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Greek Magistrates in Roman Naples?

Law and Memory from the Fourth Century BC to the Fourth Century AD

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Some of the most challenging questions about the evolution of the municipal system and the development of Roman administrative structures in Italian communities after the beginning of the first century BC concern the peculiar political structure of ancient Neapolis, as it seems to emerge from the surviving body of evidence, in particular for the period before and after the Social War (90–88 BC). Most previous studies—driven by assumptions about Naples’ identity as a ‘Greek city’—have stressed the conservative nature of the city’s constitution in Roman times, as well as its continuity with earlier Greek institutions. These seemingly sound assumptions have often taken on a life of their own within the scholarly debate. Nevertheless, a partially different picture seems to emerge when we approach the ancient source material in a new and possibly provocative way, drawing on some of the theories and methodologies of reception studies.

In this chapter I will examine the possibility that the institution of the Sebasta games in AD 2 led to a ‘hybridized’ reinvention of the former local Greek-styled magisterial outfit. The reversion to an earlier pattern of Greek city offices (now apparently centred upon

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an eponymous chief magistrate *demarchos* and an *agonothetes*, whose job it was to deal directly with the organization of the new games) was deeply significant for a city of Greek tradition like Naples. It may be linked to a political intervention in the local civic constitution which aimed to give an appropriate administrative apparatus to a *polis* that became the first centre in Italy where Isolympic games were held. If the suggestion I offer here is sound, it follows that the survival of the city's Greek culture and constitutional framework well into the Empire did not depend only on its Greek urban history and identity, but also on a politico-cultural 'revival' connected to the cultural traditions of the Hellenistic East, and in particular with the Olympic games.

This chapter will present and discuss the main literary and epigraphic evidence for the Neapolitan constitution and magistrates (in particular the offices of *demarchos*, *archon*, and *laukelarchos*), in order to single out uncontroversial points, with an emphasis on Naples' constitutional transformations in the shift from the Greek federate city to the enfranchised *municipium*. It will then move on to reconsider the traditional interpretations of this evidence, showing that some of the Greek magistracies in Naples were in fact substantially 'reinvented' at the time of the institution of the Sebasta games. It goes without saying that this new interpretation has significant consequences for our understanding of the interaction of Roman Naples' institutions and social life with the city's Greek past, allowing for a better assessment of the interplay of Roman and Greek elements in the civic elite culture of both Naples and imperial Italy.

HISTORY AND LAW IN NEAPOLIS—AN INTRODUCTION TO THE EVIDENCE

General historical accounts of Rome's first contact with Naples are given by Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus: these writers describe how Naples, which was allied with Nola and the Samnite League, was besieged by Roman troops in 327/6 BC after having raided the territory of Roman settlers in the *ager Campanus* and *ager Falernus*.¹ Since an

¹ Livy 8.23.3; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* 15.6.5–ff. On both sources see Oakley (1998), 629–46.

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early surrender was arranged by the Roman consul Q. Publilius Philo and two of the Neapolitan leaders, this city received a very favourable alliance with Rome and became a *civitas foederata*. According to the traditional view, this treaty was so generous that more than 200 years after the end (in 89 BC) of the Social War between Rome and her Italian allies—which ended largely thanks to the granting of citizenship by the Romans—most of the inhabitants of Naples did not initially want Roman citizenship at all, preferring ‘the freedom enjoyed under their own treaty’.² In fact, since the actual degree of freedom of Naples as a federate city theoretically implied no major change in either its constitutional status or the structure of its magistracies, such a vast public hesitation before accepting Roman citizenship is rather difficult to understand.

At a later stage, Naples was granted the status of colony—either under Titus, or in the late Antonine age, or under Caracalla.³ Since the evidence for the administrative restructuring of Campania in late antiquity is regrettably fragmentary (it consists primarily of occasional references to individual office holders), any reconstruction has been correspondingly tentative. Latin inscriptions from both Latium and Campania attest that between the last decades of the third and the first quarter of the fourth century AD Campania, like the rest of the new Italic districts, was put under the control of new officials, *correctores*, who were succeeded by *consulares*. Neapolis was part of this province, although Capua became the most important town in late antique Campania.⁴ Research into the evolving status of Neapolis and the political implications of the introduction of the municipal constitution by Rome is somewhat hindered by the significant gap in evidence for the period between the 326 BC treaty with Rome and the years after the granting of Roman citizenship to the Italians (in 90–88 BC). Beyond the references in ancient Greek and Roman literary sources, the main bulk of evidence for local practices and administrative structures in this earlier period comes from the surviving Greek and Latin inscriptions, most of which post-date 90 BC.⁵

² Cicero, *Balbus* 8.21 (trans. after R. Gardner, Loeb Classical Library 1958).

³ See *ILS* 6458 (dating to the first year of reign of Alexander Severus, AD 222): *Colonia Aurelia Augusta Antonina Felix Neapolis*. For the dating to the reign of Titus see Beloch (1989 [1890]), 40.

⁴ See Savino (2005), 18–26.

⁵ A rich collection of both literary and epigraphic evidence on Naples is provided by Morelli and Nenci (1952), 371–413. A comprehensive, commented collection of

Significantly, in terms of the theme of this volume, much modern discussion of the supposed adjustments and changes in Neapolis' constitution and administrative system after the Social War is dominated by presuppositions about the enduring Greek culture and heritage of this city. Both Mommsen and Kaibel insist on the pre-Roman roots of Neapolitan magistracies and Greek institutions, and attempt to connect the local magistrates and Roman municipal offices by assimilating the archons or the demarchs and the *agoranomoi* with the typical supreme magistracy of a *municipium*, namely the *quattuorviri iure dicundo* and *quattuorviri aediles*.⁶ Beloch, starting from the same assumption about the roots of Neapolitan magistrates in the Roman Empire, also underlines the fact that the archons were much the same as the Roman *quattuorvirate*, but points out that the demarchy had instead lost its importance in the political life of the city by the Antonine age, when it (like that of *laukelarchos*) had only religious functions.⁷ De Martino, on the other hand, states that after the 326 BC treaty with Rome and before it become a *municipium*, Neapolis underwent some constitutional changes (with the office of demarch being superseded by the new role of the archon), but even after 90–89 BC it retained the typical administrative structure of a Greek city.⁸ Sartori argues that such a change seems to be attested epigraphically by the end of the first century AD: accordingly, two archons (as *duoviri quinquennales*) and two *agoranomoi* became the main executive office-holders of Neapolis, thus matching the typical supreme magistracy of a standard *municipium*, namely the board of *quattuorviri*.⁹ Costabile asserts instead that, notwithstanding our scanty evidence, a gap in the constitutional history of Neapolis seems to occur during the first century BC, which must coincide with the introduction of a new administration based on the Roman

Naples' Greek inscriptions is found in Miranda (1990) and Miranda (1995). As for local Latin records, in addition to *CIL* 10.1 (1852) and its supplement in *Ephemeris Epigraphica* (1899), see Beloch (1989 [1890]), 26–88, and Leiwo (1994), *passim*.

⁶ Mommsen (1883), 171–2; Kaibel (1890), 191.

⁷ Cf. Beloch (1989 [1890]), 48; Beloch (1926), 506–8. For the role of the Greek heritage of Naples in the early Empire, see D'Arms (1970), 142–52; Lepore (1985), 121–2. On the readings of Mommsen, Kaibel, and Beloch, see the discussion in Pinsent (1969), 368–70. According to Tutini (1644), 241–5, the Neapolitan 'tribuno popolare' of the early Middle Ages had some kind of close historical and constitutional ties with the demarchs of Graeco-Roman Neapolis.

⁸ De Martino (1952 [1979]), 328–38, esp. 334.

⁹ Sartori (1953), 45–53.

pattern of municipal government (meanwhile, he argues that the explicit Greek survival of the pre-Social War constitution should be limited to the office of demarch).¹⁰ Furthermore, Lepore argues that the 'institutional decline' ('parabola istituzionale') of Naples began soon after Sulla's time, when the archons and *agoranomoi* were replaced by the *quattuorviri*.¹¹

In general, then, previous interpretations stress continuity between Greek and Roman forms of city administration, and emphasize how the Greek offices were preserved within the citizen *municipium*. Less emphasis is placed on how these offices may have been received and transformed into hybridized forms to fit the new political needs of a changing social and cultural environment, from the first century BC onwards. In the light of such extensive historical debate, another general reconsideration of the nature of the administrative structure of Neapolis after the Social War and under the Empire may seem unnecessary, particularly given the partial and problematic nature of the evidence. However, a new consideration of these issues starting from a much more careful analysis of the existing evidence may be illuminating, as the following example illustrates.

According to current academic opinion, it is believed that a lost fragmentary inscription from Naples (*IG* 14.745 = Miranda 1990, no. 33 = Leiwo 1994, no. 119), known to us through a seventeenth-century report, has to be regarded as the principal document testifying to the existence of the quattuorvirate after Neapolis became a citizen *municipium*. The text of this inscription tells us that it was set up by the inhabitants (*politai*) of Naples in honour (so it seems) of a certain 'Seleukos son of Seleukos', who is said to have held a number of important posts in this city—two of which seem to have been municipal offices or functions. According to the career recounted in this inscription, Seleukos had been a gymnasiarch and 'one of the college of four officials' (a college that has been identified with the Roman quattuorvirate), had held the otherwise unattested function of *laukelarchos*, and, finally, was also in charge of what has been interpreted as a quinquennial censor-like office (namely, either *duovir* or

¹⁰ Costabile (1984), 126–8 (he speaks of a 'costituzione mista' in Naples, unilaterally bestowed by Rome).

¹¹ Lepore (1985), 121. A similar view is found in Miranda (1985b), 386; Lomas (1993), 156.

quattuorvir quinquennalis).¹² Now, it is theoretically possible that Seleukos was either a transmarine Greek or an Oriental magnate who, after being incorporated as a townsman of Naples, was granted citizen status after the Social War (90–88 BC). But in this case it seems quite odd that Seleukos, who as a municipal magistrate was entitled to hold at different times two (different) high offices of a citizen *municipium*, is nevertheless recorded in what seems to be a publicly inscribed document using only his individual name and his patronymic, and not by any other nomenclature which may indicate that he had become a Roman citizen. Instead, another (this time funerary) inscription from Naples, possibly dating to the second century BC (IG 14.780 = Miranda 1995, no. 118), clearly indicates the enfranchisement of the (deceased) honorand along with his full nomenclature: *Gaius Herennius, son of Gaius, Rhomaïos*—that is, a Roman citizen.¹³ It may well be that Seleukos was allowed, as a resident Greek extern but not yet an ordinary Roman citizen, to take part in Naples' social life, fulfilling some of the functions that fell to the local magistrates of the *municipium*, such as looking after games and ceremonies. Nevertheless, the case of Cicero's associate L. Manlius Sosis of Catania (modern Catania) shows that this latter individual started his participation in civic life, becoming a member of the local council (*decurio*) of Naples, right *after* he was granted Roman citizenship by the *Lex Julia* (90 BC), even though he already was *ascriptus* in his adoptive *patria*—that is, a citizen and a resident of Neapolis.¹⁴ Even the second-century BC Greek inscriptions of the banker Philostratus of

¹² On Seleukos' inscription see De Martino (1952 [1979]), 332; Sartori (1953), 49 (for Seleukos as a 'magistrate' appointed to preside over the quinquennial games in honour of Aphrodite); Miranda (1990), 50–1; Leiwo (1994), 145–6. Pinsent (1969), 371 thinks that the 'conventional' formula of this honorary inscription is 'an alternative for' *agoranomēsanta*, that is, 'having held the function of a *agoranomos*', basically the equivalent of a Roman *aedilis*.

¹³ Miranda (1995), 47, rightly points out that 'Rhomaïos' is a specific addition which seems reasonable only if we date this text to the years before Naples became a Roman *municipium* (90 BC).

¹⁴ Cicero, *Letters to Friends* 13.30 (46–45 BC): 'Manlius Sosis was of Catania, but became a Roman citizen along with the other inhabitants of Naples, and a city councillor (*decurio*) in this city. For he was ascripted to that municipality before the citizenship was given to the allies and Latins.' On the *decuriones* and their role and offices in Roman imperial cities, see *Digest* I, 2. On L. Manlius Sosis, see Deniaux (1993), 325–6. On the procedure for gaining Roman citizenship through the *Lex Julia* and *Lex Plautia Papiria*, as well as on the case of Sosis, see Sherwin White (1973), 150–5.

Ascalon and his son Theophilus erected in Delos record that they both were citizens of Neapolis (and, naturally, of Ascalon) and do not hint at any public office they might have held in this city.¹⁵ Thus we are constrained to admit that the career of an individual like Seleukos is too poorly documented to prove either his precise legal condition or his role within the political life of the *municipium*. Conversely, if we tentatively suppose that the offices held by Seleukos—who does not seem to have been an enfranchised resident—were exclusively euergetic, it follows that his inscription cannot be taken to illustrate the official administrative structure of enfranchised Naples immediately after the Social War.¹⁶

The available evidence for Naples' administrative structure has the potential to contribute to the debate about the development of the civic offices which 'survived' from Greek times into the Roman imperial period; nevertheless, the discussion of Seleukos' career here has shown that, at least in this case, inscriptions are of limited use in understanding whether and how chief Greek magistracies were preserved or transformed during the introduction of the municipal constitution by Rome in the period after the Social War. The starting point of any further consideration of these issues must be the analysis set out here of the literary and epigraphic evidence dealing with Naples' main city offices.

DEMARCHS, ARCHONS, LAUKELARCHS

In his famous excursus on Neapolis (on which see Lorenzo Miletto, Chapter 2 of this volume), Strabo emphasizes that the earliest names of their demarchs 'are Greek only, whereas the later are Greek mixed with Campanian. And very many traces of Greek culture are preserved there—gymnasia, ephebeia, phratry, and Greek names [. . .], although the people are Romans'.¹⁷ It is worth noting that Strabo clearly recognizes as the most distinctive Greek features of Neapolis

¹⁵ See Leiwo (1989), 575–84.

¹⁶ The *nomen* Seleukos/Seleucus in Naples is unattested: see Leiwo (1994), 145. His Greek name leads us to wonder whether this Seleukos might have been either an athlete or an illustrious member of a community from the Greek East, settled in Naples as a foreign resident.

¹⁷ Strabo 5.4.7 (trans. after H. L. Jones, Loeb Classical Library 1923).

its gymnasia, its clubs of ephebes (young men), and its phratries: apart from the demarchs, there is no reference to any other Greek civic magistrature or office in this passage. Moreover, according to Strabo, besides Neapolis only Tarentum and Rhegium survived a complete 'barbarization'.¹⁸ Guy Bradley has rightly pointed out that 'these are surprising choices to pick as standard-bearers of Greek culture in Italy, since Tarentum had received a Roman colony in the late second century and Rhegium was not only seized by the Roman legion which had been sent to garrison it in the early second century (and which killed most of the population in the process, according to Strabo) but had also been colonised by veterans in the late Republic'.¹⁹ Strabo is one of the most significant of all our sources and his description of Neapolis has generated the idea that this city was a distinguished but fairly typical example of 'Greek tradition' in Italy, whose Greek language, culture, and institutions resembled those of other Greek democratic communities (a city council, an assembly of citizens, and elected chief magistrates, of whom one or more held the eponymous supreme annual magistracy, so that each year could be named after its chief magistrate in office).²⁰ Instead, such a peculiar articulation of Roman Neapolis' political structure may well be seen as a reflection of what Kathryn Lomas has appropriately called 'the revival of Hellenism' during the first and early second centuries AD, that is, 'a cultural construct, not something which is consequent on ethnicity'.²¹ It is therefore worth considering whether we should interpret Neapolis' municipal structures in the first and second centuries AD in terms of a deliberate 'revival of Hellenism' through a process of manipulation of Greek heritage by the local elite, fostered by the central government. But first a word of warning, in general,

¹⁸ Strabo 6.1.2.

¹⁹ Bradley (2006), 177. As for southern Italy's 'specifically Greek identity until the second century AD', cf. Lomas (1995), 114 ff.

²⁰ For Neapolis as a city of recognizably Greek culture, see e.g. Cicero, *Archias* 3.5; Strabo 5.7 (C 247); Statius, *Silvae* 3.5.85–104; Dio Cassius 60.6.1–2; for explicit reference to Neapolis as a 'Greek city' in Nero's times see Tacitus, *Annals* 15.33. For discussion of this commonplace, see Leiwo (1994), 42–5, and my own conclusions below.

²¹ See Lomas (1993), 181. According to Lomas, this kind of Hellenism 'was largely an elite construct since it appears primarily in the inscriptions of the urban elite'; 'such an emphasis on Hellenism in civic life in cities which were not predominantly Greek in population and were certainly Romanised in their municipal structures lies in the prevailing philhellenism of the Roman elite'.

about the fact that we have to work with a fairly small and very particular selection of documents, which create difficulty in assessing sound and univocal interpretations.

The passage of Strabo cited above suggests that, at some point before the city became a *municipium*, the annual lists of Neapolis' chief eponymous magistrates were made up of, or must have included, demarchs. As for their function, since Neapolitan demarchs 'cannot have anything to do with demarchs as they are known in Athens and Cos', Frederiksen suggests that 'perhaps their functions were to preside over and answer to the popular assembly'.²² Sherk, on the other hand, suggests that 'the demarchs were actually eponymous in the Roman era', that is, until the end of the second century AD Naples possessed the (nominal) privilege of naming the year after its Greek-style higher magistrates, the demarchs, as we may infer from an inscription of AD 71 as well as from an honorary decree of AD 194.²³ According to the epigraphic evidence, the office of demarch still seems to be referred to as a magistracy of the civic political cursus even after Neapolis was given the status of a colony, that is, during the second or third centuries AD or later, as corroborated by the inscription of Munatius Concessianus, a prominent local figure.²⁴ Nevertheless, both from an administrative and a political point of view, it seems very unlikely that this office's role and powers remained unchanged in the transition from the Greek constitution to Roman types of municipal and, later, colonial government.

As far as the role and functions of the archons are concerned, the arguments advanced within the scholarly discourse have often been very general. To contribute to the debate, it is therefore worth taking

²² Frederiksen (1984), 92. Liebenam (1900), 292 thinks that in Naples they were 'einst die erste Obrigkeit, jetzt noch eine hohe Ehrenstellung'. Both Liebenam (1900) and D'Arms ((1970), 151, 162–3) underline that even a pantomimist, P. Aelius Antigenides, became *demarchos* in Naples during the Antonine age. On Antigenides' honorary inscription, see Miranda (1990), no. 47.

²³ Sherk (1993), 274. For both these inscriptions, see Miranda (1990), nos. 84 and 44.

²⁴ See *CIL* 10.1492 / *ILS* 6459, from Naples. This honorary inscription praises L. Munatius Concessianus, *patronus coloniae* and *vir perfectissimus*, for his benefactions and outstanding munificence, especially when his son held *demarchia*. Since Neapolis seems to be referred to here as *colonia*, it follows that this text cannot be earlier than the Severan age, after Neapolis was promoted in status from citizen *municipium* to Roman colony. According to Leiwo (1994), 156, this inscription indicates that the office of *demarchos* 'was kept up until the late empire'.

another, closer look at individual sources. By putting together the evidence from Dionysius of Halicarnassus (15.6.1–3) and an inscription of the second half of the third century BC from Cos, modern scholars have argued that the town council, the primary assembly, and supreme magistrates called *archontes* were working in Naples from at least the middle of the fourth century BC onwards. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the formula used in the aforementioned decree from Cos in relation to a resolution of the Neapolitan ‘*archontes*, Council and People’ is very generic, and cannot be used to determine the political structure of Neapolis in the third century BC. Such epigraphic formality was a typical feature of inscriptions dealing with the formal, diplomatic, military, and financial relationship between Greek cities, Hellenistic kings, and, later, Rome; they served to name and specify all the standard offices and governmental functions of a city or community, and examples of such usage are attested well into the Roman Empire.²⁵ It is worth noting that only Neapolitan inscriptions, two decrees of the early first century AD, make reference to the posts of archon and *antarchon* (deputy archon).²⁶ There is in fact no epigraphic evidence for the office of archon before the early Empire: therefore, it remains wholly unclear whether its functions in Greek times differed from those kept up well into the imperial period. As far as one can say from the existing evidence, one might simply argue that in imperial Naples *archontes*, rather than a specific municipal magistracy, were subsidiary officials whose role seems to be that of overseeing the town council, when summoned to make decrees.²⁷

²⁵ For the Coan decree (recording that special agents called *theoroi* had been dispatched from Cos to Naples, to win from this city public recognition of the inviolability of the Asclepius sanctuary in Cos) and its address formulae, see *SEG* 12.378. Other examples of such conventional formulae are given, e.g., by the letter of Q. Oppius to Aphrodisias’ *archontes*, *boule*, and *demos* (Reynolds (1982), doc. 3: 88 BC), by Antoninus Pius’ letters to Ephesians (Abbott-Johnson (1968), nos. 100–1: between AD 140 and 145) as well as by the letter from AD 174 written by the Tyrian *stationarii* at *Puteoli* and addressed to the *archontes*, *boule*, and *demos* of their mother-city, the colony of Tyre (*IGR* 1.421). On this major subject, Jones’s synthetic view of ‘the Greek City’ remains essential (Jones (1940), 46–7, 174–8).

²⁶ For the Neapolitan inscriptions recording the post of *archon*, see Miranda (1990), nos. 82, l. 7 and 85, l. 13. For the *antarchon*, cf. Miranda (1990), nos. 84, l. 8 and 85, ll. 6 and 18. On *archontikos*, see Miranda (1990), no. 34, ll. 5 and 9.

²⁷ It is worth noting that analogous lesser officials presided over the Attic Panhellenion, a congress of the Greek city and federal states, founded by Hadrian for religious, political, and cultural purposes: the archon (appointed by the emperor) was assisted by an *antarchon*. See Boatwright (2000), 144–9.

As for the *laukelarchoi*, many attempts have been made to determine their origin and functions (whether these were religious or political), but the role of this office within the civic life of Neapolis remains unknown. It is, however, significant that a Neapolitan Greek inscription of imperial times which deals with the procedure for appointing a new member into a council (*boule*) of former *laukelarchs* probably refers to a sacred rather than a civil board.²⁸

So far, we have seen that any attempt to reconstruct the administrative structures of Roman Neapolis generally involves an attempt to trace them back to the early Greek city's constitution. According to such an interpretation, Neapolis' original Greek magistracies continued to exist well into the Empire, 'fused' (or confused) in a complex manner with the new institutions of the Roman *colonia*. As a long-lasting symbol of the city's identity, these offices became 'complementary' to the essential core of the career system of Roman administration; we may be inclined to think that under the Empire the *demarchos* and the other main Neapolitan magistrates 'ceased to have any real political or administrative significance' and that their functions became simply honorific.²⁹ My approach to these issues, as noted above, consciously diverges from the prevailing fashion, which is to treat such historical developments as little more than a model for constructing the cultural identity and political institutions of Naples under the Empire. In what follows, I want to suggest that it is crucial instead to focus on the institution of the new games in Naples, the *Sebasta*, and to evaluate the impact that these games had on both the administrative pattern and urban social life of Naples under the Principate.

²⁸ See Miranda (1990), no. 4, dated to the second–third centuries AD, and (on their function) Miranda (1990), 18 (who rightly points out that the office of *laukelalarchoi* could be different from that of the *laukelarchesantes*, namely former *laukelarchoi*). This office is attested in both Greek (see Miranda 1990, nos. 3, 4, 30, 33, 40) and Latin inscriptions (*ILS* 6455), but, contrary to the *demarchos*, *laukelalarchos* is never displayed as an eponymous magistrate. Full discussion in Miranda (1990), 17–18; Girone (1994), 81–7; Dubois (1994), 157–62. Frederiksen (1984), 92 rightly observes that, in addition to *laukelarchoi*, the powers and titles of the military and naval offices of ancient Neapolis are also unknown.

²⁹ Thus Lomas (1993), 151. As for the (seemingly) honorary *demarchate* given to the emperor Hadrian, see SHA, *Hadrian* 19.1. According to the conjectural restorations of the editors of a local Greek inscription, Titus also held the post of *demarchos* in Naples: see *IG* 14.729 = Miranda (1990), no. 20.

THE IMPERIAL REGIME, HELLENISM,
AND THE SEBASTA GAMES

After a general introduction to the urban magistrates' duties in arranging civic feasts and games and, in particular, to euergetism and donations of games and festivals of the Neapolitan elite, I would like to argue here that a substantial and decisive change in both the cultural history and the structure of political and public life in Naples was brought to bear by the establishment of the Sebasta games in AD 2, and that some of the Greek-style offices or functionaries attested in local inscriptions (most of which date from the early Empire) may have been instituted in connection with this important new festival.

First, some general background to the Roman magistracies' care of festivals and games. The epigraphic evidence clearly attests that, from an early date, new supreme magistrates and decurions of the Roman and Greek cities of the Empire, as well as the holders of civic priest-hoods and gymnasiarchs, were expected to contribute a variable sum of money to the municipal life of their home towns. This money, together with other donations from eminent local individuals and families, was primarily used to finance major urban building programmes. In addition, local magistrates and leading families also sometimes sponsored the distribution of money, food, or oil for the gymnasia, as well as costly public displays, competitions, performances, and games, which were held either in connection with religious rites and festivals or as part of some important public event.³⁰

As for acts of public munificence in Roman Naples, Pliny the Elder informs us that the emperor Claudius appointed both Stertinius Xenophon (a famous physician) and his brother at 500,000 sesterces

³⁰ On *honores* and *munera* undertaken by the magistrates of Greek and Roman cities, see the full discussion in Abbott and Johnson (1968), 84–116; Langhammer (1973), 161–88, 219–62. On elite politics of munificence and civic euergetism in early imperial Italy, see Lomas (2003a), esp. 38–9. As for the main areas of civic euergetism of local magistrates in Latium and Campania, cf. Cébeillac Gervasoni (1998), ch. 4. According to the very important imperial dossier recently found at Alexandria Troas (north-western Turkey), which consists of three letters from the emperor Hadrian dating from the year AD 134 (replying to the requests made by the associations of theatrical performers and their members which met in Naples at the Sebasta of the same year), it is expressly stated that a city cannot 'apply to other expenditures the revenues of a contest that are managed according to law or decree or contractual agreement': on this document (and its English translation) see Slater (2008), 610–20; *AE* 2006.1403 a–c, with a French trans. of the Greek text.

a year: after this, in spite of large sums that they had spent 'by beautifying Naples with buildings, [they] left to the heir thirty millions'.³¹ If we look at those Neapolitan inscriptions that relate to civic munificence, we find that the texts connected to acts of euergetism are relatively rare: in addition to the fragmentary inscription commemorating Titus' restoration of the city (probably after the earthquake of AD 62³²), we have only two other badly damaged texts recording similar undertakings.³³ Despite this scarce evidence, it is clear that the local civic elite displayed their generosity by helping to embellish and restore Naples' buildings and infrastructures, possibly because the civic government was (especially after some serious events such as earthquakes) structurally unable to finance both the urban infrastructure and amenities from public revenues. But the really surprising thing about epigraphic evidence from Naples concerning euergetic expenditure on games or arrangements for the celebration of the civic festivals and rites either by local benefactors or by Naples' chief magistrates is actually the absence of data from inscriptions. Even the twelve attested Neapolitan phratries (the exclusively local permanent foundations dealing with their own cults and meetings) do not seem to have provided any income for the public feasts of the city.³⁴ This makes it rather difficult to reconstruct the ceremonial life of Naples both before and at the same time as the establishment of the Sebasta games for Augustus. All that is clear is that the torch race—an event connected with the festival of the eponymous goddess Parthenope which seems to have played an important religious and cultural role in Naples since the last decades of the fifth century BC—was still being held in Roman times.³⁵ Since two Neapolitan inscriptions can be connected with the worship of Leucatheia and Athena Sikele, and two other local fragmentary texts (both now lost) seem to allude to a civic, sacred 'quinquennial contest', we may presume that a series of prominent Greek-style festivals were periodically held in Naples

³¹ Pliny, *Natural History* 29.8 (trans. after W. H. S. Jones, Loeb Classical Library 1951).

³² See Miranda (1990), no. 20. ³³ Miranda (1990), nos. 36, 39.

³⁴ See Miranda (1990), nos. 42–6.

³⁵ For the introduction (in about 430–420 BC) of the torch race within the festival of Parthenope, see discussion in Peterson (1919), 176–81, who thinks that even later 'the race with lighted torches would remain the central feature of the celebration'. According to Statius (*Silvae* 4.8.50–1), torches were also connected with the current ritual practice of the local cult of Actaea Ceres.

during the Republic and the Empire, although no reliable literary or epigraphic evidence which might help us to reconstruct their institution and/or management has survived.³⁶ The lack of literary and epigraphic evidence alluding to local elite benefactors honoured for their public munificence or engagement in civic religious cults, festivals, and ceremonies makes it tempting to suppose that, at least during the Julio-Claudian period, the popularity of these festivals was challenged by a new opportunity for both the reinforcement of the civic unity and for the persistence of its cultural identity: the Sebasta games (in full *Italika Rhomaia Sebasta Isolympia*).³⁷

As F. Millar has emphasized, ‘the sudden outburst of the celebration of Octavian/Augustus was a new phenomenon’ from 30/29 BC onwards, which started from the provinces of Asia and Bithynia, by formal permission of Octavian.³⁸ As clearly expressed by him, such a turn of events ‘was new first in its wide diffusion at the city level and above all in the creation [...] of provincial cults, with common temples of Roma and Augustus, common annual games associated with them, and annual high priesthoods’.³⁹ In a passage that undoubtedly reflects the reality of the 20s BC too, Dio Cassius writes about the Roman emperors’ commitment to avoid any overt sign of an institutionalized imperial city cult in Italy: ‘For in the capital itself

³⁶ For Leucatheia and Athena Sikele see, respectively, Miranda (1995) nos. 94 and 112, which can be dated between the first century BC and first century AD; Miranda (1998), 231 ff. For the ‘quinquennial contest’ see Miranda (1990), nos. 30 and 33 (possibly late republican). For the religious functions of one of the offices there listed, see Sartori (1953), 52–3.

³⁷ Cf. Miranda (1990), no. 52; Beloch (1989 [1890]), 51. Geer disagrees with Beloch, and also objects to other modern attempts to connect Neapolitan sacred contests held in honour of Parthenope with the more comprehensive Sebasta: Geer (1935), 216–18. Strabo (5.4.7) still refers to ‘a gymnastic contest’ (set up at the suggestion of an oracle, which seems to have been celebrated at the grave of Parthenope), which points to a reduced importance of this sacred festival, as suggested by Cavallaro (1984), 179–80. A set of inscriptions relating to the Neapolitan Sebasta, written in Greek and broken into more than 1,000 pieces after having fallen from the wall of the gymnasium portico where they were located, were discovered in 2004 at the Duomo Metro station in Piazza Nicola Amore in Naples. They have been dated to the late first century AD on both historical and prosopographical grounds; the slabs that have been joined together and published so far record lists of victors, events, and features of this festival. One of the most revealing is the fragment referring to a *lampas* (torch) ‘for Augustus’; this is probably the same torch race that is mentioned in Strabo’s account, and thus seems to confirm that the Sebasta did include a torch race. On these new documents see Miranda (2007), 203–10; Miranda (2010), 417–20.

³⁸ See Dio Cassius 51.20.6–9.

³⁹ See Millar (2002), 308.

and in Italy generally no emperor, however of renown he has been, dared to do this [namely, to allow precincts or temples consecrated to himself], still, even there various divine honours are bestowed after their death upon such emperors as have ruled uprightly, and, in fact, shrines are built to them.⁴⁰ At the same time, Cavallaro has drawn attention to another passage of Dio Dio (55.10.9) in which he explains why Naples was the only city in Italy allowed to establish penteteric Greek games in honour of Augustus, that is, ‘nominally because he [Augustus] had restored it [Naples] when it was prostrated by earthquake and fire, but in reality because its inhabitants, alone of the Campanians, tried in a manner to imitate the customs of the Greeks’.⁴¹ Since these were the first games of their kind to be instituted on Italian soil until the Neronia (and, later the Capitoline Agon) were founded in the very capital city of the Empire, Cavallaro considers that a sacred festival in Augustus’ honour called the Sebasta (the Greek equivalent to ‘Augustan’) was held in Neapolis, by means of a decree of the Roman Senate from 2 BC, because a celebration of this kind could be justified only if firstly established into ‘Greek’ Italy.⁴² Now, if this assumption is accepted, it follows that the three-year interval between the date of the formal senatorial decree authorizing the Sebasta and the actual year of their first celebration (from 2 BC to AD 2) was necessary not simply to coordinate new *Italika Rhomaia Sebasta Isolympia* games with the 195th Olympic games. In fact, as Swan suggests, such an interval between the ‘constitution’ and celebration of the Sebasta is ‘unremarkable’, ‘given the pre-eminence of the figure to be honoured, the need to construct or refurbish facilities, and time required for publicizing and organizing a new ecumenical event’.⁴³

⁴⁰ Dio Cassius 51.20.8 (trans. after E. Cary, Loeb Classical Library 1914–27).

⁴¹ On Dio’s passage, in addition to Cavallaro (1984), 176–9, see Swan (2004), 101. It is worth bearing in our mind that—as Geer rightly notes—up to the end of the first century AD the Neapolitan Sebasta were ‘the most important games of the Greek type to be celebrated in the western half of the Roman Empire’. Geer (1935), 208.

⁴² According to Cavallaro, the 2 BC senatorial decree was followed by an analogous local decision that Velleius 2.123 seems to be referring to: ‘An athletic contest which the Neapolitans had established in his [namely, Augustus’] honour [. . .]’ (trans. after F. W. Shipley, Loeb Classical Library 1924). Cavallaro (1984), 177. On formal public spectacles as a fundamental feature of the ideology of the Augustan regime, see e.g. Beacham (2005), 160–73.

⁴³ Cf. Swan (2004), 102–3. He further argues that the Roman Actian games in Augustus’ honour, ‘first celebrated 28 BC [. . .], had been voted two or three years earlier’: cf. Dio Cassius 53.1.4–5 and 51.19.2.

In consequence, it does not seem excessively adventurous to assume that the institution of the *Sebasta* in 2 BC and their first celebration in AD 2 constituted a real turning point in Naples' public life.⁴⁴ Strabo clearly underlines that 'at the present time' these sacred games, which consisted of gymnastic contests and (possibly at a later stage) musical competitions, celebrated at Naples every four years and lasting several days, vied 'with the most famous of those celebrated in Greece'.⁴⁵ The extraordinary importance of the *Italika Rhomaia Sebasta Isolympia* games is not only confirmed by the fact that this festival was to be used as a basis of a new chronology, 'the new era to be reckoned by *Italids* instead of *Olympiads*', but 'is further indicated by the attention paid to them by various emperors' of the first two centuries.⁴⁶ As is well known, some days before his death in AD 14 Augustus decided to attend 'an athletic contest', that is the *Sebasta*, 'although he had already experienced [. . .] a change of his health for the worse'.⁴⁷ According to Dio Cassius, Claudius in Neapolis 'lived altogether like an ordinary citizen; for both he and his associates adopted the Greek manner of life in all respects, wearing a cloak and high boots, for example, at the musical exhibitions, and a purple mantle and golden crown at the gymnastic contests', a description that forcefully reminds us of the *agonothete* garments.⁴⁸ 'In memory of his brother [Germanicus], whom he took every opportunity of honouring, he brought out a Greek comedy [by his brother Germanicus] in the contest at Naples, and awarded it the crown in accordance with the decision of the judges'.⁴⁹ Even Nero, whose main interest was involving Roman citizens in Greek-style games within the very bounds of Rome by instituting a public quinquennial festival,

⁴⁴ For the institution year of these games, for the first year in which they were actually held and for their performance events, as well as for possible political and cultural explanations, see the exhaustive discussion in Cavallaro (1984), 176–9.

⁴⁵ Strabo 5.6.7 (trans. after H. L. Jones, Loeb Classical Library 1923).

⁴⁶ Quotations from, respectively, Ringwood Arnold (1960), 246–7; Geer (1935), 214–15. For *Italidis* (the four-year period running from one celebration of the *Sebasta* to the next) in an agonistic inscription from Naples, see Miranda (1990), no. 52.

⁴⁷ Velleius 2.123.1 (trans. after F. W. Shipley, Loeb Classical Library 1924).

⁴⁸ Cf. e.g. Robert (1970), 7 nn. 4 and 5.

⁴⁹ Thus, rightly, Cavallaro (1984), 174 n. 72. *Contra*: Geer (1935), 214. In Geer's view, Claudius' presidency over these games in AD 42 is certain, but only probable according to Cavallaro (1984), 174 n. 72. The two passages cited above are, respectively, from Dio Cassius 60.6.1–2 (trans. after E. Cary, Loeb Classical Library 1914–27) and from Suetonius, *Claudius* 11.2 (trans. after J. C. Rolfe, Loeb Classical Library 1913–14).

the Neronia, displayed his lyric talents for the first time on the public stage at Naples in AD 64, which 'he fixed upon [. . .] as a Greek city'.⁵⁰ Whereas Nero, as far as one can say, did not preside over or take part in the Sebasta games, imperial interest in this festival was renewed in the time of the Flavians. Both Titus and Domitian served as *agonothetes* for the Sebasta three times: the former between AD 70 and 80–1; the latter presumably in AD 82, 86, and 90.⁵¹ At the same festival, in August/September of AD 134, perhaps at the time when he was awarded an honorary demarchate,⁵² Hadrian met with the representatives of the guilds of the athletes and the Dionysiac artists, together with delegates from many of the major cities of the East, in order to discuss important issues such as the (re)ordering of festivals and the related financial aspects and game regulations.⁵³ Consequently, since Naples owed a special position to the institution of the new Isolympic games and could be seen by both the Italian cities and the provinces as being a real Greek *polis*, it seems only right to assume that it was precisely because of this peculiar condition that Naples was given the privilege of an 'abnormal' internal constitution. In sum, in our present state of knowledge there is no good reason to exclude the possibility that, by the institution of the Sebasta, it was the eponymous *demarchos* that was retained at Naples as the most significant and eminent office of the earlier Greek city. Since it is this very office that was conferred on to the emperors, the suspicion is that in the Augustan period it was reinvented, by the first celebration of the Sebasta, within a 'hybridized' Roman pattern of municipal government.⁵⁴ Consequently, we may suppose that the colourless

⁵⁰ Tacitus, *Annals* 15.33 (trans. after J. Jackson, Loeb Classical Library 1937). On the Greek-styled festivals instituted by Nero in Rome, cf. Morford (1985), 2018–21.

⁵¹ According to Geer, Titus presided at the Sebasta in AD 74 and 78, and at 'some special games at the time of the dedication in 80 AD or 81 AD': Geer (1935), 215. Miranda ((1990), 36–7, no. 19) suggests that only the *agonothesia* of AD 70 and 74 are certain, whereas the third is not datable. On Domitian's *agonothesia*, as well as those held by some prominent figures of the Roman elite in the late first century AD, and for the Neapolitan Sebasta in the light of the new information discovered in the 2004 excavations in Piazza Nicola Amore, see Miranda (2010), 417–20.

⁵² SHA Hadrianus 19.1.

⁵³ See *AE* 2006: 1403 b, line 5. Unless one is inclined to think that this honorary office was given to Hadrian during his Campanian excursion in AD 119 or 120. For imperial involvement in building activity and imperial contributions to the cities of Campania up to the fourth–fifth century AD, see D'Arms (1970), ch. 4, and Savino (2005), *passim*.

⁵⁴ In the Antonine age this office was even given to non-Neapolitans, as in the case of the *pantomimis* P. Aelius Antigenidas (see Miranda 1990, no. 47), 'striking testimony to the local importance attached to such performances': D'Arms (1970), 151.

title of demarch, which over time was increasingly overshadowed by the typical supreme magistracies of the *municipium*, was officially used again to designate the year (as Greek-style eponymous magistrates) when quinquennial Sebasta games were celebrated. No wonder that *demarchoi* also appeared in official documents, alongside the name of the consuls, as a sort of double dating by eponyms.⁵⁵

CONCLUSIONS

It is noteworthy that, according to Dio Cassius, one of the alleged justifications for allowing the celebration of a quinquennial sacred Greek-styled festival in Italy in honour of Augustus was that it was to be held in the most thoroughly Greek of the Italian cities: Naples.⁵⁶ We might remember that Strabo's description of Naples identified the demarchs, its gymnasia, its associations of ephebes, and its phratries as the most distinctive Greek features of this city: these elements seem to have been sufficient to allow Naples to represent itself as a real Greek *polis* well into the Principate. It seems reasonable to assume that both the organization and management of the *Italika Rhomaia Sebasta Isolympia* games (which must also have been recognized in the Greek world as worthy of sacred rank) were modelled upon an old Greek festival. Epigraphic evidence explicitly suggests that the Sebasta were entrusted to *agonothetai*, at least in the early Principate.⁵⁷ Most

⁵⁵ See e.g. Miranda (1990), nos. 44, 55, and 84; Miranda (2010), 418, for the only (fragmentary) Neapolitan inscription containing the current date according to the names of the year's *agonothetes*, of the demarch, and of the consuls. By means of the existing epigraphic evidence, it is impossible to say whether a single demarch or a board of demarchs was elected every five years, so that its members served one year each in rotation, or whether the term of office was normally a single one of five years, in order to correspond with the quinquennial Sebasta festival.

⁵⁶ Or according to Dio Cassius' source, as suggested by Cavallaro (1984), 177–8. As for whether a city cult and a sacrifice directed at Augustus were introduced as part of the celebration into the series of the events in the Neapolitan Sebasta before or after his death, see Geer (1935), 220–1; Miranda (1998), 236–8.

⁵⁷ *IvO* 56 (ll. 23 and 34) refers to *agonothetai* (therefore, two or more) and their organizational duties in these games. This has been considered a document of the Neapolitan council defining the 'regulations' of the Sebasta, to be advertised 'to the crowds that gathered at the Olympian festival': Geer (1935), 209–10. On the *agonothesia*, its double character of liturgy and office, and its formal duties, according to the epigraphic evidence, see Liebenam (1900), 373–4.

of this burden was organizational rather than financial, since the funding for both the prizes and the infrastructure of the shows was contributed by either emperors or prominent members of the Roman elite (or both), who also served as *agonothetes* of these games. It is therefore reasonable to argue (although it cannot be proved on the basis of the existing evidence) that in addition to gymnasiarchs, presiding *agonothetes* were assisted in Naples by a body of new regular subsidiary functionaries and attendants whose job it was to serve at the Sebasta, and that the less prominent *laukelarchoi* were possibly also part of this staff.⁵⁸ It is impossible to know whether this office was originally a religious one, or whether it developed into a liturgical function connected with the Sebasta, so that it grew in prominence at the expense of traditional local priesthoods. It is worth noting that the only record that testifies to the celebration of a ‘quinquennial contest in honour of the gods’ (which is obviously different from the Sebasta games) is an honorary inscription set up by an unknown phratry to L. Herennius Ariston as benefactor.⁵⁹ Unfortunately, it is impossible to establish whether he performed this ceremony as *demarchos* or *laukelarchos* (the posts he held in Naples, in addition to *grammateus*, according to this inscription) or as a private individual. What we may infer is that such a Neapolitan ‘(sacred) contest in honour of the gods’ is probably the procession to the *Kaisareion* to sacrifice to the gods of the city and to Augustus, a ritual act mentioned in the Olympia inscription (lines 49–50): that is, a definitive, central event of the Sebasta programme that was not entrusted to the presiding *agonothetes*.⁶⁰ And this in turn indicates that further study of the function of Neapolitan magistrates—both within the local administrative structure and in relation to the celebration of the Sebasta—may shed further light on their duties and the nature of their power.

⁵⁸ At the very damaged end of the Olympia inscription about the Sebasta we find the names of *agonothetes*’ traditional attendants: *mastigophoroi* (whipbearers) and a *xystarches* (generally a prominent athlete that emperors appointed to control the activities of the associations in his home town): cf. *IvO*: n. 56 (l. 51).

⁵⁹ The inscription referring to this phratry, one out of twelve (or thirteen) Neapolitan ‘social groups’ concerned with the organization of local cyclic religious feasting and meetings, is now lost and only known in a seventeenth-century report. It supposedly dates to the second half of the first century BC: see Miranda (1990), no. 30.

⁶⁰ For the *Kaisareion* (that is, the temple devoted to the worship of the emperor) see Miranda (2007), 207–8.

At present, these conclusions can be only tentative, in part because concrete evidence relating to this issue is scarce. Nevertheless, as a working hypothesis it may be quite useful insofar as it provides a plausible solution to some puzzling aspects of the relationship between Naples' Greek administrative structures and the constitution of the Roman citizen *municipium*. Needless to say, this model is still provisional, and its central assumptions still remain to some extent hypothetical. Hopefully, though, it is now clear that any further investigation into city magistrates holding offices at Neapolis between the Social War and late antiquity has to start not from the oversimplistic concept that Neapolis was a 'Greek city' but rather from an examination of the hitherto untapped evidence of the Latin inscriptions from Naples that relate or allude to local municipal offices (included in *CIL* 10.1), in order to define their uncertain history or to determine their original archaeological context.⁶¹ Only after such careful investigation may we begin to conjecture why substantial traces of Roman municipal offices have not been preserved in local epigraphic records written in Latin, and understand the complex processes of cultural memory and reception of the past that were at work in the Roman city.

⁶¹ Even Rome is labelled a 'Greek city' by Juvenal (3.60), whereas the identity of the unnamed coastal Campanian 'Greek city' where the *Cena* in Petronius' *Satyricon* (81) is held is still disputed.