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Athletes, Citizenships and Hellenic Identity during the Imperial Period

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Summary: During the Hellenistic and Imperial periods, Greek populations coexisted with several other cultures, which were very often more multitudinous. Those ‘Hellenes’, however, came together in big Panhellenic and smaller, local festivals to honour their gods and celebrate their common Hellenic culture. As a result, numerous new festivals and contests were founded (and older ones grew bigger or were even re-founded) after the third century BC, gradually forming a large festival network. Even though this festival network has repeatedly been at the centre of scholarly attention – and still is – the rhetoric of athletic inscriptions, i.e. how athletic Panhellenism is demonstrated and what it is prompted by still remains largely unexplored. The main contribution of this paper is to demonstrate how the accumulation of citizenships by athletes contributes to Panhellenic self-representation, by showing another way that this association with Hellenic culture was communicated and negotiated in the public discourse. The portrayal of citizenships by an array of ethnic names along with the name of the honoree, presented the athlete as a larger-than-city figure and an essential part of that Hellenic community. One of the other aims of this paper is to suggest two factors in the development of these conventions of athletic representation, whose significance has not been understood in full: the athletic synod and the formation of *Panhellenion*. It is a central tenet of this paper that the study of citizenship in athletic inscriptions cannot only help us reveal more ways that Hellenicity was projected, but also better understand how all these different textual images helped shape views about what Hellas was.

Keywords: Ancient Athletics, Citizenship, Epigraphy, Identity, Hellenism, Athletic Synod, Panhellenion, Imperial Period

Introduction

The following text was inscribed on a statue base that was found in the *agora* of Smyrna. This particular inscription commemorates the accomplishments of

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Marcos Aurelios Antonios Lucios, possibly in the heavy events (wrestling, boxing and *pankraton*), who was active at some point during the second half of the second century AD.¹

“Marcos Aurelios Antonios Lucios, Smyrnean and Athenian and Ephesian and Pergamene and Kyzikean and Sardean and Milesian and Lacedaemonian, and citizen and *bouleutēs* of other cities, having won the competitions written below; first and only person ever (to win) the Great Hadrianea Olympia in Smyrna in boys and men’s category three times in a row; the Olympia of Athens in the boys’ category, the shield of Argos and the Nemean in boys; in Smyrna, the league games of Asia in the boys’ and men’s category, having stopped his competitors after the second lot-drawing; in Ephesos the Barbilia in boys and beardless category, the Panhellenia and the Actia in the boys’ and men’s categories in a row; in Kyzikos the first and only to have won in the beardless (category) and the next day proceed to the men’s category; in Isthmia the boys’, beardless, and men’s category in a row.”²

The document gives us plenty of information regarding Antonios Lucios’ impressive athletic career, which includes a list of his victories in big Panhellenic contests in Greece, Asia Minor, and Italy as well as an enumeration of his citizenships and cities in which he held the status of *bouleutēs*. This particular format of honorific inscription – one that can be said to greatly resemble a modern CV – became increasingly common for athletes and other festival performers after the first century BC.³ This paper focuses on inscribed texts that follow this structure, and especially on the way athletes like Antonios Lucios above presented their citizenships in this kind of evidence. Its main contribution is to demonstrate how the accumulation of citizenship contributes to Panhellenic self-representation. In the process, it will suggest two factors in the development of these conventions of athletic representation, whose significance has not been understood in full: the athletic synod and the formation of *Panhellenion*.

1 IK 24.1 661. Cf. Keil 1950, 62. He suggested dating the inscription in the third century AD, and more specifically, after *Constitutio Antoniniana*.

2 [M]ἄρ(κος) Αὐρ(ήλιος) Ἀντώνιος Λούκιος Ζμυρναῖος κ[αί] / Ἀθηναῖος καὶ Ἐφέσιος καὶ Περγαμη/ νός καὶ Κυζικηνός καὶ Σαρδιανός καὶ / Μειλήσιος καὶ Λακεδαιμόνιος καὶ // ἑτέρων πόλεων πολεΐτης καὶ βου/λευτής, νεικήσας τοὺς ὑπογεγραμ/μένους ἀγῶνας· μόνος καὶ πρῶτος / ἀνθρώπων Ζμύρναν τὰ μεγάλα // Ἀδριανὰ Ὀλύμπια παίδων καὶ ἀνδρῶν / γ’ κατὰ τὸ ἐξῆς, Ἀθήναις Ὀλύμπια παί/δων, τὰν ἐξ Ἄργους ἀσπίδα καὶ Νέμεια / παίδων, Ζμύρναν κοινὸν Ἀσίας παίδων // καὶ ἀνδρῶν, στήσας τοὺς ἀνταγωνιστὰς / μετὰ β’ κληρῶν, Ἐφεσον Βαρβίλληα παίδων, / ἀγενείων, Ἄκτια, Πανελλήνια παίδων, ἀνδρῶν / κατὰ τὸ ἐξῆς, μόνος καὶ πρῶτος Κύζικον ἀ[γε]//νείων καὶ εἰς τὸ αὐριον προσβάς ἀνδρῶ[ν,] / [Ἔ]σθμια παίδων, ἀγενείων, ἀνδρῶν κατὰ τ[ὸ] / [ἐξῆς —].

3 Brunet 1998, 67–69. For more comments and literature on the dating of this format of honorific inscription, see also Mouratidis 2020, 83.

Inscriptions for Athletes

Perhaps the most distinctive characteristic of this kind of ‘CV-inscriptions’ is the extravagant focus on the honoree’s agonistic capacity, which Brunet argues seems to have been a source of honour in itself.⁴ This focus on the agonistic profile of the honoree is also accompanied by a striking absence of any extended representation of individual cities or of their relationship with the athlete, beyond the brief mention of individual cities as venues of competition or sources of citizenship awards. Conversely, in most of the earlier and many of the contemporary honorific texts, we see athletic victories being envisaged in relation to the city or the citizens, which feature prominently in the inscriptions. A good example is the honorific decree of the *boulē* and *dēmos* of the city of Andros for Damon son of Philadelphos.⁵

“Damon son of Philadelphos. The council and the people have decided; because Damon son of Philadelphos, a man virtuous and beautiful, having favoured the people and having won the Isthmian competition [.....c.20.....s]tadion crowned [— —]. It was decided that the *dēmos* should crown him with a bronze image, due to his virtue and his victory in the Isthmian [— —].”

The inscription starts with an enactment formula (ἔδοξεν τεῖ βουλευῖ καὶ τῷ δήμῳ), as is usual in decrees, in which the *boulē* and *dēmos* of Andros feature prominently. This highlighted the formality of this document and the procedure that preceded: a proposal to honour Damon was introduced, formally moved, became a preliminary resolution by the council, and then passed on to the people of Andros to be ratified. The city’s participation in the honour is evident in the citation of the formal motion (δεδοχθαι). The way the athlete-city relationship is represented in this evidence is not only indicated by the references to the *boulē* and *dēmos* but also through the presentation of Damon’s accomplishments in relation to the city and the people of Andros. The motivation clause (ἐπειδὴ) helps us identify why the honoree deserved to be honoured. His athletic accomplishment is not the only reason. Instead, he was honoured for being a good and virtuous man (ἀνὴρ καλὸς καὶ ἀγαθός), because he benefited the people of Andros (εὐνους ὑπάρχει τῷ δήμῳ), and then (thirdly), because he won an event

4 Brunet 1998, 61–69.

5 IG XII suppl. 257 (second century AD): [Δάμωνος Φιλα]δέλφου. / [ἔδοξεν τεῖ βουλευῖ καὶ τῷ δήμῳ: ἐπειδὴ Δάμων / [Φιλαδέλφου ἀνὴρ καλὸς καὶ] ἀγαθὸς ὦν εὐνους ὑπάρ/[χει τῷ δήμῳ καὶ τῶν Ἴσθμ]ίων νικήσας τὸν ἀγῶνα // [.....c.20..... σ]τάδιον ἐστεφάνωκεν [— — —]/ [δεδοχθαι στεφανῶσαι αὐτὸν τὸ]ν δήμον εἰκόνη χαλκεῖ / [ἀρετῆς ἔνεκεν καὶ τῆς νίκης τ]ῆς τῶν Ἴσθμίων [— —].

in the Isthmian games (καὶ τῶν Ἴσθμίων νικήσας τὸν ἀγῶνα) and crowned the city (ἔστεφάνωκεν). At the end of the decree, when it is decided how Damon should be rewarded (by a bronze statue), it is stated again that this honour was due to his virtues and then due to his victory (ἀρετῆς ἔνεκεν καὶ τῆς νίκης τῆς τῶν Ἴσθμίων). The athlete is envisaged here as caring about his community, and as a result, the city bestowed honours upon him. Damon's accomplishments are envisaged to deserve rewards only as part of a broader contribution to his community. More specifically, it is not enough that he won the Isthmian games. He had to crown the city (ἔστεφάνωκεν) before the city decided to crown him (δεδοχθαι στεφανῶσαι αὐτόν). Here we see an image of exchange that looks back ultimately to Archaic and Classical traditions of athletic crowning.

It becomes clear that the way the athlete and the city are envisaged in the athletic inscription of Antonios Lucios above – and all inscriptions which follow the same format – is substantially different. In the latter, the honoree's accomplishments are not envisaged as having added some value to the city. Brunet observed that these inscriptions “demonstrate that an athlete had gained honour simply by being a great athlete”⁶. At the same time, instead of presenting a special link with his city of origin, the athlete enumerates all the citizenships that he accumulated throughout his career. One of the aims of this study is to interpret this style of self-representation and offer some insights into the effect it created. It is a central tenet of this paper that the de-emphasizing of the intimate relationship with the city of origin is not a sign that the otherwise strong athlete-city bond had weakened during the Imperial Period. It is merely a technique of self-representation that emphasized a different aspect of the complex and multifaceted identity of the athlete. By drawing attention away from the close link with their city of origin and by arraying citizenships one after the other, athletes portrayed themselves as larger-than-city figures, as members of a Panhellenic network.

Athletes as Citizens

In his paper “Athletes, Artists and Citizens in the Imperial Greek City”, the only extensive study on the phenomenon of accumulation of citizenships by athletes, van Nijf offers an interpretation as to why we see such extensive lists of citizenships in athletic inscriptions. He argues that athletes portrayed their citizenships one after the other as “badges of honour” and considers these grants and athletic victories to be “functional equivalents” which added up to the agonistic glory of

⁶ Brunet 1998, 98.

the honoree.⁷ The bigger and more prestigious the city that awarded citizenship, the more it reflected the honoree's status and accomplishments, just as a victory in Olympia or the Sebasta in Naples would be more prestigious and admirable than one in a small local festival.⁸ Van Nijf's argument is based on the fact that citizenships in the 'heading' part of the inscription are portrayed in the same way as victories in the victory list.⁹ An athlete who wanted to impress others, therefore, portrayed his citizenships in as large numbers as possible, just as he did with his athletic victories.¹⁰ Nevertheless, van Nijf does not believe that these citizenships were "empty titles".¹¹ They gave athletes and other performers a political capital that they could cash out if they wished.¹²

However, not all scholars share van Nijf's opinion that these lists of citizenships could have been a source of political capital for athletes. Most have argued that the juxtapositions of ethnics by athletes, other performers and professionals is an indication that these citizenships were merely honorary and had no political significance. For example, Gabrielle Frija, who studied the phenomenon of multiple citizenships in the provincial elite of Asia Minor, has argued that the phenomenon of multiple citizenships concerned the upper social classes of the Empire primarily.¹³ She reached that conclusion based on the study of 460 people who managed to become priests and high-priests of the imperial cult – according to some scholars the most prestigious provincial positions outside of military offices, usually manned by members of the equestrian class¹⁴ – spread across 80 cities of the eastern part of the Empire (primarily the province of Asia).¹⁵ Frija found only seven cases of high-priests who had multiple citizenships and argues that besides this highly distinguished provincial elite, the phenomenon of multi-

7 van Nijf 2012b, 184.

8 van Nijf 2012b, 184.

9 van Nijf 2012a, 81–82; van Nijf 2006, 229. Van Nijf has also noticed that extensive lists of citizenships are rarely attested outside an agonistic context. For the division of this kind of inscriptions to heading and list of victories, see Brunet 1998, 61–69.

10 Cf. Brunet 1998, 72–78, 96–101.

11 van Nijf 2012b, 176. Or, in other words, merely honorary citizenships, as other scholars have suggested; for example, Jones 2012.

12 He reached this conclusion based on the hypothesis that athletes could choose to settle in a city, after their retirement. The case of a runner, originally from Caesareia Panias on the borders of today's Israel and Lebanon is indicative. This athlete, whose name has not survived, was a citizen of many cities. However, after he retired from athletics he did not go back to his fatherland. Instead, he settled in Rhodes, became a *hierokarux* and performed benefactions there. See Suppl. epigr. Rodio 67 (AD 80–90).

13 Frija 2012, 113.

14 Camia 2008, 1; Quaß 1993, 188–213.

15 Frija 2012, 113–114.

ple citizenships is not attested frequently in inscriptions for other ‘lower status’ notables. Based on this, she concluded that multiple citizenships can be a sign as well as a factor of one’s exceptional social status and that the accumulation of citizenships became almost a necessity for the elite which wished to extend its range of political and financial influence.

The style of representation of multiple citizenships in the cases that Frija examined is significantly different from the one that athletes used in their inscriptions. In Frija’s examples, the honorees instead of demonstrating the ethnic of the city, as in the case of athletes and other performers, highlighted their civic function in the cities where they had citizenship. This is exemplified in the case of Gerelane Bassa, a citizen of Miletos and Samos, and wife of the high priest of the imperial cult Minnion.¹⁶ Bassa, instead of demonstrating her second Samian citizenship by simply stating that she was Samian (as athletes did in their inscriptions), chose to portray it by being represented in an inscription from Didyma as a *stephanephoros* in the city of Samos.¹⁷ For Frija, this was how notables demonstrated their citizenships: by highlighting their civic function or office in that city. In this way, they emphasized their close link with the city in which they wished to expand their financial and political range of influence, or in which they already had a strong activity. On the other hand, she considers the juxtaposition of ethnics from other members of the civic elite, athletes, other performers, and sometimes lower-status professionals as a sign that these citizenships were merely honorary and did not indicate any major involvement in the city’s political life.¹⁸

In what follows, this paper aims to make clear that this ‘de-emphasising’ of the otherwise strong athlete-city bond was a technique of self-representation, aiming to portray a specific persona of the honoree. As van Nijf also notes, it should not

16 Frija 2012, 114.

17 I.Didyma 339, 11.4–6: πατὴρ Κλαυδίου Μηνοφίλου εὐεργέτου τοῦ Μιννίωνος, μητρὸς δὲ Γερέλανης Γαίου Βάσσης, στεφανηφόρου ἐν Σάμῳ.

18 Frija 2012, 1245. Andreea Ștefan has also studied multiple citizenships more recently. Along the same lines as Frija, she argued that the projection of multiple citizenships by elite individuals demonstrated the extent and the sphere of their political influence as well as their vast networks: Ștefan 2017, 120–121, 127. Ștefan, however, did not study the inscriptions for athletes extensively. She seems to consider them as hired performers, just like other professionals and has argued that such rewards had the potential to assist individuals in working freely in cities other than their own: Ștefan 2017, 122–123. Kirbihler reached similar conclusions in his scholarship on the phenomenon of dual citizenship in the Imperial-period epigraphic record of Ephesos. For Kirbihler, the main reason for awarding or acquiring second citizenship was financial or fiscal. Cities often charged fees for the acquisition of citizenship, and by inviting non-citizens to be part of the citizen body, the city increased its population and had a larger pool of people who could contribute to the city’s expenses and needs: Kirbihler 2012, 324; cf. Jones 2012, 215.

be considered as a sign that the athlete-city link weakened during this period. I argue that the athletes named in these inscriptions do represent that link in distinctive terms, in portraying themselves as part of a broader community which included a whole network of cities. In order to demonstrate this sufficiently, it is important to first take a closer look at the relevant evidence and examine some of its qualitative and quantitative characteristics as well as the kind of information that we can draw from the way athletes portrayed their citizenships in their honorific inscriptions.

Inscriptions for Athletes and Citizenship(s)

Any scholar who decides to study inscriptions that give information about citizenships that athletes managed to accumulate is quickly faced with certain challenges. The first is the identification of the honoree's agonistic specialism. It is not always possible to determine based on agonistic titles and lists of victories whether the honoree was an athlete or a different kind of performer, such as a singer or an actor. A good example is the case of a Marcos Aurelios, a citizen of no less than fourteen cities. His agonistic capacity is undeniable based on the last line of his inscription (νεικήσαντα τοὺς ὑπογεγραμμένους ἀγῶνας), but without further information about his victories, it is almost impossible to determine whether he was an athlete, an artist, or had any other specialism.¹⁹ We encounter the same difficulty in other cases where victory titles are included, as in the case of the M. Aurelios Ammonios who is characterised as *paradoxos*. Such titles alone are not strong indications of one's athletic specialism since they were used by other festival performers too.²⁰ This study deliberately focuses on athletes and excludes other festival performers who often share similar styles of self-representation with athletes.²¹ The main reason is that the gathering of all this evidence would be a gargantuan task exceeding the scope of a single article.²² For this case study, I have chosen to study only athletes so that I can have

¹⁹ FD III 4 476, Delphi, AD 175–225.

²⁰ FD III 1 214, Delphi, Imperial Period: ἀγαθὴ τύχη. / Μ.Αὐρ. Ἀμμώνιον Ἀντινοέα / παράδοξον Δελφοὶ Δελφὸν / καὶ βουλευτὴν ἐποίησαν. // ψηφίσματι βουλῆς. For a discussion on *paradoxos* and other athletic titles, see Brunet 1998, 146–210; Remijsen 2015, 120–121.

²¹ For example, the honorific inscription for the *biologos* Tiberios Claudios Philologos Theseas, a citizen of Marathon and Ephesos and Magnesia on the Maiandros and other cities: IK 14 1135.

²² The collection of all the evidence about performers of Antiquity is the goal of the “Connecting Contests” project, launched by the University of Groningen. For more information on this

a manageable interpretative picture of the evidence, and expand to cover other kinds of performers in a future publication.

A second important challenge is that it is not always possible to determine the number of citizenships and *boulē* memberships of each athlete. For example, in the case of Antonios Lucios above:

Μάρκος Αύρηλιος Αντώνιος Λούκιος Ζμυρναῖος καὶ Ἀθηναῖος καὶ Ἐφέσιος καὶ Περγαμηνὸς καὶ Κυζικηνὸς καὶ Σαρδιανὸς καὶ Μειλήσιος καὶ Λακεδαιμόνιος καὶ ἐτέρων πόλεων πολεῖτης καὶ βουλευτῆς.²³

We cannot be sure, whether he held the status of *bouleutēs* regardless of his athletic achievements. Also, whether the καὶ βουλευτῆς indicates that he was *bouleutēs* in all the cities where he was a citizen, or he was *bouleutēs* in some or all of the other cities where he was a citizen but which are not mentioned in the inscription (καὶ ἐτέρων πόλεων πολεῖτης καὶ βουλευτῆς).²⁴ In general, even outside an athletic context, it is difficult to determine whether distinguished outsiders who held citizenship in a city also enjoyed the status of *bouleutēs* there. The opposite, that individuals who held the prestigious position of *bouleutēs* in a city must also have had enjoyed citizenship there is safer to assume since this position was limited only to citizens of the *polis*, whether permanently settled there or not. In some cases, however, we can reach conclusions with relative safety. For example, in an honorific inscription for the pentathlete Polycrates that was found in Philadelphia of Lydia, we read in lines 1–9:

Πολυκράτης Κιβυράτης βουλευτῆς, πένταθλος, καὶ Φιλαδελεφεὺς βουλευτῆς, ξυστάρχης διαβίου τῶν μεγάλων ἀγῶνων Δείων Ἀλείων Φιλαδελφείων, καὶ Λακεδαιμόνιος βουλευτῆς καὶ Ἀθηναῖος καὶ Ἐφέσιος καὶ Νεικοπολεῖτης καὶ ἄλλων πόλεων πολλῶν πολεῖτης.²⁵

In this case, it is easier to determine the cities where Polycrates enjoyed the status of *bouleutēs* (Kibyra, Philadelphia and Sparta) and the cities where he probably did not (Athens, Ephesos, Neikopolis, and “many other cities”).²⁶

project, see Onno van Nijf and Christina Williamson: <http://www.connectedcontests.org/about/>, last accessed 03.02.2021.

23 IK 24.1 661, ll.1–6.

24 Similarly, in IGUR I 240 (AD 220–230) and CIG II 3426 (Imperial Period).

25 IAG 82, ll.2–9 (AD 210–212): Polycrates *bouleutēs* of Kibyra, pentathlete, and *bouleutēs* of Philadelphia, *xystarches* for life of the great competition of *Deia Haleia* in Philadelphia, and *bouleutēs* of Sparta, and Athenian and Ephesian and Neikopolitan and citizen of many other cities.

26 Similarly, the case of the herald Eklektos (IG II 2 3169/70, ll.2–7). J. and L. Robert observed that Eklektos was not a member of the boule of Elis, but only enjoyed citizenship there: BÉ 1976 no. 279.

The following table contains all the cities that feature in ‘CV inscriptions’ (inscriptions similar to that of Antonios Lucions above) and their frequency, in alphabetical order. However, in order to get an even more complete picture of the spread of the phenomenon, this table also includes all the epigraphic evidence I could find that gives information about grants of citizenship to athletes, drawing on other kinds of inscription too. In total, 54 inscriptions were brought together, that testify to 137 grants of citizenship and *boulē* membership by 47 different cities to 60 athletes.²⁷ It is important to note that this list contains the cities that granted additional citizenships to athletes and does not include the times the original city of an athlete is mentioned. In the example of Antonios Lucios above, for instance, his original Smyranean citizenship is not counted in the following table:

Tab. 1: Table showing the frequency of citizenship awards to athletes in inscriptions of the Imperial period

Cities	‘CV inscriptions’	Other inscriptions	Total
Alexandria, Egypt	3	2	5
Ankyra, Galatia	–	1	1
Antinoes, Egypt	2	–	2
Antioch, Syria	1	1	2
Antioch on the Maiandros, Karia	–	1	1
Antioch Caesareia, Pisidia	–	2	2
Appolonia, Illyria	–	1	1
Argos, Peloponnese	1	1	2
Arykanda, Lykia	–	1	1
Athens, Central Greece	8	14	22
Balboura, Lykia	–	1	1
Brindisi, Italy	–	1	1
Byzantion, Thrace	–	1	1
Caesareia Tralles, Lydia	3	1	4
Claudiopolis, Kilikia	–	1	1
Corinth, Peloponnese	1	1	2
Cyaneae, Lykia	–	1	1
Delphi, Central Greece	1	4	5
Didyma, Ionia	–	1	1
Elis, Peloponnese	3	3	6
Ephesos, Ionia	11	7	18
Hermopolis, Egypt	2	–	2
Kibyra Caesareia, Karia	1	–	1
Kyzikos, Mysia	2	–	2

²⁷ Important information for these inscriptions, such as their text, their dating as well as secondary literature, is included in Mouratidis 2020, Appendix 2 and 3.

Lacedaemon, Peloponnese	3	2	5
Laodikeia, Phrygia	–	2	2
Miletos, Ionia	2	1	3
Myra, Lykia	–	1	1
Neapolis, Italy	2	-	2
Neocaesarea, Pontus	–	1	1
Nikomedia, Bithynia	2	1	3
Nikopolis, Epiros	1	–	1
Olympia, Peloponnese	–	2	2
Pergamon, Mysia	3	2	5
Pessinus, Galatia	–	1	1
Philadelphia, Lydia	2	1	3
Puteoli, Italy	1	–	1
Prusa, Bithynia	–	2	2
Rhodes, Aegean	2	–	2
Rodiapolis, Lykia	–	1	1
Sardis, Lydia	1	–	1
Smyrna, Ionia	3	4	7
Tanagra, Central Greece	–	1	1
Tarsos, Kilikia	–	3	3
Thebes, Central Greece	–	1	1
Thespies, Central Greece	–	1	1
Tlos, Lykia	–	3	3
Total	61	76	
Total in both categories			137

Regarding the chronological distribution of this evidence, with the exception of one inscription from Ephesos,²⁸ all inscriptions are dated in the Imperial Period, with the majority placed in the second century AD. Regarding the geographical distribution of this evidence, the 54 inscriptions examined for this paper were found primarily in the Greek-speaking East: specifically, the regions of the Peloponnese and Central Greece, the Aegean islands, the regions of Ionia, Lykia and Karia in Asia Minor, Alexandria of Egypt in the South, and Naples in the West.

It is important to be aware of the possibility that this picture is not entirely representative. The image we get from the available evidence, in reality, might have been different. Inscriptions that have not survived could substantially change the picture. However, it is not right to assume that the picture is skewed by the prevalence of inscriptions found in a few key cities, since the information about grants of citizenship does not necessarily come from the cities that granted

²⁸ That is the IK 14 1415. It is included in this table because it is the earliest testimony of an awarded citizenship, predating the second, IDidyma 201, by almost two centuries.

them. One can, for example, assume that the epigraphic habit of Ephesos, along with the vast amount of epigraphic evidence that has survived from this region, significantly distorts the image we have of this situation. That is not the case, however, because for twelve of the eighteen cases of grants of Ephesian citizenship or *boulē* membership, we know about them from inscriptions that were found elsewhere.²⁹ Even more impressive is the fact that all 22 Athenian citizenships are known from regions outside Athens.³⁰

At first sight, it appears that cities like Athens and Ephesos held some importance and probably that is why athletes were so eager to acquire citizenship there. In two inscriptions from Didyma and Miletos for a runner whose name has not survived, the athlete even goes as far as to mention specifically the acquisition of Athenian citizenship in his list of victories, information which is very uncommon in those kinds of inscriptions.³¹ The only other instance where the grant of a specific citizenship is singled out is when the emperor himself awarded an athlete Roman citizenship. Such is the case of the pankratiast Poplios Aelios Aristomachos, who was awarded Roman citizenship by Hadrian himself (τεμηθείς τε ἐπὶ τούτοις ὑπὸ θεοῦ Ἀδριανοῦ Ῥωμαίων πολειτείας).³²

The most convincing explanation regarding the more frequent representation of certain cities is given by van Nijf. He argues that in the context of the inscriptions that follow the same format as Antonios Lucios' above, prestigious cities were more often represented in such lists in the same way that important accomplishments were listed in more detail than wins in smaller festivals.³³ I find van Nijf's argumentation convincing, but I do not think it is sufficient. That is because based on this argument we would expect cities that were responsible for organising some of the most prominent competitions of that time, such as Corinth (Isthmia), Elis (Olympic Games) and Naples (Sebasta), to be more represented in the above table. We must also not forget that athletic victory did not necessarily mean the grant of citizenship to the victorious athlete, as van Nijf also rightly observes. Not all athletes who dedicated a crown to Ephesos, for example,

²⁹ Indicative examples are the SEG XL 1141, IAG 82, and SEG XXXVI 259.

³⁰ For example, seven we know from a victory list found in Thessalonike: IG X 2 1 38.

³¹ IDidyma 201, ll.18–20 (last quarter of the first century AD): καὶ τμηθέντα ὑπὸ τοῦ δήμου τοῦ Ἀθηναίων πολιτῆραι καὶ ἰκόνι καὶ θαλλοῦ στεφάνωι. This is the only case that I am aware of where an athlete includes his acquisition of a citizenship in his list of victories.

³² IMagn. 180, l.16–18 (AD 138). Similarly, the case of Marcos Aurelios Demonstratos Damas: Sardis VII 1 79, ll.C10–13 (AD 212–217): τεμηθείς ὑπὸ θεοῦ Μάρκου καὶ θεοῦ Κομμόδου πολειτεία.

³³ van Nijf 2012b, 184. Other scholars have given more vague interpretations, lacking extensive analyses. For example, Frija followed Robert, who argued that certain cities were more open to this phenomenon than others: Frija 2012, 116.

became Ephesians like Athenodoros.³⁴ In what follows, this paper aims to supplement van Nijf's original observations by discussing how the athletic synod and the *Panhellenion* have probably affected significantly the representation of cities in the table above, and offer some new observation into the way contemporaries portrayed their Hellenic identity and the way they understood their role as Greek citizen of the Roman Empire.

The Athletic Synod

The link between the synod of athletes and the kind of inscriptions similar to Antonios Lucios' has been discussed initially by Brunet, whose conclusions were also followed by later scholars such as van Nijf and Remijsen.³⁵ Brunet has argued that these inscriptions included information that required extensive documentation of the results of contemporary and past athletic competitions, and knowledge that was not easily accessible to the average athlete. For example, in the aforementioned inscription of Antonios Lucios, we read that he was the first and only person from Smyrna to ever win the Hadrianic Olympia in the boys' and men's category.³⁶ This and other similar statements, according to Brunet, undoubtedly required an extensive athletic record that could provide such information. We know that the athletic synod was in possession of such records and could provide the relevant information to its members.³⁷ Brunet even went as far as to suggest that some documents might have been drafted by the synod itself, which was also likely to have supervised the erection of those monuments, especially in cases where athletes could not be present at the time the monument was set up, either because they were no longer alive or because they needed to travel regularly to participate in festivals.³⁸ This is a plausible observation, although it is unlikely that we can ever know definitively whether it is true or how common this practice was.

³⁴ IK 14 1415.

³⁵ Brunet 1998, 29–60, 90–95. Also van Nijf 2012b, 198; Remijsen 2015, 220. The association of athletes of the Late Hellenistic and Imperial periods, also known as the *σύνδοξ ζυστική περιπολιστική τῶν περὶ τὸν Ἡρακλέα*, among other names, has been extensively studied in the past and thanks to this earlier scholarship we have today many insights into the founding, development and workings of this synod. The latest and most comprehensive study of the athletic synod is Fauconnier's. His study provided insights into the origins of the synod, its officials, its members, and its relationship with other cities and institutions during the Imperial period: Fauconnier 2018. For earlier scholarship, see Remijsen 2015, 230–251; Caldelli 1992; Pleket 1973; Forbes 1955.

³⁶ IK 24.1, ll.7–9.

³⁷ Brunet 1998, 29–60, 90–95. Cf. van Nijf 2012b; Fauconnier 2018, 228–230.

³⁸ Brunet 1998, 94–96.

The systematic study of the epigraphic evidence that testifies to the accumulation of citizenships by successful athletes can further enrich the argument about the link between this kind of evidence and the athletic synod. This observation is based on the study of the geographical distribution of this evidence and the distribution of the cities that offered citizenship or *boulē* membership to victorious athletes in the table above. Both the cities where these inscriptions were located and the cities that awarded citizenships, correspond to a large extent with the cities where we know the athletic synod was very active. The recent study of Fauconnier on the athletic and thymelic synods of the Late Hellenistic and Imperial periods has shown that the two synods had a strong presence in certain cities, and possibly also had permanently settled branches of this association.³⁹ The argument for the synods' strong presence is based primarily on a large number of inscriptions that were found in those cities, which give extensive information about the activity of some of its members.

Ephesos, for example, has provided extensive epigraphic material that underscores the synods' activity in the region. These documents testify to the activity of many synod officials, such as *xystarchs* and high priests of the *sympas xystos*.⁴⁰ A good example is Marcos Ulpios Domestikos, an accomplished athlete (as his title *paradoxos* suggests), who according to one inscription was a *xystarches*, high priest of the synod and curator of the imperial baths, and who oversaw the erection of the monument of an *agonothete* (the name has not survived).⁴¹ Ephesos was a city in which the synod had permanently settled officials, a situation that did not change even after the move of the synod's main headquarters to the baths of Trajan in Rome during the reign of Antoninus Pius.⁴² Similarly, we know that there was significant activity of the athletic synod and possibly also permanently-settled officials in cities like Athens, Naples, Smyrna, and Sparta according to Fauconnier, cities in which we find many of the inscriptions that include citizenships bestowed to athletes, and which according to the table above granted citizenships to many athletes.⁴³

³⁹ Fauconnier 2018, 122–166.

⁴⁰ References to the athletic synod are included in at least 10 of the 30 inscriptions of this kind. See Mouratidis 2020, Appendix 2, nos. 4, 6, 8, 9, 13, 14, 17, 24, 27, and 30. The true number of such references, however, is not possible to determine since many of these texts are severely fragmented.

⁴¹ IK 14 1155. For the extensive epigraphic material about the activity of the synod in the city of Ephesos, see Fauconnier 2018, 130–132.

⁴² Pleket 1973, esp. 209. See also Fauconnier 2018, 130–132.

⁴³ Fauconnier 2018, 122–166. It is possible to make similar observations for the inscriptions about artists. There is evidence to suggest that in Ephesos, Smyrna and Athens, for example, there is strong activity of the thymelic synod, and both cities, very probably, had officials settled

In cities for which we have evidence that the athletic synod was very active, the number of awarded citizenships rises significantly. Perhaps the most interesting observation in the above table is the overwhelming number of grants of Athenian and Ephesian citizenship, especially in comparison to the other cities. Almost 30 % of the total number of grants (40 in number, or a little more than one in every four cases) is shared among the cities of Ephesos and Athens. Conversely, regions that have not provided evidence for the athletic synod, such as Macedonia and Sicily, are not represented in the table above.

During the Imperial Period, the athletic synod reached its peak of political influence, as contemporary evidence suggests. Its headquarters in Rome offered valuable proximity to the highest administrative echelons of the empire and to the emperor himself.⁴⁴ Furthermore, its representatives throughout the empire seem to have had a strong political influence that superseded the main responsibilities of ensuring the smooth functioning of the athletic competitions in big festivals. Epigraphic evidence suggests that occasionally it was even possible to circumvent the decision-making mechanisms of a city and address the high Roman officials or the emperor directly: for example, when the *hieronikai* that represented an athletic association send a letter directly to Marc Antony asking for the acknowledgement of their privileges, as well as their further extension.⁴⁵ The proximity of the synod to the strongest – politically – institutions offered an excellent opportunity for athletes to push for privileges.⁴⁶ An indicative example is the honorific decree of the pankratiast Kallikrates from Aphrodisias.⁴⁷ In his inscription, we read that the athletic synod (ἱερᾶ ξυστικῆ περιπολιτικῆ εὐσεβεῖ σεβαστῆ συνόδῳ καὶ τῷ σύνπαντι ξυστῷ τῶν περὶ τὸν Ἡρακλέα) asked of the city of Aphrodisias to find suitable places in the city to erect the statue of the athlete and bestow on him the appropriate honours. We

there. For example: IK 24.1 598 from Smyrna and II 2 1350 from Athens. For a short discussion about the workings of the thymelic synod in Ephesos, see Fauconnier 2018, 130. More difficult to interpret is the large amount of evidence that comes from the city of Delphi, in which it is possible to indicate activity of the athletic synod, but not as easy for the thymelic: Fauconnier 2018, 128.

⁴⁴ Fauconnier 2018, 259–269.

⁴⁵ P.Lond. 137. Fauconnier has analysed the opportunities for cooperation between the synod and the city and demonstrates the ways this relationship could and was developed. However, he also revealed that the synod-*polis* relationship was not always smooth and that there were occasional tensions between them. See Fauconnier 2018, 270–297.

⁴⁶ van Nijf has discussed at length the link between the athletic and thymelic synods and the emperor. See van Nijf 2012a, 86, and van Nijf 2006.

⁴⁷ Roueché 1993, no. 89.

learn from the same inscription that the synod also asked the city of Ephesos to bestow similar honours.⁴⁸

This paper suggests that citizenships can be seen in the same context. It is plausible that like the privilege to erect a statue and an inscription in the city – as well as other honours that we read about in these documents (ἐπιγραφησομένων τῶν τιμῶν) – citizenship could be granted by the same mechanism too. Unfortunately, there is hardly any evidence about the process of granting of citizenship to victorious athletes.⁴⁹ Therefore, in the light of current evidence, it is not easy to test this hypothesis systematically. However, there is evidence that suggests that one could ask for and be granted citizenship. The forty-first oration of Dio Chrysostom to the Apameans testifies to this.

“[...] for wherever I have been, not only cities in general, but even, I may say, most of those which are of equal rank with yourselves, have presented me with citizenship, with membership in the Council, and with highest honours without my asking it.”⁵⁰

Dio reveals that he was given citizenship, without him asking for it, which suggests that some people might have pursued and eventually received such rewards.

Furthermore, there is evidence which suggests that athletes received citizenships not only as prizes for their athletic victories but through imperial favour. The most characteristic example of this is Marcos Aurelios Demonstratos Damas, who was granted not only Roman but also Alexandrian citizenship by the emperor, as his honorific inscription suggests (τιμηθεὶς ὑπὸ θεοῦ Μάρκου καὶ θεοῦ Κομμόδου πολιτεία μὲν Ἀλεξανδρέων).⁵¹ From the same inscription, we know that Damas asked the emperor for various honours, which it seems he received. More specifically, he asked for (αἰτησάμενος) the office of *xystarches* and of the high priest of the athletic synod to be passed on to his children.⁵² Based on such evidence, it is plausible that athletes could ask for and receive citizenships, either during or after their athletic careers have ended. In this regard, in cities where the synod

⁴⁸ Roueché 1993, no. 89, ll.23–33. A similar example is an honorific decree for Aelius Aurelios Menandros, written on a statue base. The athletic synod, wishing to honour Menandros, one of its distinguished members who at that time also had the office of *xystarches*, asked the city of Aphrodisias to find a suitable place for Menandros' statue and to offer him the appropriate honours. See Roueché 1993, nos. 91 and 92 (AD 138–169).

⁴⁹ Exceptions are the IK 14 1415, the IvO 54, and possibly the anonymous athlete in IDidyma 201.

⁵⁰ Dio Chrysostomus, Or. 41.2 (Loeb translation): οὐ γὰρ μόνον αἱ λοιπαὶ πόλεις, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν ἰσοτίμων ἡμῖν αἱ πλεῖστα σχεδόν, ὅπου γέγονα, καὶ πολιτείας καὶ βουλῆς καὶ τῶν πρώτων τιμῶν οὐδὲν δεομένῳ μετέδωκαν.

⁵¹ Sardis VII 1 79, ll.C.10–12.

⁵² Sardis VII 1 79, ll.A.18–22. For a detailed analysis of Damas' athletic career and his career in the athletic synod, see Strasser 2003.

was more powerful, or where there was a much closer collaboration between the synod and the city, the large number of granted citizenships and *boulē* membership should not surprise us.

It becomes clear, then, that this body of inscriptions, with its repeated reference to the accumulation of citizenships, is connected with the athletic synod not only in its geographical distribution – which maybe reflects the way in which these inscriptions required access to information from the synod’s records – but also agrees chronologically with the peak of the synod’s influence in the first three centuries of our common era. Further support for this claim can be the evidence for grants of citizenship to officials of the athletic synod, who seem to have been inactive as athletes or who possibly had retired from their athletic careers at the time of their honorific inscriptions. Being responsible for several important aspects of festival organisation, these officials were crucial to the smooth functioning of the festivals, and by extension, to the city. By acting as benefactors, they received the rewards that other benefactors enjoyed, including citizenship. A good example is the case of Marcos Aurelios Serenos, whose citizenships, Strasser argues, were a result of his activities as a secretary of the athletic synod,⁵³ and the case of Quintilius Karpophoros, a citizen of Ephesos and Elis, who became citizen and *bouleutēs* of Delphi during his term as a secretary of the athletic synod.⁵⁴

This city-synod collaboration can also be seen, and possibly better understood, against Lendon’s model of governance of the Roman Empire, as described in his book, “Empire of Honour”.⁵⁵ According to Lendon, honour was used repeatedly in Antiquity to mask relationships of power between two parties. The ability to honour was inherent with the ability to have the power to decide who deserved to be honoured. Furthermore, it imposed an obligation on the honoree, who was now indebted to reciprocate. An awarded honour that involved an invitation to join a citizen body initiated a relationship of exchange and ‘tied’ the athlete to the city.⁵⁶ From that point on, one party could be in the service of the other. In this context, we can see the interchange of the athletes with their cities. Evidence suggests that it was possible to ask for and receive honours like citizenship, as I have argued, and the synod could have been the go-between in this kind of exchange, as the inscriptions for Kallikrates and Menandros above suggest. On the other hand, evidence such as the aforementioned honorific inscription for the pankra-

⁵³ Strasser 2001, 144–146. Cf. SEG XXXIV 1022. Strasser also reached a similar conclusion for the athlete Agatheinos Athenaiou, see Strasser 2001, 144–146.

⁵⁴ FD III 1 209.

⁵⁵ Lendon 1997.

⁵⁶ Lendon 1997.

tiast Poplios Aelios Aristomachos from Magnesia on the Meander, who performed embassies on behalf of his city to Rome, suggests that athletes and the athletic synod did reciprocate those favours.⁵⁷

The Panhellenion

The term Panhellenic or Panhellenism is a modern concept used anachronistically by scholars in a variety of ways, which nevertheless do not differ from each other to a large extent.⁵⁸ It is primarily used to signify a community of Hellenes, unified either politically or culturally to coordinate their actions towards a shared end or to perform their customs collectively.

Politically speaking, since the beginning of Greek history there was never a unification of all or most of the Greeks in a single political entity, although there were many instances where a large number of Hellenic communities were brought together.⁵⁹ The relationship among them was either in terms of a military alliance, as in the case of the Persian invasion of Greece at the beginning of the fifth century BC, or a relationship of subjugation, as in the case of the Athenian hegemony or the subjugation of Greek cities to Phillip II and then his son Alexander. Perlman has argued that the concept of Panhellenism during the Classical and Hellenistic periods had a central role in the propaganda that aimed to promote the interest of a *polis* or an imperial policy. He reached this conclusion based on how the hegemonic powers of Athens, Sparta, and Macedonia used the rhetoric of the unification of the Greek *poleis* for a specific cause, whether that was a war against Persia or a tyrant.⁶⁰

Culturally, the most significant manifestation of Panhellenism was participation in the big ‘Panhellenic’ festivals. An example of such a festival is the Olympic Games, held every four years in ancient Olympia in the Peloponnese. Spectators from all over the Greek-speaking world were brought together to watch the greatest – Greek – athletes competing in the most prestigious athletic event of their time. The Olympic as well as other big festivals such as the Isthmian, the Nemean,

57 IMagn. 180.

58 Chaniotis 2011, 1; Perlman 1976, 1.

59 Although there were political unifications of Greek cities, they were restricted to small geographical areas. Examples are the league of the Achaeans and the Delphic Amphictyony, see Romeo 2002, 24–26.

60 Perlman 1976, 30.

and the Pythian, constituted a cultural framework within which all Hellenes would share, celebrate and affirm their Hellenic identity.⁶¹

The festival as a carrier of Hellenic identity never lost its significance: quite the opposite. During the Hellenistic and Roman periods, when the Greek population was mixed with several other cultures which were very often more multitudinous, festivals (and consequently the athletic competitions that were a central part of them) became all the more important. Numerous new festivals and contests were founded (and older ones grew bigger or were even re-founded), creating a large festival network.⁶² All those who belonged to that network (cities, performers, spectators, officials, and later kings and emperors) developed and established a normative framework in which geographical boundaries were transcended and cultural identity was reinforced, if not re-developed.

This network has been extensively studied in the ‘Connecting Contests’ project in the University of Groningen.⁶³ Onno van Nijf and Christina Williamson have illustrated how ‘social network analysis’ can help us better understand the way festivals served to connect Greek cities through ties of cult.⁶⁴ The festivals (especially the Panhellenic ones, but also their smaller equivalents), van Nijf and Williamson argue, “were a way for cities to create a space among and make connections with other Greek cities, each forming the central hub in an agonistic network”.⁶⁵ Greek cities exploited the possibilities that the ancient festival offered, not only to present themselves as parts of the Greek world, but also to highlight their prominent position in this community. This is illustrated powerfully in the ‘upgrade’ of the festival of Artemis Leukophryene, from local to Panhellenic festival during the third century BC, and the case of the local festival of Hekatesia in Stratonikeia to the large Hekatesia-Romaia festival, after the Mithridatic wars.⁶⁶

This cultural framework even provided an important common ground between the communities of this network and – imperial – authority.⁶⁷ Festivals became the vehicle through which Hellenistic kings and later the Romans claimed their membership of the Hellenic world by funding or even taking part in such

61 van Nijf 2010.

62 Robert 2010, 111.

63 More information in <http://www.connectedcontests.org/about/>, last accessed 01.04.2021.

64 van Nijf – Williamson 2016, 45, with several references to theoretical works on the network theory. Social Network Analysis (SNA) is the process of investigating social structures through the use of networks. It examines the spread of knowledge and innovation through contacts.

65 van Nijf 2012a, 71.

66 van Nijf – Williamson 2016, 46–50.

67 Lavan – Payne – Weisweiler 2016, 1–28.

competitions.⁶⁸ Recent studies have underscored the crucial role of such ‘normative frameworks’ that potentially crossed cultural boundaries and connected people and Greek cities (which although they had a common Hellenic origin were never really connected politically) and assisted in the consolidation of imperial power.⁶⁹ This worked by generating new forms of subjectivity: in the case of athletic festivals of the Imperial period, emperors became funders of big festivals, and often founders of new ones, and created associations that were directly or indirectly controlled by the emperor, for example, the athletic synod that I have discussed above.⁷⁰

It is not only through festivals that cities tried to secure their place in the Hellenic world, however. It was also through their association with successful athletes. By awarding citizenship to these international ‘celebrities’, cities managed to secure representation not only in Panhellenic centres such as Olympia or Delphi, but also in other cities that were considered at the heart of the Hellenic world. For that reason, this paper suggests that the formation of the *Panhellenion* in AD 132/133 might have played a significant role in the representation of some cities in the above table.

Founded by an initiative of either Hadrian himself or of independent Greek communities, this ‘league of Greeks’ included cities that could prove their direct descent from Ionians, Dorians or Aeolians.⁷¹ The *Panhellenion* is probably the first political entity, inherent with the concept of ‘Panhellenism’, that incorporated a large number of Greek cities. Being dependent upon and in the direct control of the Roman emperor, the *Panhellenion* became a strong tool of imperial propaganda. This is best reflected in one of the most important activities of the *Panhellenion*, which was the running of a large festival in honour of the Roman emperor, held in Athens.

Hadrian gave a prominent role to Athens as the centre of this ‘league’, and this might have affected its representation in the lists of citizenships. It is plausible that for athletes a link with a city that theoretically stood at the heart of the Hellenic world during that time might have been highly sought after and thus, proudly advertised. In this regard, it is probably no surprise that Athens is the city which awarded the most citizenships. Furthermore, grants of Athenian cit-

⁶⁸ Kainz 2016; Remijsen 2009. The Ptolemies’ links with the festival life of the Greek-speaking world have repeatedly been in the centre of scholarly attention.

⁶⁹ Lavan – Payne – Weisweiler 2016, 2.

⁷⁰ For example, the re-establishment of the Actian festival by Augustus, and the Capitoline by Domitian. For the link between the athletic synod and the emperor, see Fauconnier 2018, 259–270; van Nijf 2006.

⁷¹ Romeo 2002.

izenship to athletes are attested more and more often after the age of Hadrian, which further supports this hypothesis. 20 of the 22 known awarded Athenian citizenships to athletes are dated after the formation of the *Panhellenion*.⁷² In the light of current evidence, however, even though a causal relationship between the foundation of the *Panhellenion* and the rise of grants of Athenian citizenship seems very likely, it is impossible to prove decisively.

Athletes as *Hellenes*: Imagining the Hellenic Space

The link between athletics and Hellenic identity has repeatedly been at the centre of scholarly attention.⁷³ This scholarship, as I have briefly shown in the previous section, focused primarily on the role of the ancient festival as a place where Greek cities could celebrate together their common religious and cultural identity. Jason König, for example, has argued that victory lists that were set up in cities by the *agonothetai* are indicative of this practice. By recording a geographically diverse set of victors from cities that are spread all over the Greek-speaking east, these documents helped transform the city into ‘a microcosm of the Panhellenic gatherings of the *periodos*’.⁷⁴

It is not only cities that actively tried to be part of a Hellenic community but also individual athletes. Nevertheless, we still lack a systematic study that examines how athletic Panhellenism is demonstrated and what it is prompted by. In other words, the rhetoric of athletic inscriptions regarding Hellenic identity still remains largely unexplored. A notable exception is König, who has argued that the extensive lists of victories that are found in honorific inscriptions for athletes, as in the example of Antonios Lucios at the beginning of this paper, created a similar effect with victory lists by juxtaposing the geographical range of the athlete’s victories with his home city: “That technique paints the athlete as a Panhellenic figure, a man whose victory extends far beyond the edges of the *stadion* to encompass territorial domination”⁷⁵.

72 The other two cases are the IDidyma 201 and the FD III 1 534. The 20 other inscriptions date from AD 137 (TAM V 2 1368) to 252/253 (IG X 2 1 38). It is important to remember, however, that the vast majority of inscriptions that testify to multiple citizenships have the second century as their *terminus post quem*, see Mouratidis 2020, 105–108.

73 van Nijf 2010; Remijsen 2009; Newby 2005. And even from a Roman perspective, see Mann 2014.

74 König 2005, 166–167.

75 König 2005, 168.

This paper aims to move that discussion forward by suggesting that the accumulation of citizenship contributes to Panhellenic self-representation in a similar way. The portrayal of citizenships by an array of ethnic names in the nominative along with the name of the honoree (ensuring that the honour of the victory was equally shared among the cities) portrayed the athlete as a larger-than-city figure and an essential part of that Hellenic community; a true ‘cosmopolites’ in the sense that athletes crossed the political boundaries of the *polis* and were united in a wider cultural framework.⁷⁶ The athlete is not simply a member of this community by virtue of his victories, but is also its representative in the Roman Empire.

This observation might also help us understand why it can be powerful to intentionally ‘miss out’ some names of cities in the lists of citizenships, and replace them with the phrase ‘and citizen of other cities’.⁷⁷ This rhetoric replicates the way in which Panhellenic geography generally was understood – by citing only a few important cities, whose structures and traditions are then paralleled repeatedly in smaller and less famous cities – thus, making it easier to imagine the athlete as part of a Panhellenic community.⁷⁸ This is, perhaps, best exemplified in an honorific inscription for an athletics trainer named Poplios Flavios Klaudianos. The following inscription was set up at the city of Delphi sometime during the Imperial period.

“Good fortune. P. Fl. Klaudianon Ephesian and Elian and citizen and *bouleutēs* of the entire Hellas, athletic trainer [.....] (the city of) Delphi made Delphian citizen and *bouleutēs*. With a decree by the council.”⁷⁹

The Delphians issued a decree of the council to bestow Klaudianos Delphian citizenship and to make him a member of their *boulē*. Along with this exceptional honour, however, the document also refers to the honouree’s Ephesian and Elian citizenship, and even goes as far as to characterize him as “citizen and *bouleutēs*

76 Lavan – Payne – Weisweiler 2016, 10. The editors of “Cosmopolitanism and Empire”, defined cosmopolitanism as “theoretical universalism in practice”: People or entire communities, without needing to forget or erase their different unique identities, by focusing on common factors – in this case on the participation in Panhellenic festivals – were incorporated in a wider cultural framework.

77 As in the case of Antonios Lucios at the beginning of this paper.

78 Incidentally, this habit of representation also replicates exactly the way in which festivals are listed in these inscriptions, with the key festivals listed and the less important ones not.

79 SEG XXXVII 396 = FD III 1 200: ἀγαθὴ τύχη. / Π. Φλά. Κλαυδιανὸν / Ἐφέσιον • καὶ • Ἑλλ[αί]ον / καὶ τῆς Ἑλλάδο[ς] ἀπάσης // πολεῖτ[η]ν κα[ὶ] β[ου]λευτῆν, / παιδοτρ[ίβη]ν[ν]], / Δελ[φοὶ] Δελφὸν πολεῖτην / καὶ [βουλευτῆν ἐποίησαν]. // ψ(ηφίσματι) β(ουλή[ς]).

of the entire Hellas". This characterisation is very peculiar, with no parallels to the epigraphic record.⁸⁰ It is improbable that Klaudianos was citizen and *bouleutēs* of every single Greek city, and it is important to note that this designation probably did not have any major political significance since legally there was no Hellas one could be a citizen of. Nevertheless, the honoree is still envisaged as a part of a wider Panhellenic community by being envisaged as its citizen.

Another category of people that shared a similar ideology and that can work as a parallel case to athletes is sophists. Like athletes, sophists too shared the concept of a – vaguely defined – Hellenic community, and they also accumulated citizenships. Dio Chrysostom, for example, in his writings, repeatedly refers to the number of citizenships and *boulē* memberships that he had accumulated over the years.⁸¹ Similarly, in an inscription from the city of Delphi, we read that the sophist (σοφιστήν) Aurelios (the *praenomen* has not survived) was awarded Delphian citizenship and a place in the *boulē* (πολείτην καὶ βουλευτὴν ἐποίησαν).⁸²

Sophistic literary works of the Imperial period are characterised by their many references to a Panhellenic audience and sophists are often envisaged delivering orations at Panhellenic festivals. As Schmitz has demonstrated, sophists through their *paideia* often highlighted their Hellenic identity and portrayed themselves as open channels of the glorious Classical past.⁸³ In other words, like athletes, sophists also often highlighted their agonistic and Panhellenic connotations, following a tradition that started during the Archaic or Classical period. Philostratus' "Lives of the Sophists" is particularly characteristic of this phenomenon, as König has recently demonstrated. Philostratus' sophists are often presented as addressing Greek audiences, both in Panhellenic and other smaller festivals.⁸⁴

This image of sophists being presented in a Hellenic context is not limited to literary works of that period but also extends to the relevant epigraphic evidence. There are numerous references to a Panhellenic community in the inscriptions for

80 The only exception to this rule seems to be an imperial-period honorific inscription for G. I. Ioulianos, whose tragedies gave him victory in some of the most prestigious festivals of that time. In this inscription, however, we do not read explicitly that Ioulianos was a citizen of all Hellas, like Klaudianos, but that he acted as a citizen (πολιτευθέντα) in Hellas, Macedonia, Thessaly, and Crete: πολει/τευθέντα δὲ ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ Ἑλλάδι καὶ Μακε/δονία καὶ Θεσσαλία καὶ Κρητῶν, IG V 1 662, ll. 6–8. For the term πολειτευθέντα, see Kokkinia 2012.

81 For example, see oration no. 41, To the Apameans. For an extensive discussion of Dio Chrysostom and the phenomenon of multiple citizenship, see Jones 2012. A similar example is Arrian, see Ştefan 2017, 122.

82 Puech 2002, no. 188. Cf. nos. 55 and 145 of the same work.

83 Schmitz 1997.

84 König 2014, 260–261.

orators and sophists that Bernadette Puech has brought together.⁸⁵ For example, in the honorific inscription for Tiberius Claudius Celsus Orestianus and his wife Claudia Lycia, we read that the two honorees were honoured by the ‘Hellenes of Asia’ (οἱ ἐπὶ τῆς Ἀσίας Ἑλληνας ἐτίμησαν) for having served as high priests of Asia in the city of Pergamon.⁸⁶ In the funerary epigram for the sophist Proclus, we read that the deceased was a sophist renowned in all ‘Hellas’ (σοφιστὴν Ἑλλάδι πάσῃ).⁸⁷

However, it is important to be aware of the difficulty of interpreting the term *Hellas* or Hellenic in the evidence for sophists. That is because it is not always clear whether that term was geographical, cultural or had been given any other meaning. Many scholars, for example, have argued that the term *Hellenes* is often used to describe the students and admirers of sophists.⁸⁸ This interpretation also applies to inscriptions. We read in an honorific inscription for the sophist Poplios Aelius Aristeides Theodoros that he was honoured for his virtue and his orations or oratory skills by the cities of Alexandria, Hermoupolis and Antinoes as well as the *Hellenes*.⁸⁹

“The city of Alexandria and the Great Hermoupolis and the council of Antinoeia New Hellenes, and those who are in the Delta of Egypt, and those *Hellenes* who inhabit the Thebaic *nomos*, honoured P. Aelius Aristeides Theodoros for his excellence and his eloquence.”

As Puech rightly comments, the terms Ἑλλήνων and Ἑλληνας in this inscription are likely used to indicate the sophistic disciples or audiences.⁹⁰ Conversely, in the evidence for athletes, the terms ‘Hellas’ and ‘Hellenes’ are very unlikely to mean the disciples or the admirers of sophists. They rather mean the whole community of Hellenes that participated either as performers or as spectators in the numerous festivals.

It seems that athletes shared in their honorific inscriptions the idea of a Panhellenic community that is so strong in literary works of the Imperial period. However, what is unique about athletes and other performers is that this larger-than-city Panhellenic community is not only represented by the term *Hellas*

⁸⁵ Puech 2002.

⁸⁶ Puech 2002, no. 218.

⁸⁷ Puech 2002, no. 223. Cf. nos. 95 and 123 in the same work.

⁸⁸ König 2014, 263.

⁸⁹ Puech 2002, no. 44: ἡ πόλις ἡ τῶν Ἀλεξανδρέων καὶ Ἐρμούπολις ἡ μεγάλη καὶ ἡ βουλή ἡ Ἀντινοέων Νέων Ἑλλήνων καὶ οἱ ἐν τῷ Δέλτα τῆς Αἰγύπτου καὶ οἱ τὸν Θηβαϊκὸν νόμον οἰκοῦντες Ἑλληνας ἐτίμησαν Πόπλιον Αἴλιον Ἀριστείδην Θεόδωρον ἐπὶ ἀνδραγαθία καὶ λόγοις.

⁹⁰ Puech 2002, 143.

or *Hellenes*,⁹¹ but also by the portrayal of the ethnics of citizenships one after the other, as in the format of the inscription for Antonios Lucios. The latter, by being presented as ‘Smyranean and Athenian and Ephesian and Pergamene and Kyzikean and Sardean and Milesian and Lacedaemonian, and citizen and *bouleutēs* of other cities’, transcended his original Smyranean citizenship and became citizen of an almost Panhellenic network.

Conversely, even though sophists accumulated citizenships, they seem to have never portrayed them in as large numbers as athletes. For example, in the epigraphic evidence for sophists and orators that Puech has brought together, with two exceptions, there is no evidence for a person having more than two citizenships at the same time.⁹² The first exception is a first-century honorific decree for Isocrates, son of Abaskandos. In this inscription we read that the city of Delphi granted Delphian citizenship and membership to the city’s council to Isocrates, who was already a citizen of Athens and Acharnes.⁹³ The second exception is an inscription for a Ptolemaios from Gaza, who is portrayed as a citizen of Gaza (Γαζαῖον) and as ‘citizen of other cities’ (καὶ ἄλλων πόλεων πολίτην), which indicates that he was likely a citizen in at least two other cities.⁹⁴ Another difference from athletes is that sophists and orators rarely used for their representation the ‘CV-style’ format of inscription. The only exception in Puech’s corpus is the rhetor Aurelios Athenaios, winner of many sacred rhetoric contests.⁹⁵ In his inscription from Ephesos, we read that Athenaios was a citizen of Tyana and Ephesos, followed by a detailed list of victories. In a similar way, other hired professionals, when they appeared in an agonistic context, chose a similar style of representation of their citizenships.⁹⁶ The way to portray oneself as being a larger-than-city figure and part of a larger (Panhellenic) network of cities, was through the juxtaposition of the ethnics of cities.

Another observation that further reinforces the argument that athletes tried to be identified as members of a community of Hellenes is the fact that, although most of the athletes – if not all – that received multiple citizenships were also Roman citizens, their Roman citizenship is omitted. In the aforementioned case of Damas, for example, although we know that he was a Roman citizen from his Roman name and from the evidence that testifies that the emperor himself

⁹¹ For example, the references to Hellas in the epigram for Ariston, see IvO 225 (AD 49).

⁹² For example, Puech 2002, nos. 73, 236, and 245.

⁹³ Puech 2002, no. 145.

⁹⁴ Puech 2002, no. 229.

⁹⁵ Puech 2002, no. 52.

⁹⁶ An indicative example is the funerary inscription for a first-class gladiator (σομμαρούδης), a citizen of nine cities, found in Ankara. See IGR III 215 (AD 117–138).

awarded him Roman citizenship,⁹⁷ that information is repeatedly omitted from these lists. That is true even for an honorific inscription of his that was erected in the city of Rome.⁹⁸ Similarly, the honorific inscription for Titus Flavius Artemidoros, a citizen of Adana and Antioch in Daphne, that stood in the city of Naples has no reference to his Roman citizenship whatsoever. Based on his name, we know that Artemidoros was a Roman citizen.⁹⁹ The same artful ‘omission of almost all things Roman’ is also attested in some literary works of sophists.¹⁰⁰ This is another indication that athletes and sophists shared the same ideas about a community of Hellenes, although they expressed them differently in their self-representation.

Nevertheless, the athletes’ Roman names attest to their allegiance to the Empire. The juxtaposition of Roman names with a number of Greek cities in this evidence can be used by modern scholars as a way of understanding how Greeks and Romans interacted and understood themselves both as Hellenes and as citizens of the Empire. In this way, athletic inscriptions further contribute to the wider discussion about the interactions between Romans and Greeks. The earlier scholarship has focused primarily on literary works of the Graeco-Roman elite and tried to understand whether they testify to a harmonious co-existence or to a resistance in the strong influences of one culture to the other.¹⁰¹ The answer, of course, is much more nuanced as many have shown. For example, König using the “Lives of the Sophists” as a case study has demonstrated that rather than endorsing one of the two theses above, sometimes it is much more fruitful to see the Greek literary works of the first three centuries AD as an attempt of ancient authors to explore their sociopolitical position within two seemingly different contexts, the Hellenic and the Roman, and negotiate their identity.

Athletic inscriptions can be interpreted along the same lines and give us valuable insights into the experience of “being Greek under Rome”¹⁰². Inscriptions, as more widespread and widely read texts than literature, in a way supplement the philosophical and literary works that were probably circulated only among small elite circles. They testify that the problematisation of what the Hellenic identity is, who is entitled to it and how it exists in relation to the Roman Empire, was

97 Sardis VII 1 79, ll.C.10–12.

98 IGUR I 243.

99 IAG 67 (AD 90).

100 König 2014, 259.

101 For such a discussion as well as references to secondary literature on the subject, see König 2014, 246.

102 To borrow the phrase from the title of Goldhill 2001.

not only confined to small elite sophistic circles but was also shared by another, more populous group of people. Athletes were in the front-line of contemporary debates about Hellenicity.

Conclusions

The main contribution of this paper is to demonstrate how the portrayal of accumulated citizenships by athletes contributes to Panhellenic self-representation, and also argue that the athletic synod and the formation of *Panhellenion* were important factors in the development of these conventions of athletic representation. This study builds on the work others have done on the link between athletic practice and Hellenic identity, by showing another way that this association with Hellenic culture was communicated and negotiated in the public discourse: by presenting oneself as a citizen of many Greek cities or as a citizen of *Hellas*, exemplified in the inscription Poplios Flavios Klaudianos from the city of Delphi. Furthermore, by comparing the way the Hellenic identity is negotiated in athletic inscriptions with inscriptions for other non-athletes, this study opens up new avenues for further research based on the comparison of the way the Hellenicity is portrayed across different inscriptions, literature, and art. Further research on this topic might help us not only to reveal more ways that Hellenicity was projected, but also better understand how all these different textual and visual images helped shape views about what *Hellas* was and who *Hellenes* were.

Athletes, however, were much more than simple carriers of Hellenic identity. They represented an important channel for cultural interaction between Greeks and Romans. By being portrayed as international figures, and with the help of the athletic synod – which scholarship has shown was an important channel of communication between cities, athletes, and imperial authorities – athletes straddled the cultural boundaries between Greek and Roman culture. Athletic inscriptions attest to this more clearly than other evidence: athletes' multiple (Greek) citizenships were sometimes juxtaposed with their Roman citizenship, which was referred to indirectly by their *nomen gentilicium*. At the same time, their role in the athletic synod also often featured prominently in their inscriptions. This evidence illustrates powerfully how people or entire communities by focusing on common factors (e.g. Panhellenic festivals), were incorporated into a wider cultural framework, without needing to forget or erase their different unique identities – for athletes that would be their special link with their city of origin, which appears to be much stronger in other kinds of inscriptions that do not include numbers

of accumulated citizenships.¹⁰³ This cultural framework provided an important common ground between the communities of this network and imperial authority. Athletes seem to have been real Hellenes, but also true cosmopolites.

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103 This is one of the main arguments in Mouratidis 2020. Cf. the honorific decree for Damon at the beginning of this paper.

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