus. It is dated to the reign of Nero. On the proposal of Loukios Eiutios Poteitos and his fellow magistrates, the Demos dedicated statues honouring Nero, his wife Poppea and his brother Britannicus. The statuary group has been dated between the marriage of Nero and Poppea in AD 63 and the death of Poppea in AD 65. Britannicus died in AD 55, murdered by Nero, and his presence in this statuary group suggests to us that the inhabitants of Amisus did not suspect that Nero was responsible for his brother’s death. The presence of Britannicus in this statuary group, as always with dead Julio-Claudian princes, was the indication of their destiny as heroes, which would come to pass for the current emperor as well.

It is very difficult for us to indicate the exact original location of statuary groups related to the inscriptions, because the data preserved regarding the discovery of all these inscriptions are very rare and extremely imprecise. After accurate studies about numerous statuary groups documented in the entire Roman empire, we can conclude that these groups were situated in the buildings where the new values of identity and community in the urban ideology, profoundly renovated by the ideology of

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18 Bean 1956.
19 SEG 16, 1959, n. 748.
20 Rose 1990, 161.
21 Britannicus appears in the East also on the relief of Sebastion at Aphrodisias in Caria (Rose 1997, 164-69) and in the statuary groups at Amasae in Lycia (Rose 1997, 170-71), at Ilium in Troad (Rose 1997, 178-79), at Alexandria in Egypt (Rose 1997, 185-86), always in Claudian age.
Principate, were elaborated.22 In the western part of the empire the basilicas, theatres, Augusteia and honorary arches became sanctuaries of the new civil religion of the empire, where the power manifested itself. On the contrary, in the eastern part of the empire the euergetism of the rich and powerful supporters of the regime was materialised not only in the construction of the buildings where daily life took place in the city but also in the construction of magnificent fountains, of plateai, of stoà. At Ilium, the statues of Augustus and Tiberius were most probably in the Bouleuterion (the citizen council). Maybe the statues of the children of Claudius decorated the stoà dedicated by Tiberius Claudius Philocles and his wife Parmenis to Claudius and his family (IGRR IV 208), but if one considers the specific spot where the inscriptions were found, near the southern gate of the city, these statues probably were placed on the top of the southern gate, making it an honorary arch, which occurred at Rome with Claudius’ arch inserted into the Aqua Virgo.23 The statuary group was dedicated by the Cyzicenes and Roman citizens on the top of the honorary arch. Unfortunately, we do not have enough data to state where the statuary group at Amisus was placed. Only one inscription documents the presence of a Kaisareion at Phanagoria (IGRR I 904). The Kaisareia at Alexandria in Egypt and Antiochia in Syria were the building complex for the imperial cult with cryptoporticus, with linked porticus and with a central courtyard used as garden. The supposed Kaisareion at Phanagoria may have been a similar building. In this regard, it is significant that Tiberius Claudius Philocles and his wife chose to dedicate to Claudius and his family a stoà that recalls the porticus in the Kaisareia. According to an inscription from neighbouring Olbia, another stoà was dedicated to Divus Augustus and Tiberius by Ababo (Calistene’s son) (IGRR I 853). Moreover in AD 53 a stoà was erected by Tiberius Claudius Kleophanes at Ilium in the precinct of the Hellenistic temple to Athena to hold statues of the imperial family, the senate and the Demos of the city.24 It seems that in the East the stoà was the favourite architectural type for the cult of the emperor and his family. In the West, other types of buildings served the same function and offered the same ideological view as the stoà (porticus Liviae, porticus Octaviae and porticus Gaii et Lucii at Rome, but also the building of Eumachia at Pompeii, the whole Insula II with cryptoporticus at Velia, and finally the types of fora at Roscino and at Conimbriga).25

The erection of the statuary groups was very expensive. From the analysis of the statuary groups mentioned, it results that the dedicators may possibly, have been entire citizen communities by their representatives such as the Boulé and Demos; for example the statue of Tiberius and the statuary group of Claudius’ children at Ilium, the Neronian group at Amisus, the honorary arch dedicated to Claudius by two different civic communities, the Cyzicenes and the Romans, in Cyzicus. In other places, the dedicators may possibly be local prominent citizens, like Melannipides, who dedicated the statue of Augustus in the Bouleuterion at Ilium, and Loukios Eutios Poteiotos, the magistrate who encouraged the erection of the statues at Amisus with his colleagues, or Tiberius Claudius Philocles, who dedicated a stoà to the entire family of Claudius. An inscription from the southern coast of Lake of Ascanius, near Nicea, records that C. Iulius Aquila, from Amastris, was at the same time procurator Ponti et Bythiniae and sacerdos perpetuus Divi Augusti during the Neronian period (IGRR III 15; CIL III 346). In reality, the euergetism of these powerful people responsible for the dedication of statuary groups was only one aspect of the worship of the imperial family. The complexity of the imperial cult involved every component of early imperial urban Roman society, but only prominent wealthy people could transform their support of the ideology of the Principate into a physical form changing their cities’ look. In this way, they were to their cities what the princeps was to Rome. This is known as Imitatio Principis. It is very important that this happened also in free cities and in the vassal kingdom of Bosporus, where the king was the medium between Rome and local population and the promoter of the imperial cult. An inscription from Panticapaenum records that Cotys, son of Aspurgus, most probably the son of Dynamis and Asander, like Arkiereous tòn Sebastôn called itself philokaisaar and philoromaios and honoured Nero (IGRR I 876.). In a multiethnic and multicultural empire, a strongly differentiated and fragmented society, the princeps became the only authentic moment of cohesion and the imperial cult overcame every boundary and became the universal language through which new values were diffused by the centre of power. In those values the Romanitas was impersonated and renovated. This phenomenon is very visible in territories around the Black Sea, at the border between two different cultures, which until that time had two different ideas of the city, of man and of power. The imperial cult spread rapidly and strongly – so it contributed to transform every cities of the empire in effigies parvae simulacrae of Rome.26 The statuary groups played an important role. Most likely, the poet Ovid depicted the reality not very objectively in the experience of an exile, when, shut up in the house he considered a prison at Tomis, he described it as a place in which it was impossible for a Roman to live and its inhabitants as very distant from the Romanitas. Thus, Ovid secluded himself in his private sacrarium created in his home, where he prayed to the busts of Augustus, Livia, Tiberius, Drusus Minor and Germanicus, which meant to him the Imagines Patiae – so he lived in his ‘Imaginary Rome’ (Ovid Epistulae ex Ponto 2. 8. 1 ff.). This shows clearly how great and significant was the power of the statuary groups; this also shows the role that frontier territories played where the encounter between Rome and the ‘Other’ occurred sometimes by dialogue and sometimes by conflict.

22 Boschung 2002.
23 Fasolini 2006, 135-54; Rodríguez Almeida 1993; Barrett 1991; De Maria 1988, 112-13, 280-82, n. 69; Kleinier 1985, 59-62; Koeppe 1983; Gordon 1958, 101-02, n. 103; Hanson and Johnson 1946, 393, n. 18; Castagnoli 1942.
23 Vermeule 1968, 216.
22 Cesaranо forthcoming.
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