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# Benefactors in the Roman East: 'Spiritual Euergetism'?

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## Abstract

This article analyses a novel aspect of euergetism or civil munificence in the Greek cities of the Roman Empire. A spiritual component is observed in this relations between the elite and the rest of the demos; indeed, since charitable actions are appreciated and reciprocated with representations and honours similar, sometimes, to those paid to the gods highlighting that they are close, they attend to their prayers and resolve their hardships. This perspective is structured around three elements: the non-elite citizen needs the physical presence of someone who cares about them; the euergetes is a benefactor, especially in terms of the material goods that he distributes among the community and, above all, those that enable what is considered the life of a true Greco-Roman citizen; the power of the elite is legitimized through symbolism and its representation. The phenomenon, which had been defined in the Hellenistic era, gained momentum and found its true expression during the Roman Empire, peaking in the second century A.D.

## Keywords

euergetism; civic munificence; benefactor; god; donation; honours; inscriptions

## Introduction

The phenomenon of euergetism is well known among researchers of Classical Antiquity. The term was coined one hundred years ago by A. Boulanger and later popularized by H. I. Marrou.<sup>1</sup> Studies on this topic number in the hundreds, with some magnificent overviews and others dedicated to more specific issues. However, despite the abundance of studies and excellent research, one key aspect has received little attention; namely, the role that euergetism played in people's spirituality, since there are similarities and concomitances in the ways in which public benefactors are honoured and represented and those in which tribute is paid to the gods. Herein lies the originality of this research: it is a new approach and addresses the novel concept of "spiritual euergetism".

This novel concept is expressed through three elements:

1. The non-elite citizens need the physical presence of those who care for him and attend to their pleas.

2. The *euergetes* is a benefactor (just like the gods), especially in terms of the material goods distributed to the community as a whole,<sup>2</sup> even if the goods may ultimately be enjoyed individually or by a specific group. These goods may alleviate hardships<sup>3</sup> ('utilitarian' benefits achieved through the distribution of food, various gifts, money, and so on), or make it possible to lead what is considered to be the life of a true Greco-Roman citizen<sup>4</sup> (foundations that provide oil for bath buildings and ensure their maintenance, books for libraries, public competitions, fairs, festivals, public works).<sup>5</sup>

3. The legitimization of the exercise of power by the elite has a symbolism and requires its representation.

Furthermore, the phenomenon needs to be approached from the underexplored perspective of the beneficiaries of euergetism. The motivations of the benefactors have been extensively analysed, as have the implications of their munificence, but fewer studies have addressed the perceptions and valuations of the beneficiaries.<sup>6</sup>

1 Boulanger (1923: p. 25); Marrou (1948: p. 405).

2 Zuiderhoek (2020: p. 222).

3 Jones (1940: p. 237); Hands (1968: p. 27); Garnsey (1988: pp. 31–33).

4 Domingo (2020: p. 70).

5 Modrzejewski (1963: pp. 82–92); Schmitt-Pantel (1990: p. 177).

6 Colpaert (2014: pp. 186–188, 197–198); Blank (2014: pp. 393–399); Domingo (2016: p. 2).

To cover all these aspects, this study will make special mention of the Greek cities of the Roman Empire in the 2nd century A.D., as this is considered the essential period of euergetism,<sup>7</sup> starting from the ithyphallic hymn to Demetrius Poliorcetes, since the idea has remained practically unchanged over time.<sup>8</sup>

## 1. Importance of the physical presence of benefactors

One of the fundamental spiritual elements of the ancient world, is the existence of the gods and the effect of their actions on people; hence the importance of ensuring that the gods favour them, either in general or for some specific case. Indeed, securing their favour is the main purpose of a large part of the sacrifices offered to the gods. However, there is obviously no tangible proof of the existence of the gods, since they do not appear or attend to the requests of mortals (Ath. 6.253 D–F). This creates a problematic issue surrounding the divine absence and people's daily lives. It is here that we find the term *epiphanes* ("manifest"), since its superlative, *epiphanestatos*, emphasizes the physical presence, which is understood as an element of divine power.<sup>9</sup>

A clear example is the ithyphallic hymn to Demetrius Poliorcetes,<sup>10</sup> which shows that the Athenians considered him more a god than a king, even before he became a monarch.<sup>11</sup> It is interesting to note that the hymns dedicated to deified abstractions or political figures are characteristic of the period,<sup>12</sup> reflecting the custom of honouring Hellenistic monarchs.<sup>13</sup>

The case of the hymn dedicated to Demetrius is very interesting and should be treated with some care as there are several aspects worth highlighting. On the one hand, it is a lyrical composition of a religious nature that announces the cult of the sovereign of the Hellenistic period.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, the anonymous poem has been transmitted to us by Athenaeus (6.253 D–F); it reflects the comments made by Demochares, nephew of the orator Demosthenes<sup>15</sup> (Ath. 6.253 C–D), criticizing the fact that Demetrius was received with incense, crowns, processional choirs,

7 Domingo and Zuiderhoek (2020: pp. 1, 5, 7); Zuiderhoek (2020: p. 230).

8 Domingo (2016: p. 11); Zuiderhoek (2020: p. 222).

9 Chaniotis (2003: p. 431); Versnel (2011: p. 290); Parker (2011: pp. 10–11).

10 Pordomingo (1984: pp. 727–742); Chaniotis (2011: pp. 174–176); Versnel (2011: p. 449).

11 Pordomingo (1984: p. 736); Sartre (1991: p. 124, n. 429).

12 Woolf (2012: p. 254).

13 Mitford (1971: no. 104); Lebeck (1973: pp. 101–113); Pordomingo (1984a: pp. 384, 388).

14 Ehrenberg (1973: p. 182); Gómez (2001: p. 308).

15 Pordomingo (1984: p. 730).

dances and songs, and the crowd shouted that he was the only true god, while the other gods were asleep or far away or did not exist, that he possessed a universal philanthropy towards all (the fundamental quality of a benefactor) and that the people addressed supplicants and prayers to him.<sup>16</sup> The rhetorician's recreation of this episode is thus taking place at the end of the peak period of euergetism. It may be a pragmatic, intelligent and opportunistic response, recognizing that kings acted as saviours on certain occasions.<sup>17</sup>

These two fragments of Athenaeus (6.253 D–F), especially the poem, show us people's need for the physical presence of god:

O son of the most mighty god Poseidon and of Aphrodite, hail! For other gods are either far away, or have not ears, or are not, or heed us not at all; but thee we can see in very presence, not in wood and not in stone, but in truth. And so we pray to thee. First bring peace, thou very dear! For thou hast the power.<sup>18</sup>

In fact, the poem uses the traditional elements of the Greek hymn (epiphany, invocation, petition) to express the general theme of the cult of the man-god,<sup>19</sup> of the divinization of a mortal. This is not a criticism of the gods, since people continue to believe in them, but of those who do not attend to mortals, creating the need for a living, present god. Therefore, along with the term *euergetes*, the term *epiphanes* appears most frequently in the cult of sovereigns, clearly expressing the evident benefits that people yearn to receive.<sup>20</sup>

It is the benefactors themselves who, within the context of the active religious life of the time<sup>21</sup> and by dedicating a substantial share of their donations to constructions, games and religious festivals,<sup>22</sup> promote the existence of divinity, who is not present and is longed for. This is where the *euergetai* take advantage of the power to replace the gods in some of their functions and facets, such as providing shelter and aid to non-elite citizens, satisfying some of their needs.

16 Jacoby, *F.Gr.H.* 75 F2, in Pordomingo Pardo (1984: p. 730, n. 9).

17 Gómez (2001: p. 308).

18 Translation: Gulick (1937: p. 313).

19 Woolf (2012: p. 256); Cerfaux and Tondriau (1957: pp. 183–191).

20 Pordomingo (1984: p. 740).

21 Lane (1986: pp. 91–97); Rogers (1991: pp. 74–75).

22 Burkert (1987: pp. 25–44); Van Nijf (1997: pp. 131–137); Van Nijf (2020: pp. 244, 246, 248).

## 2. The *euergetes* as material benefactor

The *euergetes* is a material benefactor, since euergetism involves a specific donation of goods, food delivery, money or gifts, the construction of a public works, the creation of a foundation that ensures the permanence of an institution, or a bequest.<sup>23</sup> It is, therefore, a practice whereby an individual's wealth contributes to the benefit of the community.

Although in some cases (libraries, theatres, temples, schools), the ultimate benefit feeds the spirit (knowledge, aesthetic enjoyment, the religious act), the practice is more related to material goods, which are the most keenly appreciated by the beneficiaries.

At a time when the majority of the population lived in scarcity, the distribution of material goods, in the form of donations, meant relief from daily hardships.<sup>24</sup> In this context, modest donations are important, particularly deliveries of food, public banquets,<sup>25</sup> and free oil in the bath buildings. Although basic daily needs are not addressed, nor is there any improvement in the standard of living of poor citizens (with those least in need also benefitting from the donations) the subjects perceive that help has been provided. While it is true that poverty is not eradicated,<sup>26</sup> this is not the aim; rather, it is about perception, the beneficiaries' feeling of relief, even only momentary.

However, euergetism did little to raise standard of living, although the non-elite perceived certain improvements in their situation due to the received tangible goods: "the gifts made civic life somewhat more comfortable in material terms".<sup>27</sup> Therefore, the non-elite citizen believes that there is someone present in the world who cares about his well-being and wants him to be able to live what is considered a life worthy of a citizen. Even if it is only a little, the elite does try to provide what is necessary for an adequate life: they are present and listen to the requests of rest of the demos, as we will discuss in more detail later.

This is also related to the existence of a kind of reciprocity between the masses and the elite, in the sense that the former accept economic and political inequalities in exchange for the powerful providing them with everything they consider necessary to be able to live as true Greco-Roman citizens (gymnasia, baths,

23 Schmitt-Pantel (1990: p. 177); Ventroux (2017: p. 343).

24 Schmitt-Pantel (1990: p. 179).

25 Zuiderhoek (2009: pp. 23–24, 32–36, 81).

26 Gordon (1990: pp. 217–219).

27 Zuiderhoek (2009: p. 149).

theatres, temples, games, festivals, distributions of food, money or various gifts), thereby maintaining social cohesion and preventing civic conflicts.<sup>28</sup>

What we see is a clear convergence of interests and aspirations. Thus, on the one hand, citizens with fewer resources have their needs fulfilled (the material goods provided by "the divinity") and they are happy that these benefactors listen to them and take care of them. On the other hand, the benefactors, who belong to the political and social elite, manage to create and maintain social harmony in a hierarchical system, in which differences in wealth between some strata and others are growing increasingly wide.<sup>29</sup> It is not a disinterested action.<sup>30</sup> It can thus be seen that euergetism arises out of social inequality, so its objective cannot be to end said inequality, but rather to establish an oligarchical political system.<sup>31</sup>

In this sense, the institutionalization of the *euergetai* as a different kind of citizen (the opposite of *homonoia*), specifically, as members of an elite, defies the "theoretical" equality of the polis.<sup>32</sup> This reinforces the notion that those who wield power are different, endowed with exceptional qualities.

This hierarchy is staged in various ways, notably through the processions held at the festivals paid for by the *euergetes*. In these processions, the arrangement of the different groups that made up the citizen body confirms the importance of some members over others.<sup>33</sup> In the theatre, benefactors enjoyed front-row seats, as evidenced by numerous honorary decrees.<sup>34</sup> This privileged seating demonstrated their relative position in the civic hierarchy.<sup>35</sup>

The aforementioned convergence of interests and aspirations reveal that euergetism is essential to prevent conflicts and ensure a process of exchange:<sup>36</sup> the elite's members, once their private luxuries have been satisfied and their own economic security is established, distribute what they receive among the community. In exchange, they want honours,<sup>37</sup> prestige<sup>38</sup> and the legitimization of their social and

28 Zuiderhoek (2009: pp. 70, 74); Van Nijf (2013: p. 313; 2020: p. 244); Zuiderhoek (2020: pp. 226, 230); Domingo and Zuiderhoek (2020: pp. 331, 335).

29 Zuiderhoek (2008: pp. 418, 427, 429, 444); Zuiderhoek (2020: p. 222); Van Nijf (2020: p. 261).

30 Schmitt-Pantel (1990: p. 185); Domingo (2016: pp. 27, 71–72).

31 Zuiderhoek (2009: p. 94); Domingo (2020: p. 93).

32 Domingo and Zuiderhoek (2020: pp. 331–332).

33 Wörrle (1988: pp. 10–12); Rogers (1991: pp. 83–85); Van Nijf (1997: p. 193).

34 Van Nijf (1997: pp. 224–234).

35 Van Nijf (2013: p. 328).

36 Domingo (2020: p. 70); Zuiderhoek (2009: pp. 226, 230); Van Nijf (2020: p. 249).

37 Domingo (2016: pp. 3, 219).

38 Zuiderhoek (2009: p. 5).

political supremacy.<sup>39</sup> All this can only be granted by the non-elite, which can refuse to do so (and, in fact, do on occasion) meaning there is always room for negotiation between what the benefactor wants to give and what rest of the demos is requesting.<sup>40</sup> In some cases, the opinions of the two groups differ as to what types of munificence are the most appropriate for covering citizens' needs and respecting their rights.<sup>41</sup> Underlying this question is the idea that the non-elite had, through the granting of honours or their refusal to grant them, a weapon to control the elite.<sup>42</sup> And here the question arises whether the requests of non-elite citizens were heard. In any case, the honours paid to the benefactors are also the result of the underlying idea that the polis should be improved through euergetism and that there should be certain rules for organizing these demonstrations of beneficence. All this would constitute a true *euergetic system*.<sup>43</sup>

At any rate, the beneficiary of the specific good sees how his daily situation improves, which is precisely what is usually asked of the gods: that they provide what is required to live. Indeed, this is the purpose of most prayers offered up to the divinity, along with those asking for a return to health or continuing good health.<sup>44</sup>

The reality is that the benefactor is the one to provide the goods needed to live. It is the *euergetes* that puts into practice the favourable resolution of the prayers. It is he who listens to requests and responds positively. He is there together with the demos petitioning him, granting them benefits.

Although we are considering a spiritual dimension of euergetism, we must take into account that the benefactor delivers material, tangible goods, not spiritual ones. He makes no promises about the future or the afterlife (like the mystery religions) and he does not require sacrifices that have no visible recompense. Rather, he fulfils (at least partially) basic needs. But, the *euergetes* does require recognition and gratitude (in fact, the recipient of a gift incurs a debt to the giver),<sup>45</sup> and these honours could underscore the superiority of the benefactor and increase the distance between the benefactor and the non-elite citizens,<sup>46</sup> since the one who holds power needs to see that others recognize that distinctive glow.<sup>47</sup>

39 Farnell (1921: pp. 37–41); Delorme (1960: pp. 337–353); Gauthier (1985: pp. 60–61); Hughes (1999: pp. 167–175); Jones (2001: pp. 141–149); Zuiderhoek (2009: p. 150); Zuiderhoek (2020: p. 234).

40 Rogers (1991: pp. 24–25); Rogers (1991a: p. 93); Zuiderhoek (2008: pp. 419, 420, 424, 445); Domingo (2016: p. 18); Van Nijf (2020: p. 249).

41 Zuiderhoek (2009: p. 108).

42 Van Nijf (2020: p. 261).

43 Domingo (2016: p. 223).

44 López-Pulido (2021: pp. 73, 81).

45 Godelier (1999: p. 12); Zuiderhoek (2009: p. 7); Domingo (2016: pp. 37–38).

46 Domingo (2020: p. 92).

47 Sartre (1991: p. 121); Ventrux (2017: pp. 359–360); Zuiderhoek (2009: pp. 5, 7, 21).



### 3. Power, Symbolism and Representation

Linking to the end of the previous chapter, it should be noted that, although not all the *euergetai* are rich and not all of them are politically powerful, most of them are both. The discussion here focuses on the powerful *euergetai*: members of illustrious families, with Greek roots in most cases or some descendants of Romans who had settled in the Hellenic territory a few generations earlier. Their social pre-eminence is usually accompanied by political power: they are magistrates, members of city assemblies, priests of temples and sanctuaries, and they may also form part of the leadership of the Roman administration and of the imperial cult, often sharing various responsibilities. This issue marks an important dimension: not all members of the citizen community are equal; rather, there is a hierarchical system, basically formed of the elite and the rest of the demos.<sup>48</sup>

#### 3.1 Prominent Benefactors

To illustrate this point, it is worthwhile to refer specifically to some of these notables.

– Ephesos:

Tiberius Iulius Celsus, the first Ephesian to enter the Roman Senate, served as consul in 92 and proconsul of Asia in 105–106 A.D., among other positions. He belonged to an important family, whose members held important positions in Sardis, Ephesos, and Rome. Aside from his role as *euergetes*, the library that his son, Tiberius Iulius Aquila, who was *suffectus* consul (110 A.D.), commissioned in Ephesos to house his remains is noteworthy.<sup>49</sup> He also ensured that all expenses were covered by a foundation he established;<sup>50</sup> Tiberius Claudius Aristion, during the time of Trajan, he fund the building of two fountains, an aqueduct, and a marble hall in the gymnasium at the port, having held various civil and priestly offices for three decades (archireus, neokoros, prytany, three times asiarch);<sup>51</sup> Titus Flavius Montanus, also from the Trajan period, who participated in the construction of the theatre and contributed money to repair the port; P. Qyntilius Varius Valens and his relatives, who erected baths and a temple; Dionysios, who built two rows of seats in the stadium and the marble columns of the port baths, as well as ensuring the

48 Godelier (1999: p. 12); Domingo (2016: pp. 37–38).

49 García Sánchez and López García (2015: p. 51).

50 García Sánchez and López García (2015: p. 58).

51 García Sánchez and López García (2015: p. 63).

oil for these baths on certain occasions.<sup>52</sup> Standing out above all of them is Marcus Claudius Publius Vedius Antoninus Phaedrus Sabinianus, one of the first Ephesians recruited for the Roman Senate, between 128 and 136 A.D. His role as a benefactor is notable, as evidenced by a multitude of inscriptions, both those relating to the buildings he and his wife Flavia Papiane built, and the bases of some of their statues. Vedius Antoninus continues the family tradition, as his father and adoptive grandfather were euergetai of their city, and his wife was a descendant of high priests and, herself, *archiereia* of Asia. They are a clear example of a family of benefactors, as their son Papianus, who died childless, bequeathed a significant estate to the city. His daughter Vedia Phaedrina and her husband, the sophist Flavius Damianus, invested large sums in the beautification of the polis, and three of their sons attained the consulate.<sup>53</sup>

– Rodiapolis:

Opramoas is a paradigmatic example. We have epigraphic information from the period 114–152 A.D., which is precisely the period of greatest popularity of euergetic practices. This *euergetes* is the brother, son, grandson, and great-grandson of other benefactors (Calliads, Apollonius I, Apollonius II, Apollonius III), who also held the most important public offices, such as archiphylacus, lyciarchs, strategos, and navarchs, receiving constant recognition for their services. He belonged to one of the first families, not only of Rodiapolis, but of the entire province of Lycia, and he followed the family tradition, but he competed in excellence with his ancestors.<sup>54</sup> Therefore, he not only held all the magistracies, some even five times, with the most notable priesthoods of the imperial cult, but he also contributed huge sums of money to finance buildings throughout the province and also for reconstruction and relief in times of calamity.<sup>55</sup>

– Pergamon:

C. Antius Aulus Iulius Quadratus, was consul (105) and proconsul of Asia (109–110). He also belonged to the *Fratres Aruales* and was *Septemviri Epulonum*, being appointed Perpetual Gymnasiarch in his city and priest of Dionysus Kathegemon. It is noteworthy that he obtained the second neochory for Pergamon from Trajan and paid for a large part of the construction of the Traianeum on the acropolis, which was dedicated jointly to the emperor and Zeus Philios. This represented an extraordinary rise for the city, as it was the first in the province of Asia to have two

52 Kalinowski (2002: p. 124).

53 Kalinowski (2002: p. 145).

54 Gascó (1999a: pp. 172–173).

55 Gascó (1999a: p. 170).

neochorias.<sup>56</sup> In addition, he financed festivals, banquets, the construction of aqueducts, and several smaller buildings.

– Oinoanda:

Iulius Demosthenes established a foundation in 124–125 A.D. It involved a sum of money to fund a festival, every four years, lasting twenty-two days and consisting of various literary competitions in honour of the god Apollo and the imperial cult. A market was also held.<sup>57</sup>

Diogenes, who, during the reign of Emperor Hadrian,<sup>58</sup> ordered the construction of a rectangular plaza surrounded by a portico decorated with statues. The walls on the two longer sides were covered with inscriptions on Epicurean doctrines.<sup>59</sup>

Lucius Pilius Euarestos, a teacher of literature, also funded a small local festival.<sup>60</sup>

– Termessos:

Atalanta, daughter, granddaughter, and great-granddaughter of benefactors and public office holders. She was honored with a bronze statue and a golden crown, placed in a prominent place in the city, commemorating victorious athletes, for having amply supplied the population with grain during a time of scarcity.<sup>61</sup>

### 3.2 Symbolism

The symbolism implies the notion of inherent superiority of anyone who exercises power over another (the teacher over the student, the lord over the slave, the powerful over the humble), that is to say that all those who have some kind of authority over others acquire a special preponderance by virtue of that authority, was explicitly formulated by Artemidorus ("the fact of commanding has the force of a god" [2.36 and 2.69]). However, it had long been present (Men. 233.3) in the Greek collective mentality, makes the *euergetai* recognized in a position of supremacy,<sup>62</sup> as we discussed in the previous chapter on the perpetuation of a hierarchical social and political system. The *euergetes*, who holds some kind of power, however small,

56 Ventroux (2017: p. 342).

57 Gascó (1999: pp. 166–167); Kalinowski (2002: pp. 111–112).

58 Smith (1996: pp. 43–48).

59 Reale (1990: p. 45).

60 Van Nijf (2020: p. 258).

61 Van Nijf (2000: p. 21).

62 Domingo (2016: pp. 71–72).

acquires a kind of enhancement over the rest of the community. That said, it is not a matter of power as such, but simply the exercise of some kind of influence.<sup>63</sup>

This issue is related to the fact that the gift of giving is always in exchange for something, the counter-gift, so it is a form of exchange,<sup>64</sup> we reiterate the idea that, despite what Veyne maintained,<sup>65</sup> euergetism is not disinterested.<sup>66</sup> In reality, it sustains and strengthens the prestige, power, and control of the elite,<sup>67</sup> by means of the inscriptions<sup>68</sup> and honorific practices,<sup>69</sup> which, moreover, give rise to the authority and identity of the power groups.<sup>70</sup> And, if we add to this the fact that these inscriptions, among other aspects, highlighted the excellent attributes of the benefactor, endowed with outstanding qualities, which we could consider, in a certain way, as supernatural, as superior to those of the rest of the community, using a shared vocabulary with which they are dedicated to the gods, showing respect and consideration, we see how the parallels and similarities in the ways of honouring the *euergetai* and the gods are reinforced.<sup>71</sup> In short, a language similar to that intended for divinity is used because it constitutes a magnificent reference to enhance the prestige of the benefactors. Added to this is the fact that these public demonstrations, in which non-elite citizens celebrate their benefactors' generosity, use a discourse identical to that used by members of the elite in their own self-representation in honorary inscriptions, thereby acquiescing to the oligarchical system and legitimizing its power.<sup>72</sup> In these acts, in which the demos honours the *euergetes* because he deserves to be honoured, we see similar elements to, though not exclusive to, the recognition given to the gods, such as statues (the role of statues in a benefactor/god assimilation is very important, since it showed that the represented was in a position superior to other citizens and close to the gods),<sup>73</sup> busts and dedications.<sup>74</sup> So we insist again on the similarities and borrowings existing between the ways in which the gods were represented and honoured and those of which the *euergetai* were the object.<sup>75</sup>

63 Zuiderhoek (2009: p. 112).

64 Godelier (1999: p. 12); Zuiderhoek (2009: p. 113); Domingo (2020: p. 70); Van Nijf (2020: p. 250).

65 Veyne (1976: pp. 230, 237, 319).

66 Andreau, Schnapp and Schmitt-Pantel (1978: pp. 317–319); Gordon (1990: pp. 224–231); Van Nijf (1997: pp. 111–120).

67 Zuiderhoek (2009: p. 113); Domingo (2020: p. 71).

68 Lambert (2011: pp. 200–201); Van Nijf (2020: p. 249).

69 Domingo (2016: pp. 219, 222).

70 Van Nijf (1997: p. 119).

71 Zuiderhoek (2008: pp. 422, 435); Ventroux (2017: pp. 346 and 349).

72 Beetham (1991: p. 150); Zuiderhoek (2009: pp. 129, 132, 133); Von Reden (2020: p. 125).

73 Domingo (2016: pp. 122, 133 and 222); Dickenson (2017: p. 444).

74 Zuiderhoek (2009: p. 7).

75 Ventroux (2017: p. 352).

We must also refer to the very public rituals of praise that the cities organize as thanks to their benefactors.<sup>76</sup> All this perpetuates the collective memory, producing an act of union between the elite and non-elite.<sup>77</sup>

At this point, let's focus on the role played by statues, as it deserves a detailed discussion.

Honorary statues played a key role for the collective understanding as served to reinforce the cultural values, political realities, and aesthetic sensibilities of the polis. To gauge the magnitude of honorary statues, it is necessary to understand that they were erected in places where the city's daily activity took place, for everyone to see, rather than in galleries designated exclusively for that purpose. Thus, the agora acted as the space in which power relations, between the elite and the non-elite, developed through the interactions and mutations of its constructions.<sup>78</sup> The urban landscape was a "*lieu de mémoire*"<sup>79</sup>, a kind of mnemonic device that helped the demos understand itself and its internal relations, and what its social and civic values were.<sup>80</sup> Hence, the honorific monuments of the Roman period, erected in a public space, elevated the honoured person to a level above that of their equals, permanently placing them among the gods, heroes, and their ancestors.<sup>81</sup>

In another sense, it also should be noted that one of the primary missions of these monuments was to inspire and encourage emulation so that munificence could be exercised, as evidenced by inscriptions that attest to this.<sup>82</sup> And also, considering that euergetism was an exchange between the elite and the non-elite, the erection of a statue meant the successful culmination of this transaction, in a space where the entire demos interacted daily,<sup>83</sup> since power relations are complex and entail the acceptance of the non-elite, whose support is necessary.<sup>84</sup>

Therefore, it is clear that the agora, being one of the most prestigious and visible places, was preferred by notables for their representations.<sup>85</sup> It might be thought that the statues in the agora would have been shown to foreign dignitaries and merchants, as it was part of a notable's honour to have his position thus enhanced before foreigners. Furthermore, the entire complex of its monumental buildings expressed the local

76 Zuiderhoek (2009: pp. 119–122).

77 Ventroux (2017: p. 359).

78 Dickenson (2017: pp. 438 and 441).

79 Nora (1989: pp. 7–25) in Van Nijf (2000: p. 32).

80 Van Nijf (2000: pp. 23, 32).

81 Dickenson (2017: p. 443).

82 D. Chr. 31.17 in Dickenson (2017: p. 439).

83 Dickenson (2017: p. 439).

84 Van Nijf (2000: p. 23).

85 Van Nijf (2013: p. 322); Dickenson (2017: p. 443).

identity and showed that the city received gifts from its *euergetai* and participated in recognized forms of symbolic exchange.<sup>86</sup>

An example can be found in Dio Chrysostomos's criticism in Rhodes of the custom of inscribing new names on the bases of ancient statues, which he linked to budgetary savings.<sup>87</sup> However, possessing a re-inscribed statue meant a means of publicly defending one's descent from famous historical figures, with the monuments becoming vehicles that harnessed the power of the past to bring renown to their recipients.<sup>88</sup> Furthermore, the re-inscription also created a symbolic link between the new recipient and the original, which was also an honour.<sup>89</sup>

Finally, it is important to mention the value of survival over time, as honorific statues also acted as funerary monuments to ensure the reputation of their recipients would endure and serve as an example for posterity.<sup>90</sup>

### 3.3 Benefactors and civic memory

It is important to emphasize that the *euergetai* aim to insert themselves into civic memory and, ultimately, identify with the polis itself. Hence, the benefactor, who is honoured for his munificence beginning with an honorary decree,<sup>91</sup> to whom a statue is erected,<sup>92</sup> to whom a dedication is made, for whom an act of gratitude is held and may even receive a written celebration (a laudatory poem, a panegyric), becomes part of the polis' own history. All these elements were a form of collective self-representation of the members of the elite, who believed they had the right to claim, a privileged position in the collective memory of the city, showing the rest of the demos who held the wealth and power.<sup>93</sup>

In any case, it is usually the statues that ensure survival over time, a permanence in the future.<sup>94</sup> At one time, most of the statues erected in the agora would have been of deceased individuals. In Roman times, statues of notables from the recent past would continue to transmit prestige to their immediate descendants, as symbolic links were created between the benefactors, their ancestors, and the

86 Dickenson (2017: p. 440).

87 D. Chr. 31.41 in Dickenson (2017: p. 448).

88 Atwill (2014: pp. 456–457).

89 Dickenson (2017: p. 448).

90 Van Nijf (2000: pp. 23 and 33); Ventroux (2017: p. 343); Dickenson (2017: p. 450).

91 Larfeld (1902: pp. 737–843); Larfeld (1907: pp. 487–546); Gascó (1999a: p. 169).

92 Ma (2013: pp. 112–113).

93 Van Nijf (2000: pp. 26–27); Ventroux (2017: p. 359).

94 Gascó (1999a: p. 172); Domingo (2016: pp. 124, 133); Domingo (2020: p. 78).

history of their polis, which was also an important part of the honour inherent in receiving a statue in the agora.<sup>95</sup>

Similarly, donations, whether of ornaments or buildings, will survive over time.<sup>96</sup>

They also ensure permanence over time the foundations and endowments (land or income) in perpetuity,<sup>97</sup> as well as the establishment of periodic festivities that evoke the memory of its founders,<sup>98</sup> celebrations that were civic events of the utmost importance to their organizers, the elite and their families, in their relations with the non-elite.<sup>99</sup>

In addition, acts of munificence secure the commitment of the family of the benefactor<sup>100</sup> (those of Opramoas or Veditus Antoninus, for example, to which we referred earlier),<sup>101</sup> forcing them to continue this activity for the benefit of the community: it is the incardination, in the time of the citizen community, of the first family *euergetes*,<sup>102</sup> which will continue to be remembered by the demos and to live in the collective memory.<sup>103</sup> Therefore, a large part of the honor provided by an honorary statue was not for the recipient himself, but for his family.<sup>104</sup>

In turn, the descendants benefit from the constant remembrance of their ancestor, reinforcing and authenticating his actions, perpetuating the hierarchical organization and control of the dominant group.<sup>105</sup>

## Conclusions

The phenomenon of euergetism in the period studied entails a convergence of interests: the elite wants to perpetuate its position in power and for its hierarchical system to be legitimized by the rest of the demos. The latter, in turn, wants to enjoy what are considered the comforts owing to any true Greco-Roman citizen. This need of the non-elite to enjoy the civic lifestyle has to be satisfied, particularly when

95 Dickenson (2017: pp. 449–450).

96 Davies (1999: pp. 168–169); Zuiderhoek (2009: p. 137).

97 Gascó (1999: p. 166); Ventrone (2017: p. 346); Von Reden (2020: p. 120).

98 Domingo Gygax (2016: p. 37); Van Nijf (2020: p. 249).

99 Van Nijf (2020: pp. 247–248).

100 Domingo (2020: p. 77); Van Nijf (2020: p. 249).

101 Gascó (1999: p. 172); Kokkinia (2000: p. 134); Kalinowski (2002: p. 145).

102 Jones (1978: pp. 105–106); Schmitt-Pantel (1990: pp. 177, 179).

103 García Sánchez and López García (2015: p. 63).

104 Dickenson (2017: p. 450).

105 Augé (1974: pp. 9–36); Parada-López (2013: p. 596).

it has been explicitly requested in some way. Benefactors usually respond to these requests, and by being present, we can observe how they act and how their acts of munificence extend to the people. These acts are real; they are there, they are tangible. And they are carried out by beings we could understand as distinct from others, as endowed with great qualities. And their acts are beneficial, and, seemingly, gratuitous and selfless: like the actions of the gods. However, an important part of the return that the benefactor expects is the admiration and gratitude of the citizenry, as well as the remembrance and civic memory, since the *euergetai* ingrain themselves in the polis's memory through their donations and the remembrance and commemoration of them.<sup>106</sup>

Lastly, we can observe in the *euergetai*, the three elements that we have established as belonging to a specific: the non-elite need the physical presence of someone who cares for them; the *euergetes* is a benefactor who provides material goods; and the legitimization of elite power through a system of symbolism and representation.

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106 Schmitt-Pantel (1990: pp. 181, 185).



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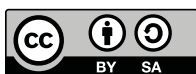
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