Euergetism / Benefactors and oil donation in Ionia in the Hellenistic and Roman period

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In Antiquity the concepts of richness and poverty were seen in a different way as they are seen today. Seneca said: *There is no fortune to delight us if we don’t share it with others*. The phenomenon about to be described, euergetism, doesn’t subscribe to the author’s idea, but there are few aspects that can bond to this interpretation of rich and poor.

The practice of euergetism is linked with the social construct rich and poor. The term, euergetism, was put to use by the French antic writers: *évergetisme*. The Oxford Dictionary defined it as a French neologism. Afterward *benefactor*, Wohltaer¹, *munificence*, elite public generosity were associated². The Greeks used it under different forms: *euergetes* – benefactor of the city, *euergetein* – doing good to the city, *euergeteô* – doing good³.

This paper is a study. It synthesizes some practical and symbolically aspects revealed by the epigraphic testimonials which attest oil donation in Ionia. It will extend in the future to entire Asia Minor, for the Hellenistic and Roman period. The first part will present important works that stood at the bases of investigating euergetism, from which will result an important bibliography. I will also write and discuss four of the most important definitions/points of view given for euergetism. In the second part I will resume the whole categories of benefactors and their giving. In the third part I will reopen some discussion related to the importance of oil in Antiquity, especially in Asia Minor. In the last part I will get to the analysis of the case of Ionia, from Asia Minor, based on epigraphic study, just for the case in which oil is offered, to see: To whom are the decrees dedicated? What aspects inscriptions reflect? Which were the tidings between rich persons and poor persons? We hope we will find some answers.


General and specific works, volumes, articles – short bibliography

The first paper which proposed an interpretation to euergetism was Paul Veyne’s. Until him, few discussions about the subject were made by H. Francotte, A. Wilhelm, A. Boulanger and H. I. Marrou. But the first researcher who explained this phenomenon widely spread in the Greco-Roman world was him. From his point of view euergetism was of two types: ob honorum – benefactions made during a magistrature, a function, from where the benefactors received honors and liberum – benefactions realized without obligation, which existed until and during Late Antiquity. He also claimed the fact the local community expected the rich ones to contribute at the public necessities with personal resources.

The most significant paper round euergetism was written by Ph. Gauthier. Organized, systematic, clarifying different questions, he establishes that the theme was part of institutional history, having primary sources the honorary inscriptions, civil law documents. The author sets the chronology, the space and the method used. He states his objectives through questions: How does the city honors benefactors, citizens, stranger? What was the value of the rewards? Is there a significant evolution in giving honors, and if it is, in which period were made the most important changes?

Later, general, specific studies, articles increased. Important congress had investigated the peculiarity. The results of the first one were published in Actes du Xe Congrès International d’Epigraphie grecque et latine, Nîmes, 4-9 octobre 1992, édités par Michel Christol et Olivier Masson, Publications de la Sorbonne, Paris, 1997. The second chapter is dedicated entirely to the subject: Euergetism and epigraphy, split into five sections: Classic and Hellenistic period, Hellenistic and

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6 P. Veyne, op. cit., p. 20-21.
7 Ph. Gauthier, op. cit., p. 2.
Roman period\textsuperscript{10}, Great Empire\textsuperscript{11}, Late Antiquity\textsuperscript{12}, Christian Occident\textsuperscript{13}. The next volume, Citoyenneté et participation a la basse époque hellénistique. Actes du table ronde de 22 et 23 mai 2004, Paris, BNF, dirigé par Ph. Gauthier, Libraire Droy S.A., Genève, 2005, edited by Pierre Frölich and Ch. Müller, has important articles\textsuperscript{14}. The one which interests more this paper is L’huile et l’argent. Actes du colloque tenu à Fribourg du 13 au 15 octobre 2005, publiés en l’honneur du Prof. Marcel Piérart à l’occasion de son 60\textsuperscript{ème} anniversaire\textsuperscript{15}. Significant other articles recorded with different occasions were published\textsuperscript{16}. All of them became valuable instruments offering directions for identification, analyses, study of the concept. The most recent paper which incorporates the conclusions resulted in 45 years of research is the one published by L. Migeotti in 2014\textsuperscript{17}.

There were established the category of donors, of donations/gifts, the beginnings of the process, reasons for the benefactions, different characteristics, the division between strangers euergetes and citizens euergetes, and the subject is still open. Multiple definitions and conclusions exist. Ph. Gauthier draws a line about between the term euergete/benefactor in general and those benefactors who made public donations which were official recognized of the civic communities or by the State. He sustains that this kind of euergetism developed only in the Late Hellenistic period


\textsuperscript{11} G. Alföldy, Euergetismus und Epigraphik in der Augustisches Zeit, p. 293-304; W. Eck, Der Euergetismus im Funktionszusammenhang der Kaiserzeitlichen Städte, p. 305-331.

\textsuperscript{12} C. Lepelley, Évergétisme et épigraphie dans l’Antiquité tardive : les provinces de langue latine, p. 335-352; Ch. Rouché, Benefactors in the Late Roman Period : The Eastern Empire, p. 353-370.

\textsuperscript{13} Y. Deval, J. Pierre, Évergétisme et épigraphie dans l’Occident chrétien (IV\textsuperscript{e} – VI\textsuperscript{e} s.), p. 371-395.


\textsuperscript{17} L. Migeotte, Les cités grecques et le finances, Les Belles Lettres, Paris, 2014.
(150 –till the reign of Augustus) and in the Empire, both intervals having distinct features\textsuperscript{18}. Migeotti explains euergetism like contributions from the rich citizens who preferred to pay the public expenses, receiving in exchange gratitude and prestige. We deduce the fact that the nature of their actions was voluntary, addressed in particular to the inhabitants of the city, becoming an income for them. Using Ph. Gauhtier’s ideas, he synthesizes the howl evolution of the subject, from the classical period to the roman period\textsuperscript{19}. Zuiderhoeck, in his book dedicated to benefactions during Roman period, considers that: \textit{Euergetism was a gift-exchange form between the rich citizens and the city/community/group of citizens}. He says that the public donation succeeded by honors was a public and politic act with political and ideological purposes\textsuperscript{20}. So euergetism wasn’t voluntary during Romans, it had reasons more or less evident, focusing in the first place on the legitimation of power, which was held by a small group of rich citizens. Muller proposes a definition reporting at the economic character. This involves a \textit{transaction by which a transfer of resources moves from one individual or a group of individuals to the city, respectively to the community}\textsuperscript{21}. Euergetism becomes in this way an economic transaction for currency, supply of oil and grain.

\section*{Categories of benefactors and benefactions}

In the Classical period the public duties were held from the city finances, by the magistrates, such as: \textit{agoranom}, gymnasiarh, \textit{agonothet} and by the ambassadors and proxeni. Some of the magistracy became gradually liturgies, since the magistrates refused to use the city money for the expenditure, financing of their own fund the community needs, by supplying with grain and oil. The acts of benefactions were rewarded and recognized through honors, but they were different when offered to citizens and when offered to proxeni. Still, the abundance of the inscriptions for the proxeni exists, but this does not denote the fact that citizens weren’t too involved in benefactions. The only aspect to be remembered is that if the status of proxen and euergetes was inscribed on a stone, the man’s privileges were known in both cities\textsuperscript{22}.

In the Hellenistic period, the Diadochus, the kings, the queens, their relatives have expanded benefactions\textsuperscript{23}. Multiple cases were registered and commented, we will describe only three, chosen from Ionia. In 288/7 b.Ch., Seleucus I offered pots of gold, 1000 sheep, 12 steers for Apollo’s temple at Didyma\textsuperscript{24}. Lisimachus addressed to Priene, in 285 b. Ch., being grateful for their devotion, reminding he would continue the benefactions toward the city. Unfortunately we don’t know what categories of donations were, because the inscription is mutilated\textsuperscript{25}. Ptolemy II in his letter to Milet, in 261, being close in losing the control on the city, reminded them the fact that the donations made in the past will continue if they remain loyal to him\textsuperscript{26}.

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{}\textsuperscript{18} Ph. Gauthier, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 2-3.
\bibitem{}\textsuperscript{19} L. Migeotti, \textit{op. cit.}, p.299.
\bibitem{}\textsuperscript{20} R. Zuiderhoek, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 6-9.
\bibitem{}\textsuperscript{21} Ch. Muller, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 350.
\bibitem{}\textsuperscript{22} More about the subject in: Ph. Gauthier, \textit{op. cit}, p.28-30; L. Migeotti, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 184-185; B. Paarmann, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 9-36.
\bibitem{}\textsuperscript{23} L. Migeotti, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 297.
\bibitem{}\textsuperscript{24} C. Bradford Walles, \textit{Royal Correspondence in the Hellenistic period, L’erma di Bretschneider}, Roma, 1966, p. 33.
\bibitem{}\textsuperscript{25} Idem, p. 40.
\bibitem{}\textsuperscript{26} Idem, p. 71
\end{thebibliography}
Seleucus II in 246 accepted important honors from the inhabitants of Milet and also approved for them favors\textsuperscript{27}. When the Hellenistic monarchies disappeared, the royal donations were continued by the rich people from the city, who weren’t only officials. An important quantity of inscriptions proves the nature of the benefactions towards the city. The political activity was sustained by the euergetes/benefactors, who were a rich and important minority. This is where Ph. Gauthier says the euergetism started\textsuperscript{28}.

The roman conquest took over the euergetic system. Enormous numbers of inscriptions prove, more than from the Hellenistic period, were discovered and registered. The Romans progressively took place of the monarchies, either by conquering or by inheritance or by simple acceptance. Because eurgesia was a fundamental royal virtue (as Seleucos I and his son Antiochus wrote when they offered donations to the temple of Nisa: 	extit{Our politic is the benefactions for pleasing the Greek citizens}\textsuperscript{29}), the Romans also became euergetes through excellence and 	extit{euergetes} became an epithet of Rome\textsuperscript{30}.

Benefactions knew their evolution too. In the classical period they were made by proxeni and strangers: receiving embassies and privet persons, establishing the contact between the two cities, freeing war prisoners, financing and participating to war, trade meditation, wood supply for ships\textsuperscript{31}; citizens: financing from their own money the city\textsuperscript{32}. To the end of the Hellenistic period three kinds of benefactions were developing: supplying the city with grain, oil; constructing and reconstructing the buildings of the city; financing public games, festivals, celebrations. To this benefaction, extremely developed in the roman period, the activity of 	extit{negotiators} had added. They were sent by the citizens to treat with the emperor to set public relations and to expose their requests\textsuperscript{33}. Emperors also made donations: financing with money, decorating the city, reducing/eliminating taxes, donating land, giving privileges\textsuperscript{34}.

The honors received have their characteristics too. We will just resume, without describing them in periods: euergete title, crown, tax exemption, the erection of a statue. About the nature of honors Ph. Gauthier wrote\textsuperscript{35}.

**Use of oil in Antiquity**

The benefaction with oil weren’t made randomly. As we will see oil has its place, as in the quote of Pollion Romilius who said that the secret of a long life is: wine in the inside and oil on the outside\textsuperscript{36}. What kind of oil did antics used? Usually they used oil from sesam, castor, walnut fruit, fruits nuts. In The Mediterranean was utilized especially oil from cultivated olive. There were used also savage olive, known as oleaster for the romans and agrielaia, cotinos, philia for greeks, for perfume and

\textsuperscript{27} Idem, p. 105.
\textsuperscript{28}L. Migeotti, op.cit., p. 297-298; Ph. Gauthier, op. cit., p. 28-30.
\textsuperscript{29}C. Bradford Walles, op.cit., p. 54.
\textsuperscript{30}L. Ferrary, op. cit., p. 200.
\textsuperscript{31}B. Paarmann, op. cit., p. 14-28;
\textsuperscript{32}Migeotti, op. cit., p. 295.
\textsuperscript{33}L. Ferrary, op. cit., p. 201
\textsuperscript{34}Idem, p. 204.
\textsuperscript{35}Ph. Gauthier, p. 131-171.
Olive oil was utilized in nutrition, body care, pharmacy, perfume, textile crafts, and lightning. The population which didn’t cultivate olives had three ways of getting oil. First of all there was the market, where merchants sold. The prices were either big, either small. We can have an idea for the oil price, from Aristotle’s Economy: three drachma, 39 l-36 drachma and of course there were different other sources and prizes. The second way was institutional, in which governors were ought to share oil to the people, and the third one, the phenomenon we discuss here, euergetism, when the members of the elite were donating oil. They got in this way public recognition, as the citizens were the ones that served the elite and from time to time, for not unpleasing the population, they donate. This is another point of view, interesting, related to euergetism.

The highest quantity of oil was used for body care. The lubrication with oil represented the normal cleaning of the body. It was generally used in the Palestra (a particular place or a place attached to the Gymnasium, destined to physical exercises) and in The Gymnasium (a center for military training at the beginning, than used in physical and intellectual education). In the Hellenistic period the oil supply was sustained by the gymnasiarch (The gymnasiarch was chosen initially to take care of the Ephebia’s education, of their behavior, of the functioning of the Gymnasium, afterwards he used only to donate oil for needs of the Institution). It was also used in the cults, giving as a present for the invites in behalf of the King, and as a perfume. It was estimated that a women used per year oil for bathing and perfumed oil 1.5 l, and a man 5-10 l per year. For a gymnasium per year was required 3800 l oil.

So oil giving was necessary from three points of view: in gymnasium, for sacrifices during celebrations and for the inhabitants. In Ionia, oil donations are mostly attested through epigraphic inscriptions.

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40 Aristotel, II, 27.
41 P. Garsney, op. cit., p. 33.
43 P. Garsney, op. cit., p. 172-173.
Oil donation in Ionia in the Hellenistic and Roman period

One of this category of benefaction is made in Priene, after 84 b. Ch., by Zosimos, son of Sextos. He became citizen by decree. The people honored him by giving a gold crown, a portrait, three statues, one from bronze, one from gold and the last one from marble. His responsibilities were of two kinds: he was the secretary of the Council and the gymnasiarch of the city. In the inscription it is mentioned the fact that he agreed in taking the jurisdiction of the Gymnasium when none wanted and the building was falling apart. For his tasks as gymnasiarch it is mentioned oil donating, not as usual, one hour a day, but from the rising of the sun, till dawns. He also shared perfumed oil for public celebrations, for the gymnasium and the baths. It is also written the fact that he offered arms and a teacher of letters for the Efibia, song at fight contests. He garnished the gymnasium with statues.

Oil donating wasn’t made only for the gymnasium, but for the rest of the city, in the public baths in all the days of the panegyric. His benefactions continued: he established a new contest for group fighters, he organized the procession of the celebration of Panatheene, offering cattle, meat for the sacrifices to the magistrates and councilors, to the players, to the teachers and the public slaves.50

As we can see this rich man made to the city of Priene many benefactions, one of them being oil giving. The other inscription, imperial one, from Efes is mutilated, the name of the gymnasiarch isn’t known, but it is attested oil giving.51

Oil donations in Ionia aren’t well known, as we can see, there are only two inscriptions which attest this kind of benefaction. For the classical period, Pierre Frölich sustains the fact that oil donations weren’t necessary, they were assured from the finances of the city, to this we confirm. For the Late Hellenistic period Zosimo’s donations reveal some of the aspects of this kind of benefaction: he was part of the elite, also a rich person; he provided oil, contributing in this way at sustaining the Gymnasium, one of the most important institution from the Greek cities, and in the same time he organized celebrations and contest. For the imperial period, for now, there is nothing to conclude, because of the lack of inscriptions. After, the study will extend to the rest of Asia Minor, some connections will be driven.

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Even though there are not so many inscriptions to attest benefaction with oil, these kinds of donations were done and they had their importance, as we could see: role in the Gymnasium, in the public baths, for cleaning the body; role in the celebrations; role in giving the Greek a way to honor their benefactor. Rich people made oil donations in order to help the wealth of the people, as Zosimos did, to keep the balance of the education in the city. His facts brought him honors, we can’t say if his actions were determined by the need of public recognition, but we can say that he improved the economic and social position of Priene during that time.

50 The translation of the decree in P. Frolih, op. cit., p. 85-90.
51 Idem, p.83.
Synthesized bibliography


