

Trajan and the *honorarium decurionatus* in the Cities of Pontus and Bithynia A Re-assessment of Plin., *Ep.* 10.113*

The transformation of the Greek city councils under Roman rule and the emergence of a 'bouleutic class' in the Roman East have been the subject of much scholarly interest in recent years.¹ However, the implementation and organisation of the so-called *honorarium decurionatus* (*pro introitu*), i.e. the fee to be paid by newly appointed councillors upon entering office,² has still not been elucidated satisfactorily. The source situation is tricky and the evidence for this practice scanty. It is Pliny the Younger's correspondence with the Emperor Trajan in Book 10 of his *Epistulae* which provides us with the earliest attestation of the *honorarium decurionatus* in the East. It is worth citing *Ep.* 112 in full:³

Lex Pompeia, domine, qua Bithyni et Pontici utuntur, eos, qui in bulen a censoribus leguntur, dare pecuniam non iubet; sed ii, quos indulgentia tua quibusdam ciuitatibus super legitimum numerum adicere permisit, et singula milia denariorum et bina intulerunt. Anicius deinde Maximus proconsul eos etiam, qui a censoribus legerentur, dumtaxat in paucissimis ciuitatibus aliud aliis iussit inferre. Superest ergo, ut ipse dispicias, an in omnibus ciuitatibus certum aliquid omnes, qui deinde buleutae legentur, debeant pro introitu dare. Nam, quod in perpetuum mansurum est, a te constitui decet, cuius factis dictisque debetur aeternitas.

The Pompeian law, my lord, which is observed by the citizens of Bithynia and Pontus, does not prescribe that those selected by the censors for the council should pay a sum of money. However, those whom your generosity has permitted certain cities to add to their lawful number, have contributed 1,000 or 2,000 denarii each. Subsequently Anicius Maximus, the proconsul, ordered those chosen by the censors

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¹ See esp. QUASS (1993), p. 384-394; ZUIDERHOEK (2008), p. 429-431; HELLER (2009); (2015).

² On the *honorarium decurionatus* (and the *summa honoraria/legitimae*) see esp. GARNSEY (1971a). Also LIEBENAM (1900), p. 54-65; ABBOTT (1926), p. 76-77; LANGHAMMER (1973), p. 105-108; DUNCAN-JONES (1962), p. 65-69; DMITRIEV (2005), p. 152-157.

³ In the following, all the English translations of *Ep.* 10.112-113 are quoted from WALSH (2016). For post-Trajanic epigraphic evidence attesting to an entry fee to the council in the Roman East see OLIVER (1989), no. 82A-B (Hadrian) and no. 156 (Antoninus Pius).

as well to contribute various sums in a very few cities. So it remains for you to decide whether in all cities all who will from now on be chosen as councillors should pay a certain sum to be admitted. For it is fitting that you should decide what will remain as a permanent arrangement, since undying fame is the necessary outcome of your deeds and words.

From this letter the following situation can be reconstructed: under the *lex Pompeia*, which had been in place since the formation of the province of Pontus and Bithynia (63 BC), ordinary councillors were not required to pay a fee when they became members of the *boule*. Under Trajan the situation changed in so far as the emperor granted some cities the right to adlect supernumerary councillors, i.e. councillors appointed in addition to the legal number of ordinary members of the council (*super legitimum numerum*).⁴ It was these supernumerary councillors who were to pay the *honorarium decurionatus* when taking office. Yet, the neat distinction between ordinary and supernumerary councillors as regards the payment of the fee soon became blurred when, in a further step, the Trajanic governor Anicius Maximus extended the application of the *honorarium decurionatus* to ordinary councillors, but only in a very few cities of Pontus and Bithynia. As a result of this policy Pliny was faced with an apparently inconsistent legal and administrative situation when he arrived as governor of the province in 109/110 AD.⁵ In the interest of a uniform application of the law Pliny wrote to Trajan, asking him to exercise his imperial authority and ‘to decide whether in all cities all who will from now on be chosen as councillors should pay a certain sum to be admitted’.⁶

Given the significance of Pliny’s letter for our understanding of the implementation of the *honorarium decurionatus* in Pontus and Bithynia, it is indeed most regrettable that Trajan’s answer (*Ep.* 113) is beleaguered by a number of interpretative problems. The corrupt last sentence of *Ep.* 113 (*sed ... praefere<n>tur*) has been puzzling to scholars for a long time. Its historical significance must not be underestimated. C. P. Jones, for instance, has classified it as ‘one of the most important sentences in the correspondence’;⁷ in the same vein, Sherwin-White has emphasized that it includes ‘the most notorious crux of historical importance in the Letters’.⁸ What we must realize here is that, beyond

⁴ The exact size of the councils in Pontus and Bithynia is unknown. From the extant evidence in other provinces it appears that city councils usually comprised several hundred members (e.g. 450 in Ephesus, 500 in Athens). For a useful compilation of the attested figures for city councils in the Greek East see HABERMANN (2014).

⁵ On the start date of Pliny’s governorship see ECK (1982), p. 349-350, no. 275, who argues for September 110 AD. Compare, however, SHERWIN-WHITE (1966), p. 80-81, who dates it as early as 109 AD.

⁶ PLIN., *Ep.* 10.112.3: *superest ergo, ut ipse dispicias, an in omnibus ciuitatibus certum aliquid omnes, qui deinde buleutae legentur, debeant pro introitu dare.*

⁷ JONES (1968), p. 137.

⁸ SHERWIN-WHITE (1966), p. 723.

the subject of the *honorarium decurionatus*, the last sentence of *Ep.* 113 raises important issues of wider historical relevance as regards the political and socio-economic conditions of the post-classical *polis* at the beginning of the 2nd century AD. However, the complicated transmission history of Book 10 of Pliny's *Letters*, a series of arbitrary emendations and the impact of certain connotative nuances in the translation of the Latin have left their mark on our understanding of the intention of Trajan's message in *Ep.* 113. The purpose of the following analysis is to look afresh into the problem, to unearth its manifold, often forgotten or ignored layers and to offer a comprehensive re-assessment of the final key sentence of *Ep.* 113. Such a re-assessment, which must necessarily combine philological analysis with historical investigation, becomes possible and necessary in the light of recent research on the civic life of the post-classical *polis*.

1. *The publication history of Book 10*

Before we can turn to the analysis of the last sentence of *Ep.* 113, we should recall the complicated manuscript tradition of Book 10 of Pliny's *Letters*.⁹ It accounts for the problems with which we are confronted in *Ep.* 113 and will help us to define more precisely the possibilities and limitations of our historical interpretation of *Ep.* 113.

It was not until the beginning of the 16th century that the so-called Parisian Codex (*Parisinus*), a complete ten-book manuscript of Pliny's *Letters*, was found in Paris. The discovery was spectacular in so far as all the previous editions of Pliny's *Letters* that had been published in the 15th century were based on the eight-book or nine-book manuscript tradition. So the unique correspondence of Pliny with Trajan, as documented in Book 10, had been entirely unknown to the early-Renaissance readership. A copy of the Parisian manuscript was quickly prepared by Petrus Leander and sent to the Italian humanist and editor Hieronymus Avantius of Verona. In 1502 Avantius published those letters of Book 10 which correspond to nos. 41-121 in modern editions. The reason why he did not publish the complete set of letters of Book 10 is unknown. It took another six years until the first edition of the entire Book 10 was published by the Venetian humanist and printer Aldus Manutius in 1508.¹⁰ In the preface he informs us about the two main sources upon which his edition was based. He had been provided with a transcript of the entire Parisian Codex by

⁹ On the publication history of Book 10 of Pliny's *Letters* see esp. HARDY (1889a), p. 65-73 (though outdated as regards his assessment of the Bodleian copy); LOWE / RAND (1922), p. 37-40; SHERWIN-WHITE (1966), p. 83-84. See also VIDMAN (1969), p. 237-238, who has rightly pointed out that *Ep.* 113 must be discussed against the background of the complicated manuscript history of Book 10 of Pliny's *Letters*.

¹⁰ On Aldus Manutius and his publication of Pliny's *Letters* see esp. LOWRY (1979), p. 244-245; FLETCHER III (1988), p. 112-115.

the famous architect Ioannes Iucundus of Verona, who had copied the manuscript for Manutius while staying at Paris. More important still, the original Codex itself had been brought to him by the Venetian ambassador Aloisius Mocenigo on his return from Paris in 1506.¹¹ Manutius could thus claim that he was able to publish ‘many letters that were previously not known’, presented ‘in the most correct form possible’ and ‘quite free of errors’.¹² What exactly happened to the Parisian Codex after it had been brought to Italy remains unclear.¹³ With (possibly) the exception of a few pages, it has not come down to us.¹⁴ Nor have the transcripts made from it by Leander and Iucundus. No doubt, the loss of the Parisian Codex and its copies is a major hurdle for research on Pliny’s Book 10. We cannot assess how corrupt the original manuscript was or how flawed the copies were that Leander and Iucundus had made from it. What seems to be clear, however, is that the Codex was written in a script that Renaissance scholars found difficult to read.¹⁵ Hence we must assume that the early copies and printed editions were far from flawless. The numerous variant readings that were proposed by the eminent French scholar Guillaume Budé in the early 16th century seem to corroborate this assumption. In the context of his edition of the *Pandekts* (1502-1505) Budé started work on Pliny’s *Letters* at Paris, scrutinizing either the Codex itself or the copy made by Iucundus.¹⁶ He noted down hundreds of variant readings in the form of marginal and inter-linear notes in his own hand-copy of the *Letters*.¹⁷ Modern Pliny scholars have regarded this hand-copy, which is now kept at the Bodleian Library Oxford (Auct. L.4.3 (1)), as an ‘immediate witness to the readings of the unique and

¹¹ See MANUTIUS (1508), preface. For the Latin text and an English translation of the preface see GRANT (2017), p. 71-83.

¹² See MANUTIUS (1508), preface; transl. GRANT (2017), p. 73.

¹³ FLETCHER III (1988), p. 114 notes that the manuscript is mentioned in Manutius’ first testament of 1506. He had planned that the manuscript was to ‘become the property of his father-in-law, were Aldus to die before its publication’.

¹⁴ It has been argued that a fragment of the Parisian Codex (PLIN., *Ep.* 2.20.13-3.5.4), now kept in the Pierpont Morgan Library at New York (Morgan M 462), has survived. See LOWE / RAND (1922); FLETCHER III (1988), p. 114-115.

¹⁵ See MANUTIUS (1508), preface: *epistolas ... in membrana scriptas atque adeo diuersis a nostris characteribus ut nisi quis diu assuerit non queat legere*. MERRILL (1907), p. 134-135 suggested that it must have been written in Lombardic, Visigothic, Merovingian or Gothic hand.

¹⁶ LOWE / RAND (1922), p. 40 suggest that it is more likely that Budé worked from Iucundus’ copy.

¹⁷ Bound together in one single volume, Budé’s hand-copy consisted of a) the 1498 edition by Beroaldus; b) the 1502 edition by Avantius; c) inserted pages containing those letters which were missing from these editions (*Ep.* 8.8.3-18.11; 10.1-40) and which Budé had copied by hand. It was first assumed that this hand-copy belonged to the publisher Aldus Manutius, cf. HARDY (1888); (1889a), p. 68-69. MERRILL (1910), however, has convincingly demonstrated that the original owner was Budé. On the Bodleian volume see also LOWE / RAND (1922), p. 39-40.

ancient *Parisinus*'.¹⁸ In the following analysis of the textual and historical problems of *Ep.* 113 we will have to consider Budé's annotations alongside the early printed editions of 1502 and 1508. Subject to caution, they remain our closest witnesses to the lost Parisian manuscript.

2. *The textual and historical problems of Trajan's reply (Ep. 113)*

What, then, are the textual problems of Trajan's reply and what impact do they have on our historical understanding? As far as the first part of *Ep.* 113 is concerned, Trajan's statement does not cause any interpretative problems. The emperor avoids a general ruling on the matter, recommending that the cities should adhere to local law:¹⁹

Honorarium decurionatus omnes, qui in quaque ciuitate Bithyniae decuriones fiunt, inferre debeant necne, in uniuersum a me non potest statui. Id ergo, quod semper tutissimum est, sequendam cuiusque ciuitatis legem puto ...

I cannot prescribe a general rule that all who become councillors in every Bithynian city should or should not pay a fee for obtaining that office, so I believe that the law of each city is to be followed, for this is the safest procedure.

The actual interpretative dilemma of *Ep.* 113 manifests itself in the second half of the letter. It can be best exemplified when we compare two of our standard text editions of Pliny's *Letters*. In the edition by Mynors the last sentence reads as follows:

*... sed uerius eos, qui inuitati fiunt decuriones, id existimo acturos ut praestatione ceteris praeferantur.*²⁰

In contrast Zehnacker / Méthy offer the following text:

*... sed aduersus eos, qui inuiti fiunt decuriones, id existimo nos acturos, ut erogatio ceteris praeferatur.*²¹

The differences in the reconstruction of the Latin text abound and, with them, the differences in the historical interpretation of the passage.²² In our attempt to clarify the dilemma and apparent discrepancies, it will be expedient to break down the last sentence into three key historical problems – two of which have received no adequate discussion in scholarship before – and analyse how the different emendations and nuances in the translation result in different, almost contrary historical scenarios.

¹⁸ MERRILL (1907), p. 156.

¹⁹ On Trajan's respect of local law see MADSEN (2009), p. 23-24.

²⁰ MYNORS (1963), p. 345.

²¹ ZEHNACKER / MÉTHY (2017), p. 60.

²² VIDMAN (1969), p. 236-238 has rightly drawn attention to the failure of modern text editions to indicate the corrupt state of this last sentence.

First, ambiguity surrounds the content of the relative clause of Trajan's final statement (*eos, qui ... fiunt decuriones*). In the 1502 and 1508 editions of Avanius and Manutius respectively, the word *inuiti* appears in the relative clause: *eos, qui inuiti fiunt decuriones*. This reading presumes that men were appointed councillors against their will (*inuiti*). In all its briefness, this reading is of great historical significance as it can be taken as the 'earliest allusion to compulsory appointment to the municipal senates'.²³ However, doubts have been raised about this interpretation. In his seminal commentary, Sherwin-White proposes *inuitati* instead of *inuiti*. He argues against the notion of a compulsory nomination of reluctant councillors and 'a decline of zeal for municipal service'.²⁴ When we turn to the most frequently used text editions, it becomes clear that no consensus has been reached on these emendations since the 1960s. While *inuiti* can be found in Durry, Zehnacker / Méthy and Kasten, *inuitati* has been adopted by Mynors, Radice and Philips / Giebel.²⁵ Depending on the text edition he works with, the historian is faced with two strikingly different historical scenarios as regards the mode of appointment: compulsory service vs. the honour and privilege of being chosen for service. However, this is not the end of the problem. Inextricably linked to the issue of *inuiti* vs. *inuitati* is the question of who this relative clause actually refers to. Those who read *inuiti* usually relate the sentence to the ordinary councillors, while those who prefer *inuitati* believe that supernumerary councillors are the subject of the relative clause. Suggestions for harmonizing these different interpretations have been made,²⁶ but no agreement has yet been reached.

Second, confusion has also been caused by the expression *ceteris praeferat*. Originally, *praeferat* appeared in the 1502 and 1508 editions, which Budé (Bodleian MS Auct. L.4.3 (1)) corrected into the plural *praeferant*. The

²³ HARDY (1889a), p. 227. Likewise JONES (1968), p. 137. As soon as scholars have identified councillors appointed against their will, they are quick to read 'controversies' and 'protests' with the governor into the evidence; see LANGHAMMER (1973), p. 107 and STAHL (1978), p. 50, both with explicit reference to PLIN., *Ep.* 10.112-113.

²⁴ SHERWIN-WHITE (1966), p. 724.

²⁵ DURRY (1948); ZEHNACKER / MÉTHY (2017); KASTEN (1982); MYNORS (1963); RADICE (1969); PHILIPS / GIEBEL (1998). Likewise, *inuiti* appears in all text editions before the 1960s. See e.g. KEIL (1886); SCHUSTER / HANSLIK (1958). For an overview of these text editions see VIDMAN (1969), p. 236-237.

²⁶ See, for example, GARNSEY (1974), p. 232, who proposes that 'Trajan may have referred in his letter to decurions who were reluctant not to serve as decurions, but to pay the entry fee'. JACQUES (1984), p. 374-375 suggests that, if Trajan were referring to supernumerary councillors in this sentence, this would not exclude the possibility that coercion was used. He believes that we could be dealing with 'des notables s'étant volontairement tenus à l'écart de la vie publique'. See also VIDMAN (1969), p. 238, who suggests: 'Decuriones, qui inuiti fiunt, non sunt necessario buleutae super numerum adlecti neque contra uoluntatem ui coacti, sed ii, mea quidem sententia, qui praeter uoluntatem in senatum leguntur et certo aliquo modo ab eis, qui sponte se offerunt, distinguuntur.'

late 19th century Pliny scholar Hardy later altered the verb into the passive.²⁷ Even though *praeferantur* has been widely accepted since then,²⁸ there is no general agreement about its meaning in the context of the last sentence. Sherwin-White summarized his understanding of *praeferantur* as follows: ‘Supernumeraries, I am sure, will see to it that by offering donations they stand out from the rest.’²⁹ While he has made it clear that the last sentence refers to the supernumerary councillors, he did not explicitly state who ‘the rest’ was in his view. His translation suggests that he had apparently the group of ordinary councillors in mind, implying that supernumerary councillors stood out from them by the donation they made.³⁰ In his review of Sherwin-White’s commentary, however, Jones critically remarked that “‘praeferri’ means “be preferred”, not “stand out””.³¹ Philips and Giebel in their German translation of Pliny’s *Letters* have rendered *praeferri* accordingly: ‘Was die Männer betrifft, die ehrenhalber Ratsherren werden, so meine ich eher, sie sollten so handeln, dass sie aufgrund einer Leistung den übrigen vorgezogen werden.’³² Importantly, by relating *praeferri* to the act of selection, Philips’ and Giebel’s translation suggests that *ceteri* refers to other candidates competing for the extra seats (rather than to the ordinary councillors). Thus, they suggest a historical scenario in which competition for the extra bouletic seats existed.

Third, scholars have been puzzled at the restoration and interpretation of the antepenultimate word of Trajan’s statement. While we find *praefatio* (‘preface’, ‘prologue’) in Avantius’ 1502 edition, *erogatio* (‘giving out’, ‘paying out’, ‘distribution’) appears only shortly later in Manutius’ 1508 edition. Commenting on the short passage as ‘*haec sane corrupta*’, the 19th century scholar von Orelli finally suggested the term *praestatio* and emended *ut praestatio ceteris profertur*.³³ His suggestion of *praestatio* was accepted by Hardy, who, inspired by Mommsen’s conjecture,³⁴ further altered the Latin into *ut praestatione ceteris praeferantur*.³⁵ Hardy’s emendation has met with wide approval and can be found in almost all modern text editions (with the exception of Durry and Zehnacker /

²⁷ HARDY (1889b), p. 77.

²⁸ Note, however, the edition by ZEHACKER / MÉTHY (2017), which returns to the singular: *ut erogatio ceteris praeferat*. The editors’ translation, ‘leur paiement se fasse en priorité’, ignores the *ceteri*.

²⁹ SHERWIN-WHITE (1966), p. 723.

³⁰ Followed by WILLIAMS (1990), p. 158.

³¹ JONES (1968), p. 137.

³² PHILIPS / GIEBEL (1998), p. 801.

³³ VON ORELLI (1833), p. 11. Note HARDY (1889a), p. 227, who commented on von Orelli’s suggestion: ‘But this still leaves *acturos* without a subject; while the fact of immediate or later payment seems unconnected with the case in point’.

³⁴ T. MOMMSEN in KEIL (1870), p. 313, emended more freely: *Qui sponte fiunt decuriones ita existimo facturos ut praefati id ceteris praeferantur*.

³⁵ HARDY (1889b), p. 77.

Méthy, who still give preference to *erogatio*).³⁶ It is, however, not so much the emendation but the definition and connotation of *praestatio* which creates a dilemma for our historical interpretation. Hardy translated *praestatio* as ‘payment of the fee’,³⁷ thus implying that it was a compulsory fixed charge. Sherwin-White, in contrast, rendered *praestatio* as a ‘donation’,³⁸ suggesting that it was a voluntary contribution in the sense of a benefaction.³⁹ Remarkably, other semantic meanings of *praestatio* have found no proper consideration so far in the discussion of this passage. We will return to this point further below as the nature and mode of the payment warrants clarification.

This overview of the major textual dilemmas surrounding the last sentence of *Ep.* 113 demonstrates how conspicuously a single emendation and/or its translation can influence our historical understanding of Trajan’s stance on the *honorarium decurionatus* and the circumstances under which it was applied. We are confronted here with diametrically opposed scenarios: unwilling vs. invited, willing councillors; competition among applicants vs. a lack of applicants; a compulsory fee vs. a voluntary donation. There is certainly little chance that the entire Parisian Codex will ever be rediscovered to clarify these matters. Even if it was, it might well be in such a corrupt state that it would shed no new light on the problems discussed above. Hence, in the absence of the *Parisinus*, I would like to pursue a different line of inquiry: namely, to determine which of the proposed historical scenarios is most probable in the light of other extant evidence. Certainly, since the *Parisinus* is lost, any interpretation of the last sentence must remain hypothetical. However, as the last decade has seen major advances in the historical study of the post-classical *polis* and its civic institutions, there can be no doubt that this is the right moment for a re-assessment of *Ep.* 113 from a historical perspective to identify the most plausible and probable historical scenario for Trajan’s statement in *Ep.* 113.

3. Civic life in the imperial Greek city and the interpretation of *Ep.* 113

Let us start with the issue of ‘unwilling’ (*inuiti*) vs. ‘invited’ (*inuitati*) councillors. Those who have favoured the reading of *inuiti* have usually seen it against the background of an assumed crisis of the regime of notables in the Greek cities

³⁶ DURRY (1948); ZEHACKER / MÉTHY (2017). See, however, KUKULA (1903), p. 313, who criticizes Hardy’s suggestion as ‘unglücklich’ and proposes instead: ‘*id existimaturus, ut praestantia (oder praestantior?) ceteris praefertur*’. This emendation has, however, found no support.

³⁷ HARDY (1889b), p. 77.

³⁸ SHERWIN-WHITE (1966), p. 723.

³⁹ PHILIPS / GIEBEL (1998), p. 801 translate *praestatio* as ‘Leistung’ and comment on its meaning as a donation (‘Geldspende’). Similarly, WILLIAMS (1990), p. 79 renders *praestatio* with ‘generosity’.

under Roman rule.⁴⁰ The cities more and more depended on the liturgic services of the bouletic class, which, in turn, felt increasingly over-burdened and gradually retreated from civic life. However, this picture of urban decline has been questioned in more recent studies. They have stressed the continuing political and economic vitality of the *polis* during the imperial period and highlighted the important role which the *demos* still played in civic politics.⁴¹ Especially concerning the last quarter of the 1st century AD, it has been argued that the extant evidence does not suggest a wide-spread, serious problem of urban decline or a general lack of candidates for public offices.⁴² Certainly, there is sporadic evidence for the phenomenon of unwillingness among the elite when taking up positions in the civic life.⁴³ But it is noteworthy that their unwillingness relates to the dodging of costly liturgies or civic magistracies by those who are already members of the local council. To my knowledge, there is no direct piece of evidence from 1st / early 2nd century Asia Minor for a person who rejects the position and rank of a councillor itself.⁴⁴

If it thus becomes less likely that the last sentence refers to ordinary councillors appointed against their will, who then does Trajan have in mind? A structural analysis of *Ep.* 112 and 113 may prove informative in this respect, as it helps to elucidate the semantic content of the word preceding *fiunt*.⁴⁵ It should be noted that throughout the two letters the two groups of councillors under discussion are characterized by relative clauses *ii, qui ... / eos, qui ...* Pliny starts his request with the statement that, according to the *lex Pompeia*, a payment is not required from 'those selected by the censors for the council' (*eos, qui in bulen a censoribus leguntur*), which clearly refers to the ordinary councillors. Next, he contrasts this group with 'those, whom your generosity has permitted certain cities to add to their lawful number' (*ii, quos indulgentia tua quibusdam ciuitatibus super legitimum numerum adicere permisit*). This doubtless refers to the new category of supernumerary councillors, who have been enabled to enter the political stage in several *poleis* thanks to Trajan's decision. Pliny then again focusses on the group of ordinary councillors to bring up the key issue of his request for imperial instruction: one of his predecessors, the proconsul Anicius

⁴⁰ See, for example, JACQUES (1984), p. 373.

⁴¹ On the *demos* and its role in the imperial *polis* see esp. QUASS (1993), p. 355-423; SALMERI (2000), p. 69-75; FERNOUX (2011); ZUIDERHOEK (2008), p. 418-425.

⁴² Thus GARNSEY (1974), p. 231-232, followed by WILLIAMS (1990), p. 159. In the same vein, SCHWARZ (2001), p. 105-108; ZUIDERHOEK (2009), p. 43.

⁴³ See e.g. G. BOWERSOCK as quoted by GOOLD (1964), p. 327. On the phenomenon of compulsion to liturgies and magistracies: GARNSEY (1974), p. 230-241; KLEIJWEGT (1994).

⁴⁴ The evidence from the *Digests* either dates later or is not concrete enough to argue for a wide-spread phenomenon of unwillingness of members of the elite to serve as councillors in Trajanic times; see also GARNSEY (1974), p. 230-231. In late antiquity, however, this problem is well attested; LIEBESCHUETZ (1971), p. 174-186.

⁴⁵ All the quotations of the following analysis are taken from PLIN., *Ep.* 10.112-113.

Maximus, had ordained that also ‘those chosen by the censors’ (*eos etiam, qui a censoribus legerentur*) should pay on their entry to the council – a ruling, which, however, applied to only a very few cities. In the interest of legal uniformity and security Pliny now wants to know from Trajan whether, generally, in all the cities of Bithynia ‘all who will from now on be chosen as councillors’ (*omnes, qui deinde buleutae legentur*) should pay on their entry to the council. In my view, Jones and Sherwin-White were right in pointing out that in Trajan’s answer we should expect to find the same categories of councillors as referred to by Pliny in *Ep.* 112.⁴⁶ And, indeed, Trajan takes up Pliny’s question and alludes to ‘all, who become councillors in every Bithynian city’ (*omnes, qui in quaque ciuitate Bithyniae decuriones fiunt*).⁴⁷ Here Trajan is referring to all ordinary councillors in every city throughout the province.⁴⁸ He makes it plain that he does not think it appropriate to decide on the matter by means of a universal ruling. Introducing the following statement by a contrasting *sed*, he then considers a group of councillors, which he specifies with an *eos, qui ...* relative clause. It seems obvious that, in accordance with the structure of Pliny’s letter, Trajan’s remark only makes sense if we assume that he now speaks of the supernumerary councillors in order to emphasize that special conditions apply to them. This reading is also most plausible from a judicial point of view: by referring to the supernumerary councillors in the last sentence, Trajan makes it clear that special rules apply to this new, legally distinct category, which had been introduced by him into the civic life of some *poleis*. He thus leaves the regulations of the *lex Pompeia* untouched, which is in line with his earlier statement confirming that the cities should adhere to local law as regards the appointment of ordinary councillors. Hence it is plausible to assume that the last sentence refers to supernumerary councillors and the reading of *inuitati* should, therefore, be preferred to *inuiti*. It can be argued that *inuiti*, which appears in both the 1502 and 1508 editions, is a copying mistake in the Parisinus. But other emendations with a synonymous or similar meaning of *inuitati* should also be considered. Williams, who accepted the idea that the last sentence refers to the supernumerary councillors, rightly queried why Trajan should refer to them as ‘invited’ (*inuitati*).⁴⁹ Indeed, as Mommsen already suggested with his much bolder emendation of *qui sponte* before *fiunt*,⁵⁰ we cannot exclude the possibility that the whole word preceding *fiunt* was corrupt in the original Parisian

⁴⁶ Thus JONES (1940), p. 343, n. 64; SHERWIN-WHITE (1966), p. 723. See, however, JONES (1968), p. 138, who rejects Sherwin-White’s argument.

⁴⁷ Unlike Pliny, who speaks of ‘Bithynia and Pontus’ (*Ep.* 10.112: *Bithyni et Pontici*), Trajan only refers to ‘Bithynia’ (*Ep.* 10.113: *ciuitate Bithyniae*). MADSEN (2009), p. 32-33, argues that Trajan uses ‘Bithynia’ as an abbreviation for the whole province.

⁴⁸ It is noteworthy that Trajan uses different terms for the election of councillors. While Pliny employs the verb *legere* thrice (*Ep.* 10.112), Trajan uses *feri* (*Ep.* 10.113).

⁴⁹ WILLIAMS (1990), p. 159.

⁵⁰ MOMMSEN in KEIL (1870), p. 313.

Codex. I, therefore, propose two further emendations which have not been considered by previous editors yet: *additi* and *allecti*. According to the *OLD*, *addere* means ‘to add a person to a group’, while *allegere* carries the meaning ‘to elect, admit, or recruit (to or into a body)’ and ‘to select (for a particular duty), to appoint (to an office)’.⁵¹ Indeed, *allecti* is the technical term which we find in the epigraphic record referring to supernumerary councillors,⁵² whereas *additi* is used by Pliny in *Ep.* 10.39.5 with reference to the extra councillors: *buleutae additi beneficio tuo*.⁵³ Of course, in the absence of the Parisian Codex, no final conclusion on these proposed emendations for the lacuna preceding *fiunt* can be reached. However, what seems to be clear from our structural analysis of the two letters is that Trajan’s final statement in *Ep.* 113 refers to supernumerary councillors and that *additi* or *allecti* are the most frequently used expressions in the epigraphic and literary evidence referring to this group of individuals.

Next, the question of whether there was any competition for the extra bouleutic seats needs investigation. In view of the concise and rather abstract treatment of the topic in *Ep.* 112 and 113, it is a fortunate coincidence that Dio Chrysostom, a contemporary of Pliny, gives us a graphic description of the appointment procedure of supernumerary councillors in his hometown of Prusa. Strangely enough, his critical statements and reflections have received only little attention in the context of Pliny’s correspondence with Trajan on the matter. From Dio’s *Oratio* 45, which dates to c. 101-103 AD,⁵⁴ we learn that on the occasion of his visit to Trajan, with whom Dio claims to have entertained friendly relations, Prusa had been granted the privilege of the enlargement of the council by ‘no fewer than a hundred’ supernumerary councillors.⁵⁵ Against the background of the inter-city rivalries in the Eastern Roman provinces, we may conclude from Dio’s remarks that this concession must be seen as a central mark of distinction for Prusa. From his *Or.* 40 (c. 101 AD) it also appears that the citizens had obviously hoped that the emperor would grant the *polis* even more than one hundred extra councillors.⁵⁶ All this suggests that there was a high demand for these supernumerary bouleutic seats. This impression is

⁵¹ *OLD*, s.v. *addo* (p. 36-37); *allego* (p. 103).

⁵² GARNSEY (1971a), p. 315-320.

⁵³ On the reading of *additi* in this passage see HARDY (1889a), p. 139.

⁵⁴ For the date of the speech I follow JONES (1978), p. 139.

⁵⁵ DIO CHRYS., *Or.* 45.7. I agree with JONES (1978), p. 107, who sees in them ‘a further one hundred councillors to be enrolled’. Compare, however, SCHWARZ (2001), p. 110, who speculates that the figure of one hundred may have included newly appointed *ordinary* councillors; this would mean that only c. 80 supernumerary councillors were granted by Trajan. Also note CROSBY (1946), who, with reference to this passage, misleadingly speaks of ‘a Council of 100 members’ (p. 123, n. 2) and ‘the Council of One Hundred’ (p. 209, n. 5).

⁵⁶ Cf. DIO CHRYS., *Or.* 40.14, where he defends himself against rumours that other ambassadors to Trajan had been more successful than Dio: they had allegedly been

corroborated by the details we learn from Dio about the election of supernumerary councillors at Prusa, which followed a procedure different from that of ordinary councillors. While ordinary councillors were appointed by the censors, the election of supernumerary councillors took place in the popular assembly and lasted over several days.⁵⁷ Heller has rightly pointed to the democratic procedure in this election and warned us against the idea that the assembly was merely ‘rubber-stamping’ pre-made decisions by the council.⁵⁸ On the contrary, we must assume that in the assembly the People had a real say in the selection of the candidates for the extra seats. There is no indication in Dio’s account that there was a shortage of candidates or that the assembly elected supernumerary councillors against their will. Indeed, it has been argued that there were more applicants than seats available.⁵⁹ An interesting detail of Dio’s account seems to confirm this assumption. He shows that the political implementation of the privilege turned out to be a sordid affair, characterized by intrigues, manipulation, factionalism and illegal practices. Dio, for instance, vehemently complains that some ordinary councillors schemed and worked hard to secure a coveted extra seat for their friends, in the hope of increasing their power network within the council. Dio explicitly tells us that he himself did not engage in such power games, even though it would have been a simple matter to do so. As he boastfully stresses, all applicants would have been keen to ally with him.⁶⁰ Dio’s words only make sense if we assume that the applicants were eager to get one of the seats and were willing to ally with an ordinary councillor to excel in the competition. As Schwarz has rightly emphasized, it is difficult to imagine that supernumerary councillors would have shown gratitude to their supporters, should they have been appointed against their will.⁶¹

granted ‘ten thousand councillors’. This rumour indicates that the People at Prusa hoped to be granted as many supernumerary councillors as possible.

⁵⁷ DIO CHRYS., *Or.* 45.10-11; HELLER (2013), p. 209-210.

⁵⁸ Cf. HELLER (2009), p. 347ff.; (2013), p. 209-210. With this suggestion Heller is in line with research on the post-classical *polis* over the past decade, which has stressed the continuing significance of the *demoi*. See n. 41.

⁵⁹ See SCHWARZ (2001), p. 112-113. Likewise HELLER (2009), p. 348, n. 23.

⁶⁰ DIO CHRYS., *Or.* 45.7-8: ‘... others had put in friends of their own and had schemed to have in the Council persons to aid them and to give their support to whatever they might wish to accomplish, I neither did anything of the kind nor discussed such a thing, in the belief that they [i.e. the new councillors / the applicants for the extra seats, CTK] would have sided with me rather than with somebody else had I so desired. No, I held that, if possible, no other man should introduce such a practice or conduct state affairs by means of political clubs or split the city into factions, but if they did, that I at any rate should abstain from such misdeeds, even if it meant that I should have much less influence than any of the others and be considered of no importance at all’; transl. CROSBY (1946), p. 215-217. It seems most likely that Dio is referring here to the applicants for the extra seats. However, CROSBY (1946) identifies the ‘they’ with ‘the electors’.

⁶¹ See SCHWARZ (2001), p. 112-113, with reference to this passage.

This brings us to the important question of the identity of the applicants for the extra bouletic seats. First, it is important to realize that we do not know whether any special eligibility criteria (e.g. an age requirement) applied to the extra seats. However, as argued above, the supernumerary councillors were most likely treated as a distinct legal category and thus exempt from the *lex Pompeia*.⁶² This means that the extra seats must have been particularly attractive to those who did not qualify for ordinary council membership under the *lex Pompeia*. Among the elite, these must have been, first and foremost, the sons and relatives of *bouletai* who were not members of the council yet (e.g. because they did not fulfil the age requirement yet). However, caution is necessary at this point. We must bear in mind that Trajan had granted Prusa one hundred supernumerary councillors. In view of this large number it is questionable whether a city like Prusa would have been in a position to fill all these extra seats with the sons from the established bouletic class.⁶³ According to Pliny, the Bithynian cities already found it difficult to fill the ordinary seats in the council with members from the elite families. As a result, men ‘*e plebe*’ were, though with reservations, appointed by the censors.⁶⁴ Modern demographic models have confirmed this problem of recruitment. On the basis of the Cole and Demeny Model South, Zuiderhoek has calculated that a city council of 500 ordinary councillors required an annual intake of 16-18 new ordinary councillors to maintain its regular size.⁶⁵ But the recruitment of this number of councillors was anything but straightforward. On the one hand, the mortality rate among the elite was comparatively high; on the other hand, the entrance criteria for ordinary councillors as laid down by the *lex Pompeia* were strict (age requirement of 22 years and previous tenure of a magistracy since Augustus) and thus reduced the pool of eligible candidates.⁶⁶ It has, therefore, been argued that, in order to maintain their regular numbers, the councils were bound to draw on newcomers from outside the bouletic families, i.e. from the so-called *plebs media*.⁶⁷ This stratum of society mainly consisted of successful shopkeepers, traders, craftsmen, manufacturers and intellectuals. It was in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD that this group prospered economically and showed ‘an increasing political awareness and activity’.⁶⁸ Indeed, we must assume that

⁶² On these regulations of the *lex Pompeia* see PLIN., *Ep.* 10.79-80; SCHWARZ (2001), p. 102-105.

⁶³ Even if it did, this would mean, in turn, that no sons of the elite would have been available for taking up the ordinary seats in future years.

⁶⁴ PLIN., *Ep.* 10.79.

⁶⁵ ZUIDERHOEK (2011), p. 187-188. See also JONES (1940), p. 190: ‘Towards the end of the second century many councils were finding it difficult to keep up their numbers’.

⁶⁶ See n. 62.

⁶⁷ See PLEKET (1998), p. 208; SCHWARZ (2001), p. 104-105; ZUIDERHOEK (2011), p. 190-191; (2017), p. 128-129. On the definition of the *plebs media*: VEYNE (2000); WALLACE-HADRILL (2013); ZUIDERHOEK (2017), p. 124-130.

⁶⁸ ZUIDERHOEK (2008), p. 441.

the wealth of some members of the *plebs media* came close to or was even on par with that of members of the bouletic class.⁶⁹ Accordingly, it is a logical consequence to suggest that just as the ordinary councillors had to be recruited from men '*e plebe*', so too the cities may have filled the majority of the supernumerary seats with members of the economically well-off *plebs media*. For them, obtaining one of the extra seats must have been most desirable, since membership in the council paved the way to political power. Council membership had become an increasingly important opportunity for having a direct say in the early stages of decision-making and of influencing the drafting of decrees. Certainly, we do not know whether supernumerary councillors were granted exactly the same political rights as ordinary councillors. Yet, it is plausible to assume that some political influence, however profound it was, was associated with this new position. Competition among potential candidates from the *plebs media* for the extra seats in the council is, therefore, most likely.

This consideration brings us to the crucial question of who was the driving force behind Prusa's application for extra seats and, as a consequence, the widening of the bouletic class. Since the *plebs media* played a powerful role in the civic assemblies, as suggested by recent scholarship,⁷⁰ it is plausible to surmise that the pressure to apply for additional councillors came precisely from this group. This is not to say that supernumerary council seats were not in the interest of the bouletic class, which could expect that the burden of liturgies would then be shared among a larger group of councillors. Dio himself, who led the embassy to Trajan, seems to have supported the request for supernumerary councillors, presumably in the hope of obtaining fresh financial resources for his own building project. Yet, it is also conceivable that some councillors may have disapproved of the enlargement of the council and the inclusion of men '*e plebe*' into their ranks on principal grounds.⁷¹ After all, the socio-political impact of a large number of extra seats must not be underestimated.⁷² One hundred supernumerary councillors would have made up a considerable proportion of the entire council of Prusa. If these men came predominately from the *plebs media*, as suggested above, it is clear that the ruling elite must have feared that the social stratification of the city council of Prusa, and hence the balance of power, could be affected to their disadvantage.⁷³ Remarkably, however, Dio's report about the councillors' machinations during the election of the supernumerary councillors also suggests that personal power games outweighed

⁶⁹ PLEKET (1998), p. 208. See also HABERMANN (2014), p. 244-247, who discusses the extant evidence for 'social climbers' attested as councillors in the East.

⁷⁰ See e.g. ZUIDERHOEK (2008), p. 431-445.

⁷¹ PLIN., *Ep.* 10.79.3.

⁷² See BEKKER-NIELSEN (2008), p. 127; MADSEN (2009), p. 117.

⁷³ It is noteworthy that Trajan pursued the same line of policy in *Ep.* 10.80: his decision is against the elite's wish to restrict council membership and keep away men '*e plebe*' from the councils.

the social concerns of Prusa's bouleutic class, once the extra seats had been granted by the emperor: if men '*e plebe*' were to join the council, these would ideally be those with whom individual councillors had built up long-standing ties. By securing the election of their protégés, they could attempt to strengthen their own power base in the faction-ridden council of Prusa.⁷⁴

Finally, the nature of the *honorarium decurionatus* needs to be clarified. In his letter to Trajan (*Ep.* 112), Pliny reports:

sed ii, quos indulgentia tua quibusdam ciuitatibus super legitimum numerum adicere permisit, et singula milia denariorum et bina intulerunt

However, those whom your generosity has permitted certain cities to add to their lawful number, have contributed 1,000 or 2,000 denarii each.

His words suggest that supernumerary councillors paid a fixed sum for their extra seat in the council, the amount of which could vary from city to city and was obviously set by the particular city itself.⁷⁵ The practice of allowing the cities to determine the statutory fee is in line with Trajan's determination to respect the conventions of local autonomy. A city could ear-mark the income accruing from the *honorarium decurionatus* for a particular project. As *Ep.* 10.39 makes it clear, Klaudiopolis had decided to use this income for a new public bath. But there is also good reason to assume that the system of generating income through the extra bouleutic seats was not monolithic but was open to additional contributions by the prospective supernumerary councillors. At this point the Roman West provides a helpful analogy. Duncan-Jones has shown that in the cities of Roman Africa a fixed fee for entry to the council could be topped up by the applicant with an additional voluntary donation (*dona superaddita*), whose amount was at his own discretion.⁷⁶ As to the assignment of the extra council seats it is obvious that such a system of *dona superaddita* worked particularly well under the principle of competitive pressure. The more generously a candidate was willing to give on top of the nominal fixed fee, the more

⁷⁴ DIO CHRYS., *Or.* 45.7-8.

⁷⁵ As to the one-off payment of 1,000 or 2,000 denarii (= HS 4,000 or 8,000), we should realize that this amount ranked at the lower end of the scale of benefactions made by private benefactors; cf. ZUIDERHOEK (2009), p. 25, 28-35, who defines all benefactions smaller than 1,000 denarii as 'small gifts'. It has also been argued by Schwarz that the city's overall income through the *honorarium decurionatus* (i.e. 200,000 denarii) was rather modest; see SCHWARZ (2001), p. 110, who has based her assessment on the assumption that each of the one hundred supernumerary councillors would have paid 2,000 denarii. However, caution is necessary: Duncan-Jones has shown that about ten buildings could be fully financed by such an amount; on building costs cf. DUNCAN-JONES (1974), p. 75-78.

⁷⁶ For this differentiation between obligatory (*legitima*) payment and additional voluntary donations made through a *pollicitatio* see LIEBENAM (1900), p. 55-56; DUNCAN-JONES (1962), p. 66-67; GARNSEY (1971b), p. 116-118; JACQUES (1984), p. 689-692; BRUUN (2014), p. 74.

he improved his chance to distinguish himself from his rivals and be elected to the position.⁷⁷ Generous acts of public euergetism would certainly have left a strong impression on the voters and the *polis* community. It is, therefore, possible to surmise that the system of the *honorarium decurionatus* in the East could have resembled the practice in the Western part of the Empire, where a fixed sum could be combined with additional voluntary contributions. The fact that the election of the supernumerary councillors at Prusa took place in the assembly may well corroborate this assumption. Here promises (*pollicitationes*) of *dona superaddita* could have been made before the People in a competitive context.

But what was Trajan's actual message in the last sentence? If we proceed on the assumption that the last sentence reads *ut praestatione ceteris praeferantur*,⁷⁸ it is important to realize that Trajan does not refer to the *honorarium decurionatus* as such.⁷⁹ Rather he states that those becoming supernumerary councillors should excel through a *praestatio*. In order to gain a full understanding of the semantic meaning of this term, we must consider some of the economic problems of the Greek cities more closely. Whenever a citizen intended to make a major financial contribution to his *polis*, he would step forward in the assembly and make a *pollicitatio* – an 'informal unilateral promise, especially a donative promise of money or construction to a municipality'.⁸⁰ This declaration of intent was a voluntary act and the amount announced was at the discretion of the donor. It was a promise of future payment, which was, however, often delayed by the donor.⁸¹ By the end of the 1st century AD, the problem of citizens solemnly promising munificent benefactions for the *polis* but failing to keep their word or fulfil them in the near future had become increasingly acute in the East.⁸² It was exactly this problem which Dio Chrysostom was faced with in his hometown. Several members of the urban elite had publicly promised their financial support for his ambitious plan to beautify Prusa with prestigious public buildings but soon found themselves on the verge of defaulting on their payments, thus jeopardizing the realization of the original building plans.⁸³ It is

⁷⁷ GARNSEY (1971), p. 117.

⁷⁸ As discussed above, *praestatio* is the most widely accepted emendation.

⁷⁹ Accordingly, and on the basis of the arguments presented above, the proposed interpretation of the last sentence by LANGHAMMER (1973), p. 107, is doubtful: '... sollen eben diejenigen, die bereit waren, das Eintrittsgeld zu erlegen, denen vorgezogen werden, die nicht willens waren, es zu zahlen'.

⁸⁰ FRIER *et al.* (2016), p. 3076, in the glossary of Roman law terms of Blume's edition of the *Codex of Justinian*. HAYASHI (1989) stresses that the object of a *pollicitatio* was an *opus* until the time of Caracalla. With Caracalla's rescript (*Dig.* 50.12.6.1), *pecunia* was accepted as the object of a *pollicitatio*. On *pollicitatio* see also VILLERS (1939); GARNSEY (1971b); JACQUES (1984), p. 689-690.

⁸¹ GARNSEY (1971b), p. 117.

⁸² BEKKER-NIELSEN (2008), p. 71.

⁸³ See DIO CHRYS., *Or.* 48.11; JONES (1978), p. 112-113; BEKKER-NIELSEN (2008), p. 71-72.

noteworthy, however, that it was not only voluntary benefactions but also the *honorarium decurionatus* which were affected by these delays in payment. Pliny reports that not all of those who had been appointed as supernumerary councillors at Klaudiopolis had paid upon entering office, even though the city urgently needed the money for the completion of its public bath.⁸⁴ It is against the background of this problem of delayed payments of *summa honoraria*, unreliable or unfulfilled promises of benefactions, and the lack of binding commitments on the part of the benefactors and elected office-holders, that the term *praestatio* gains greater relevance. *Praestatio* means ‘performance of a legal duty’; ‘payment’.⁸⁵ Likewise, the *OLD* defines it as ‘payment of money, goods, or services (in settlement of an obligation)’ and as ‘the action of guaranteeing; warranty’.⁸⁶ Its semantic emphasis is focussed on the legal guarantee, the binding agreement, the actual payment in the fulfilment of a public announcement.⁸⁷ What obviously mattered to Trajan was that those who were to receive one of the extra seats would be able to make the necessary payment. Those who had funds to pay the *summa honoraria* and any additional benefactions should be given preference. Certainly, a city could determine an applicant’s financial capacity through a *dokimasia*.⁸⁸ Moreover, it could ask the applicant to give sureties and present guarantors during the application process.⁸⁹ Once the supernumerary councillors had been elected, it was the city that was in charge of collecting the money. In the event that payment was delayed, the governor could intervene.⁹⁰ This prominent role of the imperial administration in enforcing payment for the extra council seats should not surprise us. After all, the point of an emperor’s grant of additional council seats was to fill a city’s public treasury and to plug the existing fiscal holes.⁹¹ In this context, we should remember that it was Trajan who issued an imperial constitution which required those who made

⁸⁴ PLIN., *Ep.* 10.39.5. GARNSEY (1971b), p. 116, n. 4, and p. 121 argues that the *summa honoraria* had to be paid immediately upon entering office.

⁸⁵ FRIER *et al.* (2016), p. 3077.

⁸⁶ *OLD*, s.v. *praestatio*, p. 1442.

⁸⁷ This key semantic aspect is corroborated by the usage of the word in the *Digests*.

⁸⁸ Note that Hadrian mentions a *dokimasia* in the context of the addition of a new councillor to the Ephesian council; see OLIVER (1989), no. 82A, l. 12.

⁸⁹ Was it possibly for this reason that the applicants for the extra seats at Prusa were seeking supporters among the members of the council (DIO CHRYS., *Or.* 45.9-10)? Remarkably, Dio speaks of them as ‘debtors’ (*chreostai*).

⁹⁰ See BURTON (2004), p. 331-332.

⁹¹ DIO CHRYS., *Or.* 48.11. Interestingly, Dio Chrysostom refers to the financial resources gained from the supernumerary councillors in the context of his building project in Prusa: unlike the promises made by other benefactors, the council fees (*bouleutikon*) provided ‘working capital’ for the city. See also Antoninus Pius’ letter to the city of Parthicopolis, in which he stresses that the *summa honoraria* is a source of income; see OLIVER (1989), no. 156. On the financial motives behind the introduction of the entry fee see JONES (1978), p. 107-108; LANGHAMMER (1973), p. 107; SCHWARZ (2001), p. 108-110.

a *pollicitatio* as well as their heirs to complete the *opus* they had pledged.⁹² Even though we cannot determine the exact date of this imperial constitution, it is plausible to suggest that Trajan had this same problem in mind when he formulated his response to Pliny in *Ep.* 113.

4. Conclusion

I have explored the complex manuscript tradition of Book 10 and discussed the major textual and historical issues of the last sentence of *Ep.* 113. It is against the background of the vitality of civic life in the post-classical *polis* in the 1st and early 2nd centuries AD that I have sought to re-assess Trajan's recommendations for adequate administrative procedures concerning the issue of supernumerary councillors in Pontus and Bithynia, as documented in *Ep.* 113 of Pliny's *Letters*. In an attempt to reconstruct the most plausible historical scenario for Trajan's statement, I have argued that the pressure to apply for the privilege of supernumerary councillors presumably came from members of (the upper echelons of) the *plebs media*, who had not been admitted to the *boule* previously but played an important role in the assemblies of the Greek cities. Their admission to the council offered them the attractive prospect of a marked increase in their social status, prestige and political power. From the civic and imperial points of view, the economic prosperity of this flourishing section of society could be profitably tapped to the benefit of the *polis* community. After all, supernumerary councillors had to pay a fee upon entering office, and it is also likely that they would take over services for the city. Injections of capital like these were urgently needed in the financially weak cities of Pontus and Bithynia. Trajan's grant of supernumerary councillors may thus be seen as an important step to activate the financial resources of the wealthy members of the middle class for the weal of the community. Obviously, the demand for the extra seats was higher than the actual supply. Hence competition for the extra seats was strong among the applicants. Under these circumstances, just as in the Latin West, the *polis* would presumably set a minimum fixed sum for entry into the council, while the competitors for the extra seats could try to outdo each other in the announcement of generous *dona superaddita* on top of the fixed fee. It is noteworthy, however, that Trajan seems to have been determined to put a stop to the recurrent abuse of delaying payment of the *summa honoraria* and of making false, unrealistic promises for additional benefactions. He thus seems to have demanded an actual, guaranteed

⁹² *Dig.* 50.12.14: *si quis sui alieniue honoris causa opus facturum se in aliqua ciuitate promiserit, ad perficiendum tam ipse quam heres eius ex constitutione diui Traiani obligatus est.* On this constitution see GARNSEY (1974), p. 239; JACQUES (1984), p. 701-702 (with appendix no. 1); HAYASHI (1989), p. 385.

payment from those eager to obtain a seat. Accordingly, I propose that the last sentence in *Ep.* 113 should be read as follows:

... eos, qui allecti / additi / inuitati fiunt decuriones, id existimo acturos, ut praestatione ceteris praeferantur.

I think that those who are made councillors by adlection shall act in such a way that they are preferred over the others due to an actual, guaranteed payment.

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