THE ACHAEAN FEDERAL CULT PART I: PSEUDO-JULIAN, LETTERS 198[1]

Antony J.S. Spawforth

Summary

This paper explores the evolution of emperor-worship at Corinth in the first century A.D. Specifically, it argues that a Greek 'letter' in the correspondence on the emperor Julian should be redated to c. A.D. 80-120 and identified as a petition from the city of Argos to the Roman governor of Achaia, in which the Argives sought exemption from payments towards the cost of celebrations of the imperial cult at the Roman colony of Corinth. Since these celebrations involved many of the province's cities, the paper goes on to argue that they can be identified with the collective cult—its place of celebration previously uncertain—known from inscriptions to have been founded by the member-cities of the Achaean league in the mid-first century A.D.

I. Introduction

It will be argued that *ca.* A.D. 54 a highly significant religious development occurred in Corinth. A quasi-provincial, as against a local, imperial cult was established by the cities of the Achaean League so that the province of Achaia as a whole could engage in emperor-worship. Such a move is likely to have pleased the local population because of the great honour and substantial pecuniary advantages that accrued for the Roman colony.

The purpose of this paper is (I) to discuss the dating and content of a largely unnoticed petition from Argos against

[1]This essay is a revised extract from a paper on 'Corinth, Argos and the Imperial Cult: Pseudo-Julian, Letters 198' which appeared in *Hesperia, Journal of the Americal School of Classical Studies in Athens* 63.2 (1994) 211-232 and is reproduced with permission of the editor. It was originally read in an earlier form at a one-day conference on Corinth at Newcastle-upon-Tyne University in October, 1992.

https://doi.org/10.53751/001c.30402

Corinth concerning the provincial imperial cult, and (II) to provide an historical reconstruction of the founding of the provincial imperial cult in Achaia *ca.* A.D. 54 based on this document and epigraphic evidence.

II. The Contents and Dating of the Petition to the Governor

A Greek literary text of disputed date and authorship is preserved in the correspondence of the emperor Julian as Letter 198 (Bidez). The text is addressed to an unidentified person, to whom it recommends an Argive embassy seeking a hearing of a dispute with Corinth over Argive payments for the staging of wild-beast shows (*venationes*) in the Roman colony. In 1913, in a long and carefully argued paper, Bruno Keil sought to demonstrate that this text should be redated to the second half of the first century after Christ, that it is a letter of recommendation addressed to the Roman governor of Greece, and that its author was an otherwise unknown Greek notable in the governor's retinue who had undertaken, in effect, to 'broker' an audience on the embassy's behalf. If correct, this view would make the text a rare surviving example of a type of letter no doubt generated in large numbers by the routines of Roman provincial administration.

The text opens (407b-408a) with praise of Argos on historical grounds old and recent, the former emphasising Argive leadership in the Trojan War and the sharing through ties of kinship in the achievements of Philip and Alexander (who claimed an Argive ancestry), the latter the city's record of obedience to Rome, obtained through alliance (ξυμμαχίας), not force of Roman arms. These justified the high rank (ἀξιώματος, 410a) which the Argives claimed for their city and which, they believed, entitled them to special consideration (410a). The text then reaches the nub of the matter. For the last seven years the Corinthians had claimed the right to collect contributions (συντελεῖν, 408a; συντέλειαν, 408d) from the Argives towards the cost of spectacles staged in Corinth. The Argives, claims the author, had once enjoyed the privilege (προνομίαν, 408c) of exemption from these payments in recognition of their

https://doi.org/10.53751/001c.30402

obligation to fund their own panhellenic games (the Nemea). The author then employs four arguments in support of the renewal of this exemption. The first involved an attempt to claim for Argos the immunity (ἀτέλειαν, 408c) enjoyed by Elis and Delphi, likewise hosts to panhellenic games; moreover, the text asserts, whereas the Pythian and Olympic festivals fell only once every four years, the Argives had expanded their agonistic cycle and now had to fund no fewer than four sets of games in as many years. This argument, however, since it required the admission of an earlier Argive liability to pay, prompts the author to float the notion that at first, perhaps (τυχόν, 408c), the Argives had not even been liable for these payments. After this attempt (specious, as will be shown) to associate Argos with the privileged status of Elis and Delphi, the author argues, secondly, that the payments were being used to support spectacles which were neither Greek nor ancient, namely *venationes* (κυνηέσια, 409a) wild-beast shows using bears and leopards (ἄρκτους καὶ παρδάλεις, 409a). Thirdly, Corinth was much richer than Argos and could support the cost herself, especially as many cities (πολλῶν πόλεων, 409b) contributed besides Argos. Fourthly, as the two cities were neighbours, the Corinthians should show a special love (ἀγαπᾶσθαι μᾶλλον, 409b) for the Argives.

We learn too that the Argives had already taken their quarrel once to a Roman court but had lost their case; they now sought to have it reopened by means of this embassy. The author then introduces its personnel, which consisted of, or at any rate was led by, two Argive notables, Diogenes and Lamprias, who are described as philosophers (φιλοσοφοῦσι, 410b) but who nevertheless, the text is at pains to emphasise, had distinguished records of civic service as 'orators, magistrates, ambassadors, and generous public donors' (ῥητορεύσι καὶ πολιτεύονται καὶ πρεσβεύουσι καὶ δαπανῶσιν ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων προθύμως, 410c).

Two initial points should be made emphatically. Apart from the title 'Julian to the Argives' (Ἰουλιανὸς Ἀργείοις) in the

https://doi.org/10.53751/001c.30402

sole manuscript to preserve this text,[2] nothing in the content suggests the authorship of Julian (indeed there are at least two indicators that he was not the author: see pp. 156-8 below). On this matter at least, literary style is no guide either, to judge from the stalemate which expert authorities have reached: whereas Wright claimed that 'there is nothing in [the text] which could not have been written by Julian,' Bidez on the contrary felt that 'neither the vitality nor the elegance of the emperor's manner can be recognised'; more recently, Weis has also found the style categorically 'un-Julianic'. Style, then, has not so far proved a useful guide in settling the question of authorship, although the current balance of scholarly debate seems to be, if anything, *against* authenticity.[3]

Secondly, there is nothing whatsoever in the text itself to point to a date in the fourth century. More than this, there are three historical references which (and here I am heavily indebted to Keil) cumulatively situate the text most comfortably in the period between 27 B.C. and A.D. 130:

(1) The text contrasts the customs or rights (νομίμοις) of old Greece with those which the Corinthians 'seem to have received recently from the sovereign city' (μᾶλλον... ἔναγχος δοκοῦσι παρὰ τῆς βασιλευούσης προσειληφέναι πόλεως) and goes on to ask if the Corinthians 'think that they can secure advantages on the basis of the situation which the city now enjoys, since it received the Roman colony' (εἰ δὲ τοῖς νῦν ὑπάρξασιν τῇ πόλει, ἐπειδὴ τὴν Ῥωμαϊκὴν ἀποικίαν ἐδέξαντο,

[2]B. Keil, 'Ein Λόγος συστατικός', *NAkG* (Philologisch-historische Klasse; 1913) 1 (the *Codex Vossianus* in Leiden).

[3]W.C. Wright, *The Works of the Emperor Julian* III (Loeb Classical Library: London/New York, 1923) xxiii; J. Bidez, *L'empereur Julien: Oeuvres complètes*, I, ii, *Lettres et fragments* (Collections des Universités de France; Paris, 1924) 220. The judgement of B.K. Weis, *Julian. Briefe* (Munich, 1973) 314 deserves quotation: 'Nach langer Beschäftigung mit den Briefen Julians, nach eingehenden Stilvergleichen und sorgfältiger Prüfung der Argumentationsweise bekenne ich mein ernsten Zweifel an der Echtheit des Briefes. Dies is nicht, so scheint mir, der bewegliche, lebendige Geist, nicht der gewandte, elegante, flüssige und mitunter auch nachlässig-flüchtige Stil, nicht der in solchen Fällen so eindringliche, beschwörende Ton, nicht der leidenschaftliche Impuls des Kaisers Julian.'

https://doi.org/10.53751/001c.30402

ἰσχυριζόμενοι πλέον ἔχειν ἀξιοῦσι, 409c). These references present the refoundation of Corinth as a Roman colony in 44 B.C. as a relatively recent event. As Bidez remarked, 'This passage is one of the most embarrassing for those who attribute the speech to Julian or one of his contemporaries'.[4]

(2) The description of Argive festivals matches the epigraphic evidence for the city's agonistic cycle in the early principate, when Argos celebrated the 'trieteric' Nemean games once every three years inclusively, along with the five-yearly Heraea and the Sebastea. Since these last two are coupled in Argive inscriptions of imperial date with celebrations of the Nemea, Axel Boëthius reconstructed a quadrennial Argive cycle in which the Heraea and Nemea fell in the first year and the Sebastea and Nemea in the third, with no celebrations in the second and fourth years; in this way, as the text says, the city hosted four agonistic celebrations in each four-year period. Soon after A.D. 130, however, this cycle was expanded by the foundation of games in honour of the deified Antinous, which are attested in a local inscription recently redated to the Severan age.[5] Since the author's point is to emphasise the financial burden to Argos of its own games, we would expect him to have included these Antinoea in his reckoning were they celebrated at the date of composition. On this view the text ought to fall after the foundation of the Sebastea, games instituted by Argos to honour Augustus sometime after his assumption of the title 'Augustus' in 27 B.C. but before (since Corinth had been refounded 'recently') the establishment of the games for Antinous in or shortly after 130.

---

[4]Keil, 'συστατικός', 15; Bidez, *Julien*, 222, n. 2, followed by Weis, *Julian*, 315, n. 10. For numismatic confirmation of the date of the colonial foundation, see now M. Amandry, *Le monnayage des duovirs corinthiens* (*BCH* Supplement 15; Paris, 1988) 13, n. 90.

[5]*IG* IV[1] 590, redated by A.J.S. Spawforth, 'Families at Roman Sparta and Epidaurus: Some Prosopographical Notes', *BSA* 80 (1985) 191-58, at 256-58. A. Boëthius, *Der argivische Kalender* (Uppsala, 1922) 60, accepted Keil's redating of the text, modifying (*ibid.* 61, n. 2) the agonistic arguments of Keil, while accepting that '*tatsächlich* die Σεβάστεια, Heraia, Nemea, während des 1. Jhdt. die einzigen Agone der Stadt Argos waren'.

https://doi.org/10.53751/001c.30402

An alternative view had earlier been put forward by August Boeckh, who suggested[6] that the text reflects a time when the Antinoea had been discontinued but when the Nemea, Heraea, and Sebastea were still celebrated. The latest evidence for the Sebastea as well as the Antinoea, an Argive inscription now redated to the Severan age (see p. 155, n. 5), shows that both were still flourishing in the later second or the early third century. It is conceivable that at a later date one disappeared while the other survived. But this is a conjecture with no special cogency; it is just as possible that both survived until threatened equally by the general financial difficulties of the Greek cities, from which Argos cannot have been exempt, in the middle decades of the third century. After this date there is no evidence for the survival of either the Sebastea, Nemea, or Heraea,[7] although a Julianic date for the text requires us to believe in the continuity of the Argive agonistic cycle from the first century into the middle decades of the fourth. Given the changed religious atmosphere of late antiquity, not to mention the reduced finances of provincial cities at this time, such continuity is not easy to accept.

(3) Lamprias, one of the Argive ambassadors, bears a name used by a distinguished family of notables based on Epidauros and Argos during the principate. The family, the Statilii, seems to have come originally from Epidaurus, but by the reign of Claudius at the latest it had acquired close ties with neighbouring Argos, which considered itself the fatherland (πατρίς) of a much later member, T. Statilius Lamprias (II) Memmianus (*IG* # IV[1] 590: note 5 above). Two Lampriases of some prominence are attested in the period between 27 B.C. and A.D. 130. The earlier, T. Statilius Lamprias (II), lived under Tiberius, Gaius, and Claudius; the later, T. Statilius Lamprias

[6]*CIG* I 1124.

[7]The latest reference to the Nemea and Herae (*ca.* 253-57) that I know of comes in the Athenian inscription for the herald Valerius Eclectus: L. Moretti, *Iscrizioni agonistiche greche* (Rome, 1953) no. 90, 263-264. Keil ('συστατικός', 13, n. 1) doubted whether the Nemea were still celebrated under Julian.

https://doi.org/10.53751/001c.30402

(IV) Memmianus, flourished around the turn of the first century.[8]

Within the period 27 B.C. to A.D. 130, Keil's preference for a date in the second half of the first century after Christ drew on the periphrastic language which the text uses to describe Roman rule, referred to once as 'the rulers' (οἱ κρατοῦντες, 408a), a usage well attested in Greek writers of the first century, notably Plutarch (*Mor.* 824c), and twice as 'the mistress city' (ἡ βασιλευούση πόλις, 408a, 409c). This usage only becomes common after the reign of Hadrian, but Keil saw it as cognate with that of *basileus* (king) to describe the Roman emperor, which first appears in Greek literature in the second half of the first century; a more recent survey suggests that Letter 198 (on Keil's dating) still offers the earliest instance of this usage.[9]

In rejecting Keil's thesis, Maas argued that a reference to the subject matter of the text could be found in a letter (Bidez 1924, no. 30) from Julian to a close friend, the polytheist Theodorus, dating from the end of 361, shortly after Julian's accession. Here Julian praises Theodorus, firstly, for his calm in the face of an outrage (παροινίαν) committed against them both by a governor of Greece, whom Julian likens to a tyrant, and, secondly, for the help given by Theodorus to a nameless city where he had spent time. Maas identified this city as Argos and Theodorus as the author of Letter 198; the author's intercession on behalf of Argos would then be the 'help' and its failure the 'outrage', referred to here by Julian, the addressee of the text being, of course, the governor.[10]

None of this quite rings true. Would Julian really have likened a provincial governor to a tyrant and considered himself as well as Theodoros the victim of an outrage, merely because in a minor administrative matter falling well within the governor's brief he had (on Maas's view) refused to hear the

---

[8]See Spawforth, 'Families', 250-2, 254, and 256-8.

[9]Keil, 'συστατικός', 12-13, 16-17. Survey: M. Wörrle, 'Ägyptisches Getreide für Ephesos', *Chiron* I (1971) 329-31; he cites no instance earlier than the second century.

[10]P. Maas, Review of B. Keil, 'Ein Λόγος συστατικός', in *BZ* 22 (1913) 534-35.

https://doi.org/10.53751/001c.30402

Argive embassy (or had found against it), thereby doing no more than uphold his predecessor's ruling? Maas ignored the fact that the text presents its addressee as well disposed towards Argos (see below). In addition (a point made by Keil), Julian considered himself a friend of Corinth, where his father was a visitor;[11] and so an official ruling which supported Corinthian interests is hardly likely to have constituted an 'outrage' for Julian (who for the same reason, if for no other, is an unlikely author of the text in the first place, as both Keil and Bidez saw[12]). Some cause close to Julian's heart would better explain his outrage on this occasion: perhaps the governor in question was a Christian sympathiser who had taken some action against the province's bastions of polytheism.[13]

Of Maas's case we are left essentially with his observation that none of the other letters in the collection now recognised as 'non-Julianic' is older than Julian's day; if the text is indeed much earlier in date, how did it come to be included with the rest of the collection in the manuscript tradition? Obviously no firm answer can be given here, although modern scholars stress the diversity and relative lateness of the surviving manuscript collections of Julian's letters.[14] Perhaps this misattribution arose because an earlier copyist, just like Maas, erroneously linked the subject matter of this text with that of Julian's letter to Theodorus. The *Codex Vossianus* in Leiden, the sole manuscript to preserve the former, does not include the latter, although it places Letter 198 immediately before a second letter from Julian to Theodorus (Bidez 1924, no. 89);[15] conceivably in one of the earlier collections on which the *Vossianus* drew, all three were bunched together. Given the complexity and vagaries of the manuscript tradition in general and of this one in particular, the prudent may well hesitate before erecting Maas's observation into a serious objection to the detachment of this text from the Julianic canon.

---

[11]Keil, 'συστατικός', 13, citing Libanius, *Or.* 14.30 (Förster).
[12]Keil, 'συστατικός', 13; Bidez, *Julien*, 220.
[13]This interpretation builds on the hint of Bidez, *Julien*, 56, n. 3: 'par "nous", Julien entend peut-être les partisans de l'Hellénisme'.
[14]See Bidez, *Julien*, viii-xvi.
[15]So Maas, 'Review'; Bidez, *Julien*, 220-1.

https://doi.org/10.53751/001c.30402

Finally, Maas objected that if the text was first century in date, its subject matter was too trivial for it to have survived until such a time as it could be muddled up with Julian's letters (not before the second half of the fourth century). On the contrary, it might well have been preserved among the private papers of either the author himself (on Keil's view a provincial Greek notable) or one or more of the other persons involved in the affair, notably the Argive ambassadors, and through the descendants of these men of wealth and culture have passed eventually into one of the libraries of later antiquity.

Keil's view as to authorship and addressee, with which I am in broad agreement, are now briefly recapitulated. The text itself gives no clue as to the author's identity beyond showing that he was neither a member of the Argive embassy, which it was the text's purpose to commend, nor a native of Argos;[16] and the detached tone of the references to Rome and Roman institutions suggests that his viewpoint was not that of the ruling power. The author makes no attempt to deploy his personal standing on behalf of the Argives, as we might expect were he a Roman patron of high rank (let alone an imperial prince); on the contrary, the impersonal tone is consonant with an author whose social status was no higher, and perhaps was lower, than that of the addressee. That the author was a well-schooled product of Greek high culture is shown by the rhetorical conventions that shape the text.[17] Keil's hypothesis, therefore, remains attractive: the author was a provincial Greek notable well known to the Argives but also, since he agreed to 'broker' an audience for his fellow provincials, to the governor, to whose retinue he perhaps belonged.

That the addressee was indeed the governor is made more or less certain by the fact that the Argives had missed an earlier chance (409d) to appeal to a higher authority 'outside Greece' (either the emperor or the Roman senate, on the assumption that Achaia at the time was a senatorial province). For an appeal outside Greece to have been the next step, the case on this previous occasion must already have been heard

[16]Keil, 'συστατικός', 22-3.
[17]On these, see Keil, 'συστατικός', 24-35.

and rejected by the highest Roman authority within the province: the governor or his delegate. Having 'wrong-footed' themselves in this way (the author lays the blame on the 'inaction' (ἀπραγμοσύνην, 409d] of the city's then advocate), the Argives had no right to a second hearing, and it was to have this procedural obstacle removed that the Argive embassy now sought a hearing with the addressee. This last was presumably a new governor of Greece, the only provincial official with the power to order a new hearing. The Argives had reason to see him as well disposed to their interests, since they claimed that they now had 'the judges of our prayers' (νῦν ἡμῖν τὰ μὲν τῶν δικαστῶν ὑπάρχει κατ'εὐχάς, 410d); these 'judges', Keil suggested, should be understood as the new governor and, as it were by anticipation, the sympathetic arbitrator (*iudex datus*) whom the Argives expected him to depute to hear the case, once successfully reopened.[18] The Argives would then have made an initial complaint seven years earlier when the Roman authorities removed their old exemption from these payments to Corinth; six years later, the arrival of a new governor thought to have Argive sympathies offered Argos the chance to try to reverse his predecessor's ruling.

As to the moment in this offensive for which this text was composed, it must have preceded the hearing which it requests (at which speeches would certainly have been the order of the day but by the ambassadors themselves, who, we learn, were old hands in public oratory): presumably the embassy had arrived and was waiting on the governor, but the favour of an audience had yet to be secured. Although our text poses rhetorically as a 'speech' (λόγος) and ranges its author among the 'orators' (411b), it was probably composed for written delivery, serving in effect as a petition on behalf of the embassy.[19]

[18]Identity of addressee: Keil, 'συστατικός', 20-24.
[19]So Keil, 'συστατικός', 22, 24.

https://doi.org/10.53751/001c.30402

III. The Achaean Imperial Cult

In 54, to mark the accession of the emperor Nero, a cult of the emperors was instituted at Corinth by the member cities of the Achaean League, its focus an annual imperial festival which included *venationes* (and, no doubt, gladiatorial shows); the first high priest for life was C. Julius Spartiaticus,[20] whose native Taygetus was well stocked at this date with wild animals, bears included, and may well have provided the less exotic fauna for his shows.[21] A forerunner, perhaps the chief one, to this cult was the celebration of imperial festivals by the Panachaean assembly on the accessions of Gaius and Claudius; and so the central Greek leagues which took part in these assemblies may also have been involved in the financing of the Achaean cult.[22] The involvement of the governor in 37 raises the question of how far this Achaean initiative came from below, how far from above; in fact, the larger background warns us against making too much of the degree of provincial spontaneity. Whereas the provincial league of Asia was paying homage to Augustus as a god as early as 29 B.C.,[23] the absence in Greece before the mid-first century after Christ of any collective imperial cult is striking.[24] A well-known inscription from Messene, dating from A.D. 2, portrays a Roman official, the quaestor P. Cornelius Scipio, engaged in the energetic promotion of the imperial cult

---

[20]See A.B. West, *Corinth: Latin Inscriptions* 1896-1927 (Cambridge, Mass., [1931] VIII, ii, no. 68) lines 8-9 *archieri domus Aug.* [in] *perpetuum*, and *SIG*[3] 790 lines 2-7, establishing the chronological priority of Spartiaticus' term, ἀρχιερέα θε[ῶν] Σεβαστῶν κ[αὶ γέ]νους Σε[β]αστῶν ἐκ τοῦ κοινοῦ τῆ[ς] Ἀχαίας διὰ βίου πρῶτον τῶν ἀπ' αἰῶνος; along with my discussion in 'Corinth, Argos and the Imperial Cult: Pseudo-Julian, Letters 198', 218ff., improved in Spawforth, 'C. Iulius Spartiaticus, "First of the Achaeans": a Correction', *ZPE* forthcoming.

[21]Pausanias, 4.20.4.

[22]Earlier celebrations: my discussion in 'Corinth, Argos and the Imperial Cult: Pseudo-Julian, Letters 198', 222-30.

[23]S.R.F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge, 1984) 54.

[24]On the imperial cult at Plataia organised by the 'common council of the Hellenes', which first appears in 61/2, see A.J.S. Spawforth, 'Symbol of Unity? The Persian Wars Tradition in the Roman Empire', in S. Hornblower (ed.), *Greek Historiography* (Oxford, 1994) 233-47.

https://doi.org/10.53751/001c.30402

at Messene and in 'most of the cities of the province'; such official zeal, in part, maybe, a labour of self-promotion, could have been encouraged by provincial sluggishness over cultic honours for Augustus and his house.[25] This view of the Messenian inscription is encouraged by other evidence that Greece was something of a reluctant province under Augustus and his dynasty. As well as disturbances in the free city of Athens, culminating in outright rebellion in 13 B.C.,[26] Greece's subject cities did not take kindly to the senatorial regime imposed by Augustus in 27 B.C. To judge from a Mantinean decree describing, with heavy irony, a local notable's embassy to Rome, where he was 'pleasant to the divine Senate, since he brought praise of the proconsuls, not an accusation', it was fairly common for the Augustan province's notables to complain about the proconsular government,[27] and in A.D. 15 these complaints made Tiberius transfer Achaia from senatorial to his own direct control.[28] In 37, political indifference, not financial embarrassment, seems the best explanation for the reluctance of Boeotia's notables to undertake to represent the Boeotian League on a congratulatory embassy to the new emperor Gaius.[29] That the new Achaean cult of 54 was

---

[25]*SEG* XXIII 206.

[26]See now M.C. Hoff, 'Civil Disobedience and Unrest in Augustan Athens', *Hesperia* 58 (1989) 267-76.

[27]*SIG*[3] 783, *ll.* 29-30. See V. Ehrenberg, 'Legatus Augusti et Tiberii?', in G.E. Mylonas and D. Raymond (eds.), *Studies Presented to D.M. Robinson* II, (Saint Louis, 1953) 943.

[28]Tacitus, *Ann.* 1.76.

[29]*IG* VII 2711 (=J.H. Oliver, *Greek Constitutions of Early roman Emperors from Inscriptions and Papyri* [Philadelphia, 1989], no. 18) lines 16-19, 61-63, 94-107; *IG* VII 2712 (=J.H. Oliver, 'Epaminondas of Acraephia', *GRBS* 19 [1971] 221-37, here at 228) lines 37-44. The implication of the remarks of Oliver, 'Epaminondas', 224, that Boeotia's notables were too poor in 37 to undertake the embassy, is not borne out by the Epaminondas 'dossier', which states that it was the 'respectable and the first men from the (Boeotian) cities' who declined it (*IV* VII 2712 = Oliver, 'Epaminondas', 227, lines 40-41: πο[λλ]ῶν τε συνεληλυθότων εὐσχημόνων καὶ πρῶτων ἐκ τῶν πόλεων καὶ πάντων ἀρνουμένων καὶ ἐπι[κα]λουμένων). Such men will have included earlier generations of the wealthy Boeotian families (*e.g.*, the Flavii of Thebes and the Flavii of Thespiae) found in the circle of Plutarch of Chaironeia, himself a man of means; and it is hard to believe that in 37 the fortune of Epaminondas, the Acraephian magnate whose benefactions

https://doi.org/10.53751/001c.30402

encouraged by the Roman authorities is suggested by the choice of Corinth as its venue. At first the Greeks had little love for Julius Caesar's colony, as we see from a well-known epigram by the Augustan poet Crinagoras of Mytilene, whose description of the colonists as 'shop-soiled slaves' (παλιμπρήτοισι) expressed a sense of Greek outrage at the servile origins of Corinth's new population, which is likely to have been most keenly felt among the colony's immediate neighbours;[30] the disdainful attitude of Letter 198 to Corinthian *Romanitas* reveals the persistence of such hostility at Argos into the later first century. In this context, Corinth may well have owed its choice as a venue for the new cult more to the Roman authorities than to the wishes of the League's membership, which no doubt included rival 'Greek' candidates for the prestigious and economically beneficial job of host, not least Argos itself, scene of the Panachaean celebration in 37 (see n. 22). Effective lobbying by colonial notables could have played its part here: Corinthian inscriptions show that the colonial elite took full advantage of the fact that Corinth was the seat of the provincial procurator and closely associated with the proconsuls to cultivate personal ties with Roman officialdom.[31] Finally, the first high priest, a man of great standing in the province with a distinguished colonial career behind him, was surely a Corinthian partisan; given the whiff of Spartan irredentism exuded by 'Argolicus', the name of one of his brothers, it may not be farfetched to suggest that this member of Sparta's client dynasty would have relished supporting Corinthian interests at the expense of Argive ones.[32]

The new cult required financing. As the case of Spartiaticus confirms, the 'euergetism' of the high priests

---

form the subject of *IG* VII 2711-2712, was not matched or exceeded by those of his peers in the larger Boeotian cities. The Epaminondas 'dossier' stresses rather the ὄχλησις, 'bother', of the embassy: *IG* VII 2711, lines 98, 105.

[30]A.S.F. Gow and D.L. Page, *The Greek Anthology* I (Cambridge, 1968) no. 37, 220-221.

[31]See J.H. Kent, *Corinth: The Inscriptions* 1926-50 (Princeton, 1966) VIII, iii, 58 on the Gellii of Corinth, who 'seem to have made a hobby of setting up monuments to their friends of high rank'.

[32]Argolicus: *PIR*² I 174.

https://doi.org/10.53751/001c.30402

played its part here, although we should not exaggerate its importance: our text shows that the cities involved were obliged to pay annually towards the cost of the yearly festival at Corinth. This cost is likely to have been considerable, since exotic beasts such as the leopards or cheetahs (παρδάλεις) and lions known to have been used in Corinthian *venationes* did not come cheaply: Diocletian's edict gives prices of between 75,000 and 150,000 denarii for Libyan lions and leopards.[33] At first the Argives successfully claimed exemption from these contributions on the grounds that they were already burdened with the cost of panhellenic games; this Argive claim (and there could have been others) hints at the unenthusiastic reception which some quarters of the province gave to the prospect of financing the new cult, if not to the cult as such. Ultimately they may have owed this concession to their standing in League affairs at the time: in 37 the 'general' presiding over the Panachaean union was an (otherwise unknown) Argive,[34] and it is hard not to see his influence at work in the choice of his own city as a venue for the Panachaean meeting of the same year. In this period the Statilii of Epidaurus and Argos were also prominent in League politics: between 35 and 44 T. Statilius Lamprias (II) and his son Timocrates arranged for the erection of statues of the Roman governor and his son at the Asclepieum 'on behalf of the Achaeans';[35] and it was this same Timocrates who, in his mature years, went on to serve the Panachaean union with such distinction as secretary after Nero's liberation of Greece.[36]

As Keil saw,[37] this exemption was not a recent event at the time of the composition of Letter 198: it had been conferred

---

[33]M. Giacchero, *Edictum Diocletiani et collegarum de pretiis rerum venalium* (Genoa, 1974) 210-11, no. 32, *ll* 1-6.

[34]*IG* VII 2711 = Oliver, *Constitutions* no. 18, *l.* 2: [.....]εὺς Διοδότου Α[ρ]γεῖος, perhaps a kinsman of Ti. Claudius Diodotus (*IG* IV[1] 606) or Diodotus, son of Onesiphorus (*IG* IV[1] 597).

[35]Spawforth, 'Families', 250-251, citing *IG* IV[2] 665 = W. Peek, *Inschriften aus dem Asklepieion von Epidauros* (Berlin, 1969) no. 289, 125-26.

[36]See Spawforth, 'Corinth, Argos and the Imperial Cult: Pseudo-Julian, Letters 198', 223, citing Peek, *Inschriften*, no. 34 lines 9-13, dated at Spawforth, 'Families', 253-54.

[37]Keil, 'συστατικός', 9.

https://doi.org/10.53751/001c.30402

'formerly', a formulation sufficiently vague to permit the author disingenuously to float the possibility that 'in the beginning (τὴν αρχήν, 408c) Argos had never even been asked to pay. Quite what 'beginning' the author had in mind is unclear. The reference could be to 54, when (I suggest) the new cult was founded and its finances first set up; but the author might have been thinking of some earlier date, if we assume that member cities of the Panachaean union were obliged to contribute towards the cost of federal celebrations of imperial accessions in the pre-Neronian period. Quite when the foundation of the cult might have come to seem an event of the past is also unclear; but a generation later is perhaps not too soon. Other considerations come into play. The text gives us no idea why, seven years previously, Argos had lost her exemption, beyond the ambiguous statement that it resulted from her 'attachment' to Corinth 'by the sovereign city' (ὑπὸ τῆς βασιλευούσης πόλεως, 408a); whether the reference is to a Roman administrative decision of recent date or to the one behind the city's initial liability to the payments, back in (as I believe) 54, is unclear. If the latter, then there appears to be proof that the Roman authorities were closely involved in the original arrangements for financing the Achaean cult and that (as would be expected) they sanctioned the system of annual contributions by member cities. If the former, we should perhaps imagine the governor getting drawn into a local attempt (successful as it turned out) to challenge Argive exemption. To hypothesise further is probably unwise; but it may be worth suggesting that the reimposition of Argive liability coincided with a waning (if only temporary) in the city's prominence in League affairs, such as might have followed the retirement or death of T. Statilius. Timocrates (I), the secretary of the Panachaean union in the late 60's. A further chronological indicator is the strong possibility, as was seen earlier (p. 165), that the second Argive ambassador, Lamprias, belonged to this same family of Statilii. The text presents him and his colleague as men of considerable experience in public affairs; if we are to identify him with T. Statilius Lamprias (IV) Memmianus, who was probably the grandson of Timocrates

https://doi.org/10.53751/001c.30402

and born between 40 and 60,[38] his mature years, and the date of this text, would fall roughly in the period from 80 to 120.

A few observations are now offered about the relations between Argos and Corinth in the early empire in the light of this text. Above all, the Argive 'quarrel' (φιλονεικίας, 411b) with Corinth was about money: on this point the text leaves us in no doubt. This quarrel can now be seen as an unusually well documented example from provincial Achaia of the petty struggles which characterised Greek inter-city relations under Roman rule.[39] As such, however, it may have sprung from more than financial causes: that the Argives were 'forced to slave for a foreign spectacle celebrated by others' (ξενικῇ θέᾳ καὶ παρ' ἄλλοις ἐπιδουλεύειν ἀναγκαζόμενοι, 409a) constituted a loss of civic face, one made all the more bitter by the fact that these 'others' were the jumped-up Roman colonists at Corinth. Asia Minor provides other examples of the way in which the organisation of provincial sacrifices could wound civic pride by 'the subordination implied by taking part in the sacrifices of a superior city'.[40] In this case, moreover, Argos was probably smarting already from a loss of regional standing as Caesar's colony went from strength to strength: on their own admission the Argives were now less prosperous than the Corinthians (χρημάτων τε ἔχοντες ἐνδεέστερον, 409a); and the choice of Corinth in 54 as home to the Achaean imperial cult put paid to any Argive aspirations to play host once again to Panachaean celebrations, as the city had done in 37 (and 41?).

The author ends his letter by making dire predictions of 'eternal discord' (ἀθάνατον...τὴν δύσνοιαν) and 'hatred strengthening with time' (τὸ μῖσος ἰσχυρὸν τῷ χρόνῳ κρατυνόμενον, 411b) between the two cities if the Argives fail to get their way. Unfortunately, the outcome of the dispute is not known. One possible pointer is the evidence for close ties with Corinth among the Argive elite in the second century. Thus there are, in a list of Isthmian victors from the Antonine age, the names of two Argive notables, Pompeius Cleosthenes and

[38]Spawforth, 'Families', 255.
[39]C.P. Jones, *The Roman World of Dio Chrysostom* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978) chapter 10, with references.
[40]Price, *Rituals*, 130.

https://doi.org/10.53751/001c.30402

Cn. Cornelius Pulcher, among the winners of the equestrian events.[41] Late in the same period, or perhaps under Septimius Severus, the Argive T. Statilius Timocrates (II) Memmianus held office in the colony as Achaean high priest.[42] But these persons, it may be objected, are increasingly remote in date from the dispute in question here. More germane is the combined Argive and Corinthian career under Trajan of M. Antonius Achaicus, who held office as agonothete in his native city but also served as agonothete of the Isthmian games at Corinth, where he was honoured posthumously with the colony's curial insignia.[43] How likely is it that an Argive would have pursued such a career if Argos and Corinth at the time were at loggerheads? This is not an easy question to answer, since loyalties to more than one city were not unusual at this level of provincial Greek society. But the career of Achaicus would certainly fit well with a period of reconciliation between Argos and Corinth following a satisfactory resolution of the quarrel over payments.

It remains to draw attention to a surprising feature of this text: its outspokenness. Although, understandably, the author stops short of referring explicitly to the imperial cult, he makes no bones about Argive disdain for the purpose to which the disputed payments were put. On this point, of course, the text finds its place in a contemporary Greek polemic against violent Roman-style shows;[44] nevertheless, given that this disdain could have run the risk of being mistaken for criticism of emperor worship itself, it seems surprising to find it in a letter addressed to, and seeking a favour from, a Roman

---

[41]B.D. Merritt, *Corinth: Greek Inscriptions* 1896-1927 (Cambridge, Mass., 1931) VIII, i, no. 15, *ll.* 44-48. For the family of Cleosthenes, see now *SEG* XVI 258-59.

[42]*IG* IV[1] 590, Date: Spawforth, 'Families', 256-58.

[43]Achaicus: *ILS* 8863; Kent, *Corinth* VIII, iii, nos. 124 (name restored) and 224, with improvements of D.J. Geagan, 'Notes on the Agonistic Institutions of Roman Corinth', *GRBS* 9 (1968) 70-80; Kent, *Corinth* VIII, ii, 31 tentatively assigned his Corinthian *agonothesia* to Domitian, which strikes me as a little early; *SEG* XVI 258. An Antonius Achaicus, presumably the same man or a kinsman, turns up at Messenian Asine,*IG* V i 1408.

[44]L. Robert, *Les gladiateurs dans l'Orient grec* (Paris, 1940) 248-53.

https://doi.org/10.53751/001c.30402

governor (even one who was thought to be well disposed towards the Argives). This text may tell us something more generally about Achaean perceptions of how far a senatorial official could be pushed without offence being given, as of the benevolent senatorial attitudes to old Greece which Pliny (a contemporary of the author) articulates in his famous letter to Maximus (*Ep.* 8.24). When dealing with the prestigious cities of what Pliny called 'the true and genuine Greece' (*veram et meram Graeciam*), were senatorial administrators more resigned than usual to tolerating Greek 'impudence'?[45]

In conclusion, for New Testament scholars, the 'Julianic' text, once restored to its rightful historical context, sheds new light on the evolution of emperor-worship at Corinth in the first century A.D. Around the mid-century the celebration of the imperial cult at Corinth became a concern, not just of the colonists themselves, but of the province of Achaia as a whole. The enhanced place of the cult in colonial religion found expression in the addition of new imperial festivals to the sacred calendar of the colony, ones attracting far larger crowds, with a higher quotient of provincial notables, than the limited, local observations of the preceding era. Some of the implications of this development for an understanding of 1 Corinthians are explored in the following essay by Bruce Winter.

[45]For *impudentia* as a Greek failing in Roman eyes, see N.K. Petrochilos, *Roman Attitudes to the Greeks* (Athens, 1974) 39-40.

https://doi.org/10.53751/001c.30402