



[Hierapolis and a Greek Sophist in the Roman Administration](#) [1]

Honours for a member of a prominent and cultured family from Hierapolis which was given Roman citizenship and participated actively in the Roman administration.

Typology (Honorific / Funerary / etc.): Honorific

Original Location/Place: North-west of the Theatre of Hierapolis

Actual Location (Collection/Museum): Hierapolis, Pamukkale (Turkey)

Date: 150 CE to 200 CE

Language: Greek

Category: Roman, Greek

Publications:

Judeich, Walther, *Altertümer von Hierapolis*, Berlin: G. Reimer, 1898, p. 80-81, no. 31 [IGR IV.819]

Commentary:

[Hierapolis](#) [2] was a major urban centre in the conjunction between Phrygia, Lydia, Caria, and the Meander valley. Today this site is best known for the spectacular archaeological remains surviving on top of a series of scenic travertine terraces called Pamukkale ("cotton fortress"). During the Roman imperial period, the city was institutionally Greek and produced a significant number of surviving inscriptions attesting its political life, local population and relationship with the ruling power (see Ritti, *An epigraphic guide*). Our text belongs to this context and records the honours granted to a Roman citizen called P. Aelius Zeuxidemus Ariston Zenon (PIR² A 281). Despite its concise content, this testimony is important for illustrating change in the provincial administration of the eastern Mediterranean and its impact on the local elites.

As expected, the inscription opens with the honouring institutions. Council (?????/*boulê*) and people (?????/*dêmos*) constituted the quintessential structures of Greek cities and, on this occasion, they were joint by the "Greeks in Asia" (?? ??? ??? ?????? ??????/*hoi epi tês Asias Hellênes*). The latter group designated the members of the commonalty (or *koinon*) in the province of Asia who – among other things – were in charge of supervising the imperial cult of Rome. Their participation in the honours of Hierapolis would be motivated by the prominent position of the honouree's father, P. Aelius Zeuxidemus Cassianus (PIR² A 282), as high-priest of Asia (????????? ??????/*archiereus Asias*; see Campanille, *I sacerdoti*, p. 54). By virtue of another inscription from Aizanoi (*MAMA* 9.26), it is known that the local dignitary was not only highly regarded by the population of the province, but also esteemed by the Roman administration. Both factors explain his appointment as *curator rei publicae* (or ?????????/*logistês*) of the Phrygian community in the reign of (P. Aelius) Hadrian. On account of such praiseworthy activities and Zeuxidemus Cassianus's nomenclature, it must also be inferred that this emperor granted him Roman citizenship. However, P. Aelius Zeuxidemus Cassianus did not belong to the class of Roman professional administrators that progressed through a variety of posts in the provinces.

The case of his son P. Aelius Zeuxidemus Ariston Zenon is different. Our inscription honours him as a ?????????? ??? ?????????/*synêgoros tou tameiou*, which is the Greek rendering of the Latin *advocatus fisci* (see Pflaum, *Les carrières*, no. 205 and Kantor, "Law in Roman Phrygia", p. 159). This position related to financial matters did belong to the career of Roman administrators and was most commonly held by members of the equestrian order (Demougin, "L'ordre équestre"). In other words, this family had achieved to progress remarkably in the social ranks of the empire within just one generation. Such a spectacular progression for a second-generation Roman citizen was exceptional in the early imperial period, but became more common in the 2nd century CE. This process coincided with the progressive substitution of freedmen for equestrians in the provincial administration and opened up new routes of quick promotion for capable individuals (see Millar, *The emperor*, p. 83-101). Even if the equestrian career was traditionally achieved through the military ranks, local notables in the eastern Mediterranean started to be accepted on account of their wealth and culture (see Heath, *Menander the Rhetor*, p. 277-321). Zeuxidemus's family in Hierapolis belonged to this latter category (see



Bowersock, *Greek Sophists*, p. 55-56 and Bowie, "The Importance", p. 46-47). Not only did the father fulfil his expensive aspiration to become high-priest of Asia, but also the family is known to keep slaves and freedmen in Hierapolis (*I.Hierapolis* 110). As for culture, the life of his grandson is even more illustrative.

According to Philostratus's *Lives of the Sophists* II.24-26, Aelius Antipater, son of P. Aelius Zeuxidemus Ariston Zenon, directed the office in charge of the Greek letters sent to the emperor Septimius Severus (or *ab epistulis Graecis*). He also acted as instructor of Caracalla and Geta, was promoted among the consuls (*adlectus inter consulares*), held the governorship of Bithynia, and became member of the imperial council as attested in *I.Eph.* 2026. These favours, nevertheless, stopped when the former tutor reproached Caracalla for the murder of his co-regent brother and decided to return to Hierapolis – "a flourishing city" – where he starved to death. From this story, several elements are particularly noteworthy. Firstly, the descendants of Zeuxidemus followed an even more spectacular progression among the social ranks of the empire. Secondly, they continued to be deeply attached to Hierapolis in spite of imperial promotion and even residence at Rome. Indeed, Zeuxidemus's wealth and culture had originated in the former city and it is no coincidence that this Asian community decided to set up honours for his son and then hosted Aelius Antipater after losing the imperial favour.

From a more general perspective, this inscription and the family it praises are important for understanding the changes in provincial administration and administrators in the high Roman Empire. More members of local communities decided to take advantage of the opportunities offered by an imperial career. Notables could translate their provincial prominence into international relevance. More soldiers could equally aspire to ascend an equestrian ladder that needed to be enlarged as a result of the progressive expansion of imperial structures. Roman officials from the eastern Mediterranean, nonetheless, did not have to renounce their origins and background. In fact, they provided the structures of power with agents who were acquainted to the population ruled by Rome. As such, P. Aelius Zeuxidemus Cassianus could successfully act as curator of Aizanoi. Also in Phrygia and Asia, his son Ariston Zenon was in charge of imperial finances extracted from lands familiar to him. Finally, the grandson Aelius Antipater could respond to letters of oriental petitioners in a common language that he, as Greek sophist and imperial tutor, mastered.

Keywords in the original language:

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- [Caracalla](#) [23]
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[Revolt \[34\]](#)

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- [Read more about Iulius Severus, Hellenistic descendant, and Roman Governor in the Bar Kokhba Revolt \[34\]](#)

Inscription

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- [Read more about T. Flavius Damianus, Ephesus and the Roman army \[35\]](#)

Inscription

[Cyrene Edicts of Augustus: I and III \[36\]](#)

Augustus sets new rules on the way Greek and Roman citizens shall chose their tribunals and juries (I). Roman citizens without immunity in the Cyrenaica shall contribute to the local liturgies (III)

- [Read more about Cyrene Edicts of Augustus: I and III \[36\]](#)

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