

ISSN 2036-587X

ὄρμος

n.s. 12-2020

Ricerche di storia antica



Università degli Studi di Palermo
Dipartimento Culture e Società



INDICE

Dossier

Memorie di guerra in competizione nell'antica Grecia
a cura di E. Franchi

Elena Franchi, <i>Introduzione</i>	1
Giorgia Proietti, <i>I Greci e le Guerre Persiane. Memorie in competizione sulla scena panellenica</i>	11
Elena Franchi, <i>Memorie sugli Spartani in guerra. Attendismo e 'interventismo' al di là dell'Istmo di Corinto</i>	49
Peter Londey, <i>War and memory in central Greece: Phokis, Thessaly and Persia</i>	87

Varia

Riccardo Bertolazzi, <i>Naples, Colonia Antoniniana</i>	109
Claudio Biagetti, <i>Una questione di principio: come tradurre l'attributo divino ἀρχηγέτης/-ις?</i>	131
Ennio Biondi, <i>Le Athenaion Politeiai riconsiderate: brevi note 'storiche' a margine di due recenti libri</i>	158
Margherita Cassia, <i>Διχθᾶς nell'Edictum de pretiis diocleziano: un'ipotesi interpretativa</i>	176
Nicola Cusumano, <i>«La speranza di avere altri figli»: bios e democrazia nel logos epitaphios di Pericle</i>	196
Giovanni Ingarao, <i>Erodoto linguista? L'origine dei nomi degli dèi greci</i>	248
Daniela Motta, <i>Caracalla e i Parti in Erodiano: fra disegno ecumenico e inganno</i>	270
Elisabetta Poddighe, <i>L'apodemia di Solone e l'inalterabilità delle sue leggi. La versione di Erodoto</i>	290
Alessandra Valentini, <i>Giuli e Claudii: il trionfo di Germanico nel 17 d.C e la Domus Augusta</i>	330
Cesare Zizza, <i>Epigrafia e storia politico-militare di Atene nella Periegesi di Pausania</i>	344

on line dal 22.12.2020



CONTENTS

Dossier

War Memories in Ancient Greece
edited by E. Franchi

Elena Franchi, <i>Introduction</i>	1
Giorgia Proietti, <i>The Greeks and the Persian wars. Competing memories on the Panhellenic scene</i>	11
Elena Franchi, <i>Remembering Sparta at war: policies of wait-and-see versus intervention beyond the Isthmus of Corinth</i>	49
Peter Londey, <i>War and memory in central Greece: Phokis, Thessaly and Persia</i>	87

Varia

Riccardo Bertolazzi, <i>Naples, Colonia Antoniniana</i>	109
Claudio Biagetti, <i>A founding principle – or translating the divine epithet ἀρχηγέτης/-ις</i>	131
Ennio Biondi, <i>The Athenaiion Politeiai reconsidered: brief 'historical' notes on two recent books</i>	158
Margherita Cassia, <i>Διχθᾶς in the Diocletian's Edictum de pretiis: an interpretative hypothesis</i>	176
Nicola Cusumano, <i>«Hopes of having other sons»: bios and democracy in Pericles' logos epitaphios</i>	196
Giovanni Ingarao, <i>Was Herodotus a Linguist? The Origin of the Names of the Greek Gods</i>	248
Daniela Motta, <i>Caracalla and the Parthians: between universality and treachery</i>	270
Elisabetta Poddighe, <i>Solon's apodemia and the inalterability of his laws. The version of Herodotus</i>	290
Alessandra Valentini, <i>Iuli and Claudii: some notes on the Domus Augusta</i>	330
Cesare Zizza, <i>Epigraphy and political-military history of Athens in the Periegesis of Pausanias</i>	344

on line dal 22.12.2020



RICCARDO BERTOLAZZI

Naples, *Colonia Antoniniana**

A dedicatory inscription attesting to a statue of Severus Alexander set up by the inhabitants of Naples in 222 informs us that the city had been granted colonial status, acquiring the titles *Aurelia Augusta Antoniniana Felix* (figs. 1-2)¹:

[[[Im]p(eratori) C[a]e[s(ari) M.] Aurellio [Severo]]]
[[[Ale]x̄an̄[d]ro [Invicto Pio] Fel[i]c̄i] Au[g(usto), pont(ifici)]
[[[m]ax(imo), trib(unicia)]] pot(estate), co(n)s(uli), p(atri) p(atriciae), divi Sep[ti]m[i]
[Se]veri Pii [[nepo]]ti, divi Anton[ini]
5 [M]agni Pii [[filio]]],
Colonia Aurelia Aug(usta)
Antoniniana Felix
Neapolis.

* The genesis of much of this article is to be traced to a presentation given at the Third North American Congress of Greek and Latin Epigraphy held in January 2020 in Washington, D.C., under the aegis of the American Society of Greek and Latin Epigraphy (ASGLE), and with support from Georgetown University. I am grateful to all those who participated and offered discussion. I am also obliged to the anonymous peer-reviewers for their useful comments, as well as to Jeffrey Easton for improving my English.

¹ *EE* VIII.1, 871 = *ILS* 6458 = *AE* 1890, 106. The inscription is stored in the National Archaeological Museum of Naples without inventory number and temporarily inaccessible to the public. I am most thankful to Umberto Soldovieri for sending images of the monument, as well as information regarding its current location. The reading of the name of Severus Alexander in the first two lines is partially taken from the first edition of this text by Christian Hülsen, though I could not see the traces of several letters which, according to him, were still visible when the stone was discovered. However, traces of an X, an A and N are still recognisable at the beginning of line 2, along with the rests of an I at the end of the erasure, just before *Au[g(usto)]*. Consequently, I think there is little doubt that the emperor honoured in this text is Severus Alexander rather than Elagabalus, who, like his cousin, was also thought to be son of Caracalla (*Dio* 80[79], 19, 4 and 79[78], 31, 4; *Hdn.* 5, 3, 10-11) and therefore grandson of Severus.

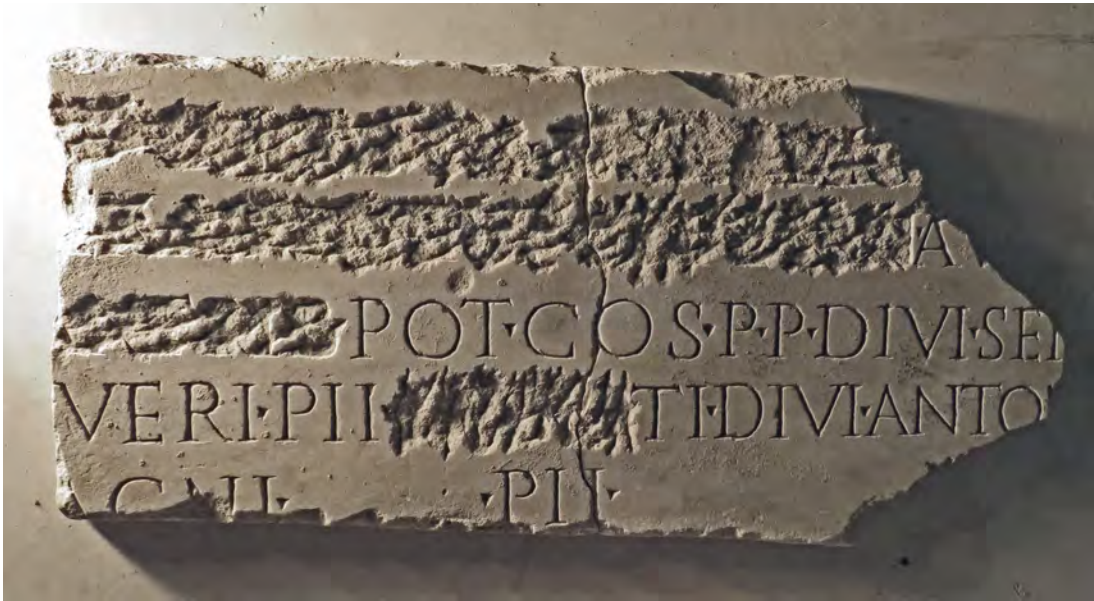


Fig. 1. Superior part of *EE VIII.1*, 871 = *ILS 6458* = *AE 1890*, 106 reporting the first five lines of the text.

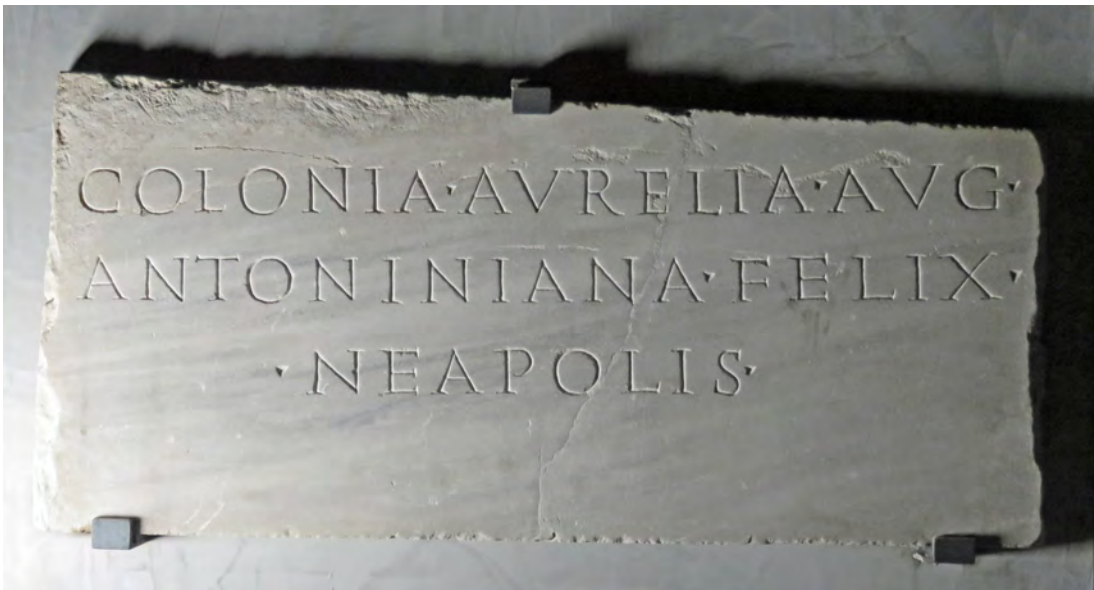


Fig. 2. Inferior part of *EE VIII.1*, 871 = *ILS 6458* = *AE 1890*, 106 with the last three lines.

The *Colonia Aurelia Augusta Antoniniana Felix Neapolis* [dedicated this monument] to the emperor Caesar Marcus Aurelius Severus Alexander Unconquered Pius Felix Augustus, greatest pontiff, holding the tribunician power [for the first time], consul, father of the country, grandson of the deified Septimius Severus Pius, son of the deified Antoninus Magnus Pius.

The identity of the emperor who made Naples a colony remains, however, disputed. In an article published in the late nineteenth century,



Giulio de Petra attributed the awarding of colonial status to Caracalla, whose official name, Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, recalled the fictitious connection between Severans and Antonines². De Petra also noted that the persistence of a strong Greek identity in Naples throughout the first and second centuries CE makes it unlikely that the city received the title of colony before the Severans³. Ettore de Ruggiero accepted these arguments, both in his contemporary book *Le colonie dei Romani* and in the *Dizionario Epigrafico*⁴. Nevertheless, in an article on the institutions of Roman Naples published in the 1950s, Francesco de Martino suggested that the titles *Aurelia* and *Augusta* point instead to Marcus Aurelius, whose stays at the imperial villas at Baiae and Neapolis are well documented in several letters addressed to his tutor Cornelius Fronto while he was still emperor designate⁵. A couple of decades later, John D'Arms accepted this interpretation in his monograph *Romans on the Bay of Naples*⁶. Since then no further investigations have been devoted to this topic, and the notion that Naples became a colony under the Antonines has remained quite popular among scholars⁷.

In this paper, I would like to re-examine the colonial titulature of Naples by comparing it to the names of other colonies which likewise took

² DE PETRA 1892, 76-79.

³ *Ibid.* On the persistence of a strong Greek identity in Naples, cf. the recent analysis by MIRANDA DE MARTINO 2017a, who also dedicates space to the institutional history of this city. Like many other Italian *civitates*, Naples became a *municipium* following the end the Social War in 89 BCE; yet the Neapolitans adopted Greek terms to refer to Roman legal procedures and municipal magistracies. Thus, for example, in a public decree written in Greek and dating to the second half of the first century CE, we find ἄρχοντες used in place of *duoviri* and ἀγορανομία in place of *aedilitas* (IG XIV 758 = MIRANDA 1990-1995, I, 83); similarly, a text carved more or less during the same period mentions an ἄρχων ὁ διὰ πέντε ἐτῶν τιμητικός (IG XIV 745 = MIRANDA 1990-1995, I, 33), a probable reference to a *duovir quinquennialis censoria potestate*. Further considerations on Neapolitan magistrates bearing Greek names can be found in DE NARDIS 2015, esp. 91-95. Another interesting element attesting to Naples' attachment to Greek customs are its phratries, which are still documented well into the second century CE (IG XIV 748 = MIRANDA 1990-1995, I, 51). On this topic, cf. MIRANDA DE MARTINO 2017a, 361-362 and bibliography there.

⁴ DE RUGGIERO 1896, 109 and DE II.1, 449, respectively.

⁵ DE MARTINO 1952, 342. The letters in question are *ad M. Caes.* 1, 4, 2 (p. 9 ed. Naber = I, p. 92 ed. Haines); 2, 6, 3 (p. 30 ed. Naber = I, p. 142 ed. Haines); 2, 8 (p. 32 ed. Naber = I, p. 146 ed. Haines).

⁶ D'ARMS 1970, 107.

⁷ GRELE 1972, 217-218 (Commodus); LEPORÉ 1985, 121 (Marcus Aurelius); CAMODECA 2002-2003, 291 (Antonines); MELE 2014, 210 (Antonines). On the other hand, MIRANDA DE MARTINO 2017a, 370 suggests that Naples became a colony at some point between the Antonines and the Severans, identifying the possible author of the grant as Antonius Pius, Marcus Aurelius or, more probably, Caracalla.



pride from sporting similar titles. In fact, a proliferation of *coloniae Aureliae* and *Antoninianae* occurred during the Severan age, most notably under Caracalla, under whom these titles were often simultaneously adopted. As for the titles *Augusta* and *Felix*, I will examine the similarities between the titlature of Naples and those of nearby colonies such as Beneventum, Nola and Puteoli. It seems to me particularly worthy of note that several Campanian cities were quite keen on honouring Septimius Severus, Caracalla and Julia Domna, thereby betraying an interest in obtaining favours from the rulers. Thus, as I hope to show in what follows, there are very good chances that it was Caracalla who made Naples a *colonia*, and that this event took place in a period in which Campanian cities were still competing for honours and privileges.

Let us start with the title *Antoniniana*. In her 1972 study on the titles borne by provincial cities, Brigitte Galsterer-Kröll argued that the first colony to be called *Antoniniana* was Carthage⁸. This city was re-founded as *Colonia Iulia Karthago* during the reign of Augustus, but later became *Colonia Aurelia Antoniniana*⁹. A fragmentary text attests to some *beneficia* which Antoninus Pius granted to this city (*beneficiis eius aucta*)¹⁰, and for this reason Galsterer-Kröll attributed the new titles to this emperor. Despite this, Hans-Georg Pflaum argued against this hypothesis a few years later, saying that there is not enough evidence to support it, since Carthage was never referred to as *colonia Antoniniana* under the Antonines¹¹. No recent discoveries have proven Pflaum wrong, and to his arguments I would add the fact that Carthage still bears its traditional name of *Colonia Iulia* in inscriptions dating to the reign of Septimius Severus¹². That said, we can confidently maintain that the first appearances of the city titles *Antoniniana* and *Antoninianum* in North Africa belong to the Severan age. In fact, between 198 and 210, Severus promoted several towns in the Bagradas valley southwest of Carthage to the rank of *municipium*; three of these, Sululus, Thibursicum Bure and Thignica, bear the

⁸ GALSTERER-KRÖLL 1972, 79.

⁹ For an overview of the titlature of Carthage, which is sometimes referred to as *Colonia Concordia Iulia Carthago*, cf. GALSTERER-KRÖLL 1972, 100. On the re-foundation of Carthage as a Roman colony, cf. the discussion in LE GLAY 1985; FISHWICK 1995; DALLA ROSA 2015. On the bestowal of the titles *Aurelia Antoniniana*, cf. now BERTOLAZZI 2020, 187-190.

¹⁰ CIL VIII 12513 = *ILTun* 890 = BENZINA BEN ABDALLAH 1986, 254-255, no. 9 = AOUNALLAH – MASTINO – GANGA 2019, 207-213.

¹¹ PFLAUM 1975, 261. Similar arguments can be found in GASCOU 1982b, 260-261.

¹² CIL VIII 26255 = IBBA 2006, 118-122, no. 35, documenting a statue of Septimius Severus which the *res publica* of Uchi Maius set up in 197; a citizen who had been priest of Ceres in Carthage, which is referred to as *Colonia Iulia Carthago*, paid for the statue base and its decoration.



titles *Septimium Aurelium Severianum Antoninianum*, *Severianum Antoninianum* and *Septimium Aurelium Antoninianum*, respectively¹³. The reference is obviously to the joint rule of Severus and his son Caracalla. The official name of the latter had changed from Septimius Bassianus to Marcus Aurelius Antoninus in 195¹⁴, a decision which aimed at emphasising Severus' self-adoption into the family of the Antonines¹⁵. Caracalla continued to use the name Antoninus until his death, which is why we continue to find new bestowals of the titles *Antoniniana* and *Antoninianum* when Caracalla ruled alone from 211 to 217: the dedication of an altar dating to 213 informs us that a group of colonists established a new *castellum* in Mauretania Caesariensis and called it *Castellum Aurelianense Antoninianense* in honour of the emperor¹⁶, whereas on a milestone dating to 214, the city of Lamasba, in Numidia, styles itself as *Res Publica Antoniniana*¹⁷. *Municipia Antoniniana* are also documented. While they appear only in inscriptions that are generically attributed to the third century, the possibility that it was Caracalla who created them seems fairly certain¹⁸. On the other hand, municipalities and colonies which can indisputably be attributed to the Antonines bear different sets of titles: Mactaris, for example, is called *Colonia Aelia Aurelia Mactaris*¹⁹, whereas Pupput and Thuburbo Maius, which reached colonial status under

¹³ Sululos: *Municipium Septimium Aurelium Severianum Antoninianum Apollinare Sululitanum* (CIL VIII 12341); Thibursicum Bure: *Municipium Severianum Antoninianum Frugiferum Concordium Liberum Thibursicum Bure* (CIL VIII 1427, 1439 = 15255; AE 1913, 180 = ILAfr 506); Thignica: *Municipium Septimium Aurelium Antoninianum Herculeum Frugiferum Thignica* (CIL VIII 1404 = 25907a = ILTun 1305; CIL VIII 1406 = 14906 = MASTINO 2020). On Severus' promotions in North Africa, cf. GASCOU 1982a, 207-220; BERTOLAZZI 2020, 179-187.

¹⁴ MASTINO 1981, 28; KIENAST - ECK - HEIL 2017, 156.

¹⁵ On this topic, cf. the recent analysis by HEKSTER 2017 with further references.

¹⁶ CIL VIII 8426.

¹⁷ CIL VIII 10403 = 22511. Cf. also CIL VIII 22467, of which only a fragment with the name of the city survives.

¹⁸ CIL VIII 25808b = AE 1909, 162: *Municipium Aurelium Antoninianum Furnitanorum Minorum*; AE 1975, 872: *Municipium Aurelium Antoninianum Abbiritanum Maius*. Caracalla is addressed as *conditor municipii* in Muzuc (CIL VIII 12060), but no titles are recorded. On Caracalla's promotions in North Africa, cf. the overview in GASCOU 1982b, 260-261, 281-282, 284, 301-302.

¹⁹ CIL VIII 11801, 11804 = AE 1890, 70; AE 1949, 47. The title *Aelia* probably refers to the promotion of the city to the rank of *municipium* during the reign of Hadrian or perhaps under the joint rule of Marcus Aurelius and Commodus, the period during which the latter bore the name *Aelius* (KIENAST - ECK - HEIL 2017, 140); cf. the discussion in NADDARI 2018.



Commodus, sport the more pompous names of *Colonia Aurelia Commoda Pia Felix Augusta Puppit* and *Colonia Iulia Aurelia Commoda Thuburbo Maius*²⁰.

If we take a look at cities located in other areas of the empire where the titles *Antoniniana* and *Antoninianum* are documented, the situation does not change. In the Danubian provinces, the first datable occurrence of the title *Antoniniana* belongs to a city which occupies an important place in the history of the Severan dynasty, Carnuntum. Severus was proclaimed emperor here in 193 and, a little later, the city was promoted from the status of *municipium* (which the city had obtained under Hadrian) to that of *colonia* with the new name of *Septimia Carnuntum*²¹. In 219, however, the new colony was referred to as *Septimia Aurelia Antoniniana Karnuntum*²². The elevation of the *municipium* of Ovilava to the rank of colony with the name *Colonia Aurelia Antoniniana Ovilava* could therefore be placed in the same period, though the only inscription attesting to this promotion lacks precise chronological references²³. Despite this, as is the case with North Africa, promotions which can be ascribed to the Antonines never resulted in the adoption of the titles *Antoniniana* or *Antoninianum*. Apulum, in Dacia, is called *Municipium Aurelium Apulum* in an inscription dating to 180²⁴. The recently published *Lex Troesmiensis* attesting to the establishment of a new *municipium* in Troesmis in Moesia Inferior during the joint reign of Marcus Aurelius and Commodus informs us that the official name of the new municipality was *Municipium Marcum Aurelium Antoninum Augustum Troesmensium*²⁵. The use of the title *Antoninum* instead of *Antoninianum* seems, in my opinion, to clear up any doubts concerning the fact that, in this area, the titles *Antoninianum* and *Antoniniana* were respectively used as municipal and colonial titles only under the Severans.

It remains to note that *Antoniniana* appears also in the East. According to De Petra, it is particularly worthy of note that Caracalla allowed several

²⁰ Puppit: *CIL VIII 24092 = AE 1900, 36; CIL VIII 24093 = AE 1899, 123, 162*. Thuburbo Maius: *CIL VIII 848 = BENZINA BEN ABDALLAH 1986, 135-136, no. 356; CIL VIII 852 = 12368 = 23984; AE 1912, 182*.

²¹ *AE 1929, 218a: Colonia Septimia Karnuntum*. Cf. MRÁV 2013, 209, noting that Carnuntum was probably awarded colonial status at the same time as Aquincum, which was already *Colonia Septimia* in 198 (*CIL III 14347 = AE 1899, 69 = TitAq I 238*); the title *Septimia* appears in *CIL III 10495 = TitAq I 7* and *AE 1959, 247 = AE 1962, 26 = TitAq I 237*). On this topic, cf. also BERTOLAZZI 2020, 68-73.

²² *AE 1966, 286 = AE 1968, 422 = AE 1983, 766 = AE 1992, 1431*. Cf. also *CIL III 14359, 3 = AE 1901, 248*, reporting the same titles but without providing elements for a precise dating.

²³ *CIL III 5630 = ILLPRON 946*.

²⁴ *IDR III 5.1, 20*.

²⁵ *AE 2015, 1252-1254 = ECK 2016*.



cities in Syria and Asia Minor to use this title, since both Naples and these communities shared a strong Greek identity²⁶. The Philhellenism of both Caracalla and his mother Julia Domna is well known²⁷. Among other things, one should note that they held the Neopythagorean philosopher Apollonius of Tyana, who had flourished under the Flavians, in particular high esteem: Julia Domna encouraged Philostratus to compose a biography of Apollonius²⁸, while Caracalla built a shrine to him in Tyana and made this city a colony, allowing it to adopt the titles Ἀϋρηλιανή and Ἀντωνινιανή²⁹. Moreover, we know that, after having deposed king Abgar Severus, Caracalla turned the independent city of Edessa into a colony, which took the name of *Colonia Metropolis Antoniniana* or *Colonia Metropolis Antoniniana Aurelia*³⁰. It also seems very likely that Dura Europos became a colony with the title *Antoniniana* under Caracalla, since a dedication to Julia Domna discovered in this city indicates that its inhabitants would call themselves Ἀϋρηλιανοὶ Ἀντωνινιανοί³¹. Other eastern cities which became colonies thanks to Caracalla were Julia Domna's hometown, Emesa, and Antioch, though there is no evidence that these centres adopted the title *Antoniniana*³². Notwithstanding, the Augustan colony of Berytus added *Antoniniana* to its titlature when Caracalla was ruling alone³³, while the dedication of another

²⁶ DE PETRA 1892, 73-79.

²⁷ On Caracalla, cf. MECKLER 1999; ROWAN 2012, 119-142, 152-157 and further considerations *infra*. On Domna and her circle of sophists (mentioned by Dio 76[75], 15, 6, 78[77], 18, 3 and Philostr. VA 1, 3 and VS 2, 30), cf. HEMELRIJK 1999, 116-122; LEVICK 2007, 107-123. For an overview on the cultural relations between the Greek east and the Severans, cf. BURASELIS 1991.

²⁸ Philostr. VA 1, 3 and VS 2, 30.

²⁹ Shrine: Dio 78(77), 18, 4. The titles appear in the abbreviated form ANT KOΛΩ or AYP KOΛΩNIAC on civic coins minted for Julia Domna (BMC 11-12) and Caracalla (BMC 13-15).

³⁰ Deposition of Abgar: Dio 78(77), 12, 1. The new titlature of Edessa is recorded through local coins: some of these display Greek legends, as had already happened with previous rulers (BMC 55-59, 62-66, 80-85 etc.), whereas others report Latin legends (cf. the list in DANDROW 2016), as it was the case with other eastern cities turned into Roman colonies, on which cf. the discussion in MILLAR 1990; DĄBROWA 2004; KATSARI – MITCHELL 2008; GUERBER 2009, 375-416; LABARRE 2013; BRÉLAZ 2017.

³¹ SEG VII 332 = AE 1933, 223: Ἰουλίαν Δόμναν / Αὐγοῦσταν, τὴν μητέρα / συνκλήτου καὶ τῶν / ἱερῶν στρατευμάτων, / Αὐρηλιανῶν) Ἀντωνινιανῶν / Εὐρωπαίων ἢ βουλή. On this topic, cf. BUONOPANE 2019, 330-334.

³² Both Ulpian (*Dig.* 50, 15, 1, 4) and Paul (*Dig.* 50, 15, 8, 6) inform us that Caracalla promoted Emesa to the rank of colony, granting this community exemption from both poll and land taxes by awarding its inhabitants the *ius Italicum* (*Dig.* 50, 15, 1, 4). Antioch, on the other hand, did not obtain any tax exemption (*Dig.* 50, 15, 8, 5).

³³ BMC 132-147, attesting to the legends COL IVL ANT FEL BER and COL ANT BER.



statue to Severus Alexander set up by Petra informs us that this city had become a *colonia Antoniniana*³⁴. Finally, under the Severans, we can find the titles *Antoniana* and *Aurelia Antoniniana* adopted by Greek *poleis* as well. In Bithynia, Septimius Severus punished Nicaea for having supported Pescennius Niger during the civil war of 193-194, but the city became Ἀὐρηλιανὴ Ἀντωνινιανή at some point before 205, no doubt after the young Caracalla had persuaded Severus to restore some lost privileges to the Nicaeans³⁵, further to the east, more or less at the same time, we find the titles Σεουηριανὴ Ἀντωνινιανή sported by Anazarbus and Tarsus in Cilicia³⁶ and by Amaseia in Pontus³⁷. During the reign of Elagabalus, the citizens of Adana in Cappadocia called themselves Ἀντωνινιανοί or Ἀντωνεινουπολίται on coins³⁸, whereas in Palestine Antipatris and Nicopolis-Emmaus adopted the title Ἀντωνινιανή³⁹. With all this in mind, I think one can safely assume that Naples became *Antoniniana* during the Severan age⁴⁰. In all likelihood, this happened because of a special relationship between this city and Caracalla, for, if this title had been adopted as an homage to Elagabalus, it would hardly have appeared in a dedication to Severus Alexander in his first year as Augustus (i.e.

³⁴ AE 2005, 1598 = AE 2009, 1616; cf. AE 2005, 1597 = AE 2009, 1615. Petra is called *Colonia Antoniniana* also on a group of clay bullae, on which cf. GITLER 2005, 185-186, nos. 2-3.

³⁵ According to the *Historia Augusta* (*M. Ant.* 1, 7), Caracalla, when still a boy, persuaded his father to withdraw the punishments inflicted upon Antioch and Byzantium, which had both taken the side of Pescennius Niger in 193 (*Antiochensibus et Byzantiis interventu suo iura vetusta restituit, quibus iratus fuit Severus, quod Nigrum iuverant*). Although Nicaea is not mentioned, Herodian (3.2.9) tells us that this city likewise supported Niger. For an overview of these events, cf. BIRLEY 1999, 108-120; DAGUET-GAGEY 2000, 220-241; SPIELVOGEL 2006, 75-87; PASEK 2014; BERTOLAZZI 2020, 120-121. The titles Ἀὐρηλιανὴ Ἀντωνινιανή appear in the dedication of a statue which the city erected to Fulvia Plautilla (AE 1939, 295 = *Ilznik* 59).

³⁶ Anazarbus: ZIEGLER 1993, 262, no. 281. Tarsus was Σεουηριανή in 205 (AE 1938, 4), but later became Σεουηριανὴ Ἀντωνινιανή during Caracalla's sole reign (BMC 182-202).

³⁷ BMC 6-37, where both names are documented between the reign of Severus and that of Caracalla as sole ruler.

³⁸ LEVANTE 1984, 91-92.

³⁹ BMC 1 and BMC 4-7, respectively.

⁴⁰ *Obiter dictum*, cities were not the only institutions to receive the title *Antoniniana* at this time. There is, in fact, a general consensus that *Antoniniana* was also bestowed on military units in recognition of their loyalty to Caracalla. On this topic, cf. ECKER 2015, who supplements the older reference works by FITZ 1976; LÖRINCZ 1982; FITZ 1983 (35-89); LÖRINCZ 1985.



immediately after the killing of Elagabalus and the *damnatio memoriae* inflicted upon the latter's name)⁴¹.

Establishing whether it was Caracalla who made Naples a colony is, however, more complicated. In fact, in the dedication to Severus Alexander the title *Antoniniana* is reported after *Aurelia Augusta* and before *Felix*, a quite strange position, if nothing else because *Aurelia* and *Antoniniana* are almost always placed together in the titulatures of colonies and *municipia* created by either Severus and Caracalla ruling together or by Caracalla alone. Besides, the name *Augusta* is rarely recorded as a city title bestowed during the Severan age⁴². Hence the possibility that it was either Marcus Aurelius or Commodus – or perhaps both – who made Naples a colony, allowing the city to bear the titles *Aurelia* and *Augusta*; only later the city would have become *Antoniniana* by virtue of a *beneficium* granted by Caracalla. This hypothesis might find some support in the fact that, in Italy, the sequence *Aurelia Augusta* appears in the titles of Canusium, a colony under Marcus Aurelius or Commodus with the name of *Colonia Aurelia Augusta Pia Canusium*⁴³; in Africa Proconsularis, Mactaris became a *municipium* under Antoninus Pius and a colony under Marcus Aurelius, thereby becoming the *Colonia Aelia Aurelia Augusta Mactaris*⁴⁴. What is more, under Caracalla the title *Antoniniana* became part of titulatures of colonies established by previous emperors. I have already mentioned the Augustan colonies of Berytus and Carthage, the first of which became *Colonia Iulia Antoniniana Augusta Felix*

⁴¹ The same consideration applies to the case of Petra mentioned above, even though the dedication to Severus Alexander (cf. note 34 above) lacks a precise dating. In any case, it is interesting that neither Antipatris nor Nicopolis-Emmaus seem to have minted coins after the death of Elagabalus, and that Adana struck again only under Maximinus Thrax with its inhabitants calling themselves Μαξιμεινιανοί (cf. LEVANTE 1984, 92).

⁴² Tyre, which was promoted to the rank of colony by Severus and Caracalla (*Dig.* 50, 15, 1), became *Colonia Septimia Felix Augusta Tyrus Metropolis* (*IGLTyr* 28 = *AE* 1988, 1051; cf. also *IRT* 437); *Dig.* 50, 15, 1, 2 also informs us that Severus promoted Heliopolis as well: this city, which had previously been a town in the territory of the colony of Berytus (*Colonia Iulia Augusta Felix Berytus*, cf. GALSTERER-KRÖLL 1972, 139), adopted the name *Colonia Iulia Augusta Felix Heliopolis* (*CIL* III 202 = *IGLS* VI 2918; *CIL* III 6665 = *IGLS* VI 2899; *IGLS* VI 2900; *AE* 1922, 58; *BMC* 292-295). On this topic, cf. BERTOLAZZI 2020, 145-150.

⁴³ *CIL* IX 344 = GRELLE - PANI 1985, no. 52. The promotion of Canusium is often credited to Antoninus Pius (GALSTERER-KRÖLL 1972, 79; PFLAUM 1975, 260; GRELLE 1993, 121-122; SALWAY 2000, 119; NICOLS 2014, 281). However, *Aurelia* normally appears among the titles of municipalities and colonies created by Marcus Aurelius and/or Commodus. Thus, for example, Apulum became *Municipium Aurelium Apulum* in 180 (*IDR* III 5.1, 20), whereas Puppit became *Colonia Aurelia Commoda Pia Felix Augusta Puppit* (cf. note 20 above). Commodus assumed the name Pius in about 182-183 (KIENAST - ECK - HEIL 2017, 142).

⁴⁴ Cf. note 19 above.



Berytus, while the second became *Colonia Felix Iulia Aurelia Antoniniana Karthago*. To these examples we can add the Claudian colony of Ara Agrippinensium, in Germany (*Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensium Antoniniana*)⁴⁵, the Augustan colony of Rusguniae, in Mauretania Caesariensis, (*Colonia Iulia Antoniniana Pont(- - -) Cl(- - -) Rusguniae*)⁴⁶, the Nervian colony of Sitifis, also in Mauretania Caesariensis (*Res Publica Sitifensium Nerviana Antoninianorum*)⁴⁷, and, perhaps, the Hadrianic *municipium* of Augusta Vindelicorum (*Municipium Aelium Anto[ninianum?]*)⁴⁸. In truth, the possibility that *Antoniniana* might be a title added to the colonial titulature of Naples during the reign of Caracalla has already been considered by Giulio de Petra, who nevertheless dismissed it⁴⁹. According to De Petra, the titles *Aurelia* and *Antoniniana* were originally supposed to stay together, but the stonemason preferred to engrave *Antoniniana* a line below out of a desire for elegance: by placing the abbreviation *Aug(usta)* in the small space after *Aurelia*, he avoided breaking *Antoniniana* between two lines, thereby preserving the well-organised layout of the inscription.

I think that a couple of further considerations about the use of *Augusta* and *Antoniniana* may corroborate this argument. The first is that the title *Augusta* does not always occupy a fixed position in colonial titulatures, sometimes appearing, for example, towards the end just before the name of the city. In Africa Proconsularis, the city of Puppit obtained the status of colony under Commodus and, as noted above, its name became *Colonia Aurelia Commoda Pia Felix Augusta Puppit*. Moreover, after Septimius Severus promoted Tyre, in Syria, the city styled itself *Colonia Septimia Felix Augusta Tyrus*⁵⁰. Severus also bestowed the title *Septimia* on the colony of Siscia (Pannonia Superior): as a Flavian colony, Siscia was called *Colonia Flavia Siscia*, but following some benefits granted by Severus the city became *Colonia Septimia Siscia Augusta*⁵¹. As for *Antoniniana*, it should be noted that also this title does not always appear in the same position: in the cases of *Berytus*, Carthage and Rusguniae, it follows the Augustan title *Iulia* (in the

⁴⁵ CIL XIII 8853.

⁴⁶ AE 1956, 160a. On possible supplements for the abbreviations *Pont(- - -) Cl(- - -)*, cf. GALSTERER-KRÖLL 1972, 68.

⁴⁷ CIL VIII 10340 = 22401, 10341, 10359 = 22403.

⁴⁸ AE 1972, 359. Alternatively, the name of this centre might be reconstructed as *Municipium Aelium Anto[ninum]*, thus sharing the title *Antoninum* with Troesmis, which acquired municipal rank under Marcus Aurelius and Commodus (cf. note 25 above).

⁴⁹ DE PETRA 1892, 78-79.

⁵⁰ Cf. note 42 above.

⁵¹ CIL III 4193 = RIU II 350; CIL III 10836 = AIJ 528; AE 2008, 1086.



case of Carthage accompanied by *Aurelia* immediately before), whereas in Ara Agrippinensium and Sitifis it is placed at the very end of the titlature, right after the name of the city. In view of this, the titlature of Naples, as it is reported in our inscription (*Colonia Aurelia Augusta Antoniniana Felix Neapolis*), appears quite anomalous, for we should expect *Antoniniana* to be placed right after *Aurelia* or, alternatively, immediately before or after *Neapolis*. Similarly, *Augusta* should stay together with *Felix* and towards the end of the titlature, as is the case with Berytus, Tyre and Puppit. The best way to explain these anomalies remains, in my opinion, what De Petra has suggested, i.e. attributing them to a problem of *ordinatio*, which prompted the engraver to separate *Antoniniana* from *Aurelia* by putting the abbreviation *Aug(usta)*, which should have stayed with *Felix*, between them. The result was a perfect alignment of the two lines *Colonia Aurelia Aug(usta) / Antoniniana Felix*, and the placement of *Neapolis* at the very centre of the following line.

It now remains to explain how *Felix* and *Augusta* became part of the titlature of the colony of Naples. Colonies created by Caracalla do not seem to have made use of these titles: Ovilava, in Noricum, is called *Colonia Aurelia Antoniniana*⁵²; as we have seen, Tyana simply styled itself Ἀντωνινιανή (or Ἀὐρηλιανή) Κολωνία, whereas Edessa became *Colonia Metropolis Antoniniana Aurelia*. One might thus postulate that *Felix* and *Augusta* were given to Naples by Commodus, who, as we have already noted, made Puppit *Colonia Aurelia Commoda Pia Felix Augusta*. It is necessary to stress, however, that, by this time, cities were used to taking some liberties when adopting new titles. While noticing that Augustus and the senate sent money to the Paphians allowing them to call their city *Augusta* after their community had suffered from an earthquake, Cassius Dio (54.23.8) observes:

Ταῦτα δὲ ἔγραψα οὐχ ὅτι οὐ καὶ ἄλλαις πόλεσι πολλαῖς καὶ πρότερον καὶ μετὰ τοῦτο καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ Αὐγουστος ἐφ' ὁμοίαις συμφοραῖς καὶ οἱ βουλευταὶ ἐπεκούρησαν (...) ἀλλ' ὅτι καὶ τὰς ἐπωνυμίας ταῖς πόλεσιν ἢ γερουσία ἐν μέρει τιμῆς ἔνεμε, καὶ οὐχ ὥσπερ νῦν αὐτοὶ ἑαυτοῖς ἕκαστοι καταλόγους ὀνομάτων οὐς ἂν ἐθελήσωσιν ὡς πλήθει ποιοῦνται.

I record this, not that Augustus and the senators, too, did not aid many other cities both before and after this occasion, in case of similar misfortunes (...) my purpose is to show that the senate even assigned names to cities as a mark of honour and that the inhabitants did not, as is usually done now, make out for themselves in each instance lists of names according to their own pleasure⁵³.

⁵² CIL III 5630 = ILLPRON 946.

⁵³ Transl. by Earnest Cary (LOEB).



This phenomenon, obviously fuelled by inter-city rivalries, is epigraphically well documented, as it happens, during Dio's time. By the end of the second century CE, the simple titles *colonia* or *municipium* were often deemed as insufficient to conveniently advertise the enhanced status of a community, particularly in regions which had been long urbanised and where numerous colonies and *municipia* had already been created. What happened in the territory of Carthage, where Septimius Severus granted municipal status to numerous cities is, I think, illuminating, since the municipalisation of this region had already started during the reign of Hadrian and had continued under the Antonines⁵⁴. During the reign of Commodus, the colonial titles *Iulia* and *Felix*, which had belonged to Augustan colonies, started to be resumed (we have seen the case of Puppis). Under Septimius Severus, we find a proliferation of new municipal titles, such as *Apollinare*, *Frugiferum*, *Herculeum*, *Liberum* and, in the case of colonies, *Sancta*⁵⁵. In Syria, Severus granted colonial status to both Heliopolis and Tyre, which adopted the titles *Iulia*, *Augusta* and *Felix*, until then sported only by the Augustan colony of Berytus⁵⁶.

It is then worthy of note that older colonies bearing the titles *Felix* and/or *Augusta* were located not very far from Naples. The ancient republican colony of Beneventum became *Colonia Iulia Concordia Augusta Felix* under Augustus⁵⁷; the Caesarian colony of Capua was likewise *Colonia Iulia Felix Augusta* and later *Colonia Flavia Augusta Felix*⁵⁸; Puteoli, another republican colony, became *Colonia Puteolana Augusta* during the reign of Augustus, *Colonia Neronensis Claudia Augusta* under Nero and *Colonia Flavia Augusta* under Vespasian⁵⁹; Nola, which might have received the title *Felix*

⁵⁴ On this topic, cf. the overview in GASCOU 1982a and BERTOLAZZI 2020, 175-179.

⁵⁵ On the *municipia*, cf. note 13 above. At some point between 198 and 211, Avitina became *Colonia Septimia Aurelia Sancta Avitina* (AE 1976, 704).

⁵⁶ Cf. note 42 above.

⁵⁷ This city became a colony in 268 BCE (Liv. *perioch.* 15; Vell. 1, 14; Polyb. 3, 90, 8; Eutr. 2, 16), but the Triumvirs portioned out its territory to their veterans (App. *Bell. Civ.* 4, 3). According to the *Liber Coloniarum* (p. 231, 5-7 ed. Lachmann), another wave of colonists was sent there under Nero. Titles: CIL IX 2165; AE 1969/70, 167-168.

⁵⁸ Deduction: Caes. *Bell. Civ.* 1, 14; Suet. *Caes.* 81; *Lib. Col.* p. 231, 19-20 ed. Lachmann. *Iulia Felix Augusta*: CIL X 3832 = AE 2001, 855; cf. also CIL X 3867 (*Concordia Iulia Valeria Felix* under Diocletian); *Flavia Augusta Felix*: AE 1969/70, 635 = ILGR 3.

⁵⁹ Puteoli was established as a *colonia maritima* in 194 BCE (Liv. 32, 29 and 34, 45; Vell. 1, 15). *Augusta*: CIL VIII 7959 = ILAlg II.1, 4; AE 1973, 138 = TPSulp 68; *Neronensis Claudia Augusta*: CIL IV 2152; CIL X 5369 = AE 1973, 172 (cf. also Tac. *Ann.* 14, 27: *vetus oppidum Puteoli ius coloniae et cognomentum a Nerone apiscuntur*); *Flavia Augusta*: CIL X 1789; AE 1941, 73 = AE 1955, 283 = AE 1973, 137.



upon its foundation as a colony by Sulla, later became *Colonia Felix Augusta Nola*⁶⁰; finally, during the reign of Hadrian, Aeclanum and Formiae respectively became *Colonia Aelia Augusta Aeclanum* and *Colonia Aelia Hadriana Augusta Formiae*⁶¹. Being citizens of a *colonia* was naturally a source of pride for its inhabitants. As far as the area of Campania is concerned, we can find a confirmation of this in several graffiti from Pompeii, one of the most ancient Campanian colonies since it owed its status to Sulla⁶². Inhabitants of Puteoli writing on the walls of Pompeii cheered their city by referring to it as a *colonia*, in one instance also quoting the colonial titles awarded by Nero⁶³. Even more interestingly, an unknown individual referred to Puteoli and Pompeii as the only true colonies (*verae coloniae*) in this area, thus implying that the other Campanian *coloniae* could not match the prestige acquired by these cities⁶⁴. In the same graffito we read that this had something to do with unspecified provisions issued by the emperor (*iudicis Augusti*), a probable allusion to Nero's rulings which lifted the ban on gladiatorial games at Pompeii and allowed colonists to settle in Puteoli⁶⁵. Therefore, as the last city of Campania to be awarded colonial status, Neapolis likely wanted, on the one hand, to emphasise its privileged relationship with Caracalla by using the titles *Aurelia* and *Antoniniana*; it also took care, on the other, to stress that its prestige was not inferior to that of other cities and, in order to do so, it adopted *Felix* and *Augusta* with a view to imitate the titulatures of its neighbours.

Several inscriptions demonstrate that, during the Severan age, a number of cities in Campania and in the nearby Samnium courted the favour of the rulers. In 196, statues of Septimius Severus were erected in Capua and Puteoli, where the young Caracalla was also honoured⁶⁶. Later, between 211 and 212, Liternum put up a statue of Caracalla as sole ruler⁶⁷, whereas Telesia dedicated an unknown building to the deified Severus, Caracalla and Julia

⁶⁰ According to the *Liber Coloniarius* (p. 236, 3 ed. Lachmann), this colony possessed *limites Sullani*. Titles: *CIL X 1244*.

⁶¹ Aeclanum: *CIL IX 1111a = EVANGELISTI 2017, 165-166, no. 8*. Formiae: *CIL X 6079 = ILMN 592; NSA 1926, 310-311*.

⁶² *Cic. pro Sulla 21*.

⁶³ *CIL IV 2152: Coloniae Clau(diae) / Nerone(n)si Putiolan(a)e / feliciter! / Scripsit C. Iulius Speratus. / Sperate va(le)*; *CIL IV 4262: Coloniae Puteolanae feliciter!* On this topic, cf. BENEFIEL 2004, 354-359.

⁶⁴ *CIL IV 3525: Iudicis Aug(usti) felic(iter)! Puteolos, Antium, Tegeano, Pompeios, hae sunt verae / coloniae!*

⁶⁵ Cf. BENEFIEL 2004, 360.

⁶⁶ Capua: *CIL X 3834*. Puteoli: *CIL X 1650, 1651*.

⁶⁷ *AE 2003, 341 = AE 2010, 317*.



Domna⁶⁸. This was probably an arch located on the Via Appia not far from Capua, where in 212 Caracalla repaired a stretch of road damaged by a flood⁶⁹. It is also possible that Caracalla and Domna had something to do with a dispute between Caudium and Beneventum, the latter of which honoured them in 207 by placing two statues not far from Caudium, most likely following the erection of another arch⁷⁰. That the cities of Campania had the possibility of seeing Caracalla quite often is finally stressed by Herodian. Following the fall of Plautianus in 205, so we are told (3, 13, 1), Severus spent a considerable part of his time in the imperial estates along the coast of Campania, where he could keep Caracalla and Geta away from the luxuries of Rome.

Lastly, I think that a few more words about Caracalla's Philhellenism are merited. The favour with which Caracalla treated Tyana on account of its connection to the sophist Apollonius has already been mentioned above. To this circumstance we could add Caracalla's well-known desire to emulate Alexander the Great⁷¹, as well as broader interests in Greek literature, oratory, and philosophy on his part. Thanks to Dio (78[77], 11, 2-3) we know, in fact, that «Severus trained him (viz. Caracalla) in absolutely all the pursuits that tended to excellence, whether of body or of mind, so that even after he became emperor (viz. co-emperor with Severus in 198) he went to teachers and studied philosophy most of the day»⁷². Traces of the erudition acquired by Caracalla in these years occasionally emerged later during his reign as sole emperor. According to Philostratus (VS 2, 32), Caracalla was so impressed by the rhetoric skills of an Arab called Heliodorus that he made him *advocatus fisci* after hearing his declamation in defence of Demosthenes against the charge of cowardice⁷³. What is more, Dio, who attended a

⁶⁸ CIL X 3835.

⁶⁹ CIL X 6876.

⁷⁰ CIL IX 2175; CARFORA 2006, 316-318, no. 63 = BERTOLAZZI 2016, 294, no. 18. The first inscription records the dedication to Domna, reporting the formula *in territorio suo quod cingit etiam Caudinorum civitatem muro tenus* (it probably also appeared in the second one, the last lines of which are missing). We know, in fact, that the land around Caudium was attributed to Beneventum during the reign of Augustus (*Lib. Col.* p. 232, 6-9 ed. Lachmann).

⁷¹ A collection of anecdotes on Caracalla's *imitatio* of Alexander the Great can be found in Dio 78(77), 7, 1-8, 3. Cf. also the discussion in MASTINO 1986, 92-93; BAHARAL 2003; KÜHNEN 2008, 176-186; MASTINO 2009, 16-24; ROWAN 2012, 152-157; IMRIE 2018, 98-112 with further references.

⁷² Transl. by Earnest Cary (LOEB); ὁ μὲν γὰρ Σεουήρος καὶ πάνυ πᾶσι τοῖς ἐς ἀρετὴν τείνουσι καὶ κατὰ τὸ σῶμα καὶ κατὰ τὴν ψυχὴν ἤσκησεν αὐτόν, ὥστε καὶ αὐτοκράτορα ἤδη ὄντα καὶ διδασκάλους συνεῖναι καὶ τὸ πολὺ τῆς ἡμέρας φιλοσοφεῖν.

⁷³ On Caracalla's taste for erudition, cf. MECKLER 1999.



symposium given by the emperor to celebrate the Saturnalia, recounts (79[78].8.4) that Caracalla «talked a good deal, as was natural at a symposium», ending the banquet by quoting a set of verses which the chorus would sing at the end of several of Euripides' plays. It is interesting to note, in this regard, that Neapolis was particularly active as a centre of Greek culture still in Caracalla's time. Every four years this city was celebrating the *Sebasta*, a festival including artistic and athletic contests which had started to be organised two centuries before by concession of Augustus⁷⁴. This circumstance certainly gave the Neapolitans some additional reasons to claim the title *Augusta* for their city and might well have helped them gain the favour of Caracalla. The attraction felt by this emperor towards the Greek world in general is, after all, also demonstrated by the considerable amount of time which he spent visiting Greek cities in Asia Minor and in the East. Between 214 and 215, while on his way to Mesopotamia where he was to wage war against the Parthians, Caracalla took a detour to visit Ilion, Pergamon and Thyatira, as well as other cities in Ionia and Lydia, eventually deciding to spend the winter of 215 in Nicomedia; besides this, after having reached Syria and dwelled in Antioch for some time, he launched a quick campaign beyond the Tigris, but then withdrew his troops and took advantage of the winter pause to travel to Alexandria; finally, he took up residence in Edessa⁷⁵. Thus, even though there is no attestation that Caracalla visited Neapolis while ruling alone, the fact that he paid special attention to issues affecting Greek cities seems evident enough.

⁷⁴ According to Dio (55, 10, 9), «a sacred contest was voted to Augustus in Neapolis, the city in Campania, nominally because he had restored it 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» (transl. by Earnest Cary [LOEB]; αὐτῷ δὲ διή τῳ Ἀυγουστῳ ἀγῶν τε ἱερὸς ἐν Νεᾷ πόλει τῇ Καμπανίδι, λόγῳ μὲν ὅτι κακωθεῖσαν αὐτὴν καὶ ὑπὸ σεισμοῦ καὶ ὑπὸ πυρὸς ἀνέλαβεν, τὸ δ' ἀληθὲς ἐπειδὴ τὰ τῶν Ἑλλήνων μόνοι τῶν προσχώρων τρόπον τινὰ ἐζήλουν, ἐψηφίσθη). On the types of contests and the history of the *Sebasta* in Naples, cf. the synthesis in MIRANDA DE MARTINO 2016 and 2017.

⁷⁵ For an overview of the evidence attesting to the travels of Caracalla, cf. HALFMANN 1986, 223-230. The best documented stops are Pergamon (Dio 78[77], 16, 8; Hdn. 4, 8, 3), where Caracalla offered sacrifices to Aesculapius, Antioch (Dio 78[77], 20, 1; Hdn. 4, 8, 6), Alexandria (Dio 78[77], 22-23; Hdn. 4, 9, 1-8; *HA, M. Ant.* 6, 2-3; *Epit. de Caes.* 21, 4), where he visited the temple of Serapis (while there, however, riots broke out), and Edessa (Dio 79[78], 5, 4; *HA, M. Ant.* 6, 6), near which he was eventually murdered while travelling to Carrhae. On Pergamon and Alexandria, cf. the detailed analysis by ROWAN 2012, 129-152, and, with specific reference to the tempestuous stay in Alexandria, LETTA 2016 and references there. Among the benefits bestowed upon some of these cities, it is important to note the third *neokoria* awarded to Pergamon (on which cf. BURRELL 2004, 30-35), as well as the promotions of Antioch and Edessa to colonial rank already mentioned above.



In conclusion, after comparing the colonial titles of Naples to those of other colonies created between the Antonine and Severan ages, I think there are very good chances that Neapolis was *Colonia Aurelia Antoniniana Felix Augusta* or, alternatively, *Colonia Aurelia Antoniniana Augusta Felix*. As already suggested by Giulio de Petra, *Augusta* was placed between *Aurelia* and *Antoniniana* because of a problem with the *ordinatio* of the inscription. Therefore, if we assume that *Aurelia* and *Antoniniana* were originally supposed to stay together, there is no doubt that Naples became a *colonia* under Caracalla. This emperor was quite well disposed towards Greek cities, as both the numerous honours he bestowed among them and the considerable amount of time he spent in Asia Minor and the East demonstrate. The epigraphic evidence indicates, moreover, that the cities of both Campania and Samnium reasserted their relationships with the imperial power particularly during the Severan age, and, consequently, there is no difficulty in placing the promotion of Naples in this period. As for *Augusta* and *Felix*, I would exclude a connection with a specific emperor or dynasty. The council of Naples probably voted to adopt these titles in order to imitate the titulatures of nearby colonies. This phenomenon is perfectly in line with Cassius Dio's report that cities were allowed a notable degree of liberty in choosing the titles they could display on coins and inscriptions. Therefore, the case of Naples is not only telling of the fact that Italian cities were still applying for promotions well into the third century, but also of the creativity with which they would advertise their enhanced status.

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Abstract

Thanks to the inscription on a statue base which the inhabitants of Naples dedicated to Severus Alexander, we know that the city had acquired the official name of *Colonia Aurelia Augusta Antoniniana Felix Neapolis*. The identity of the emperor who promoted Naples to the rank of colony remains nonetheless disputed. The examination of the occurrences of both the titles *colonia Aurelia Antoniniana* and *municipium Aurelium Antoninianum* on inscriptions from North Africa, Danubian provinces and Syria indicates that the majority of the epithets *Antoniniana* and *Antoninianum* were borne by cities which had obtained a new status under Caracalla. As for *Augusta* and *Felix*, it seems probable that Neapolis wanted to emulate the titles of other Campanian cities which had been promoted to the rank of colony by Augustus and the Flavians. The comparison with other regions where emperors created considerable numbers of *municipia* and *coloniae* shows that cities were allowed a certain liberty in choosing their titles, especially when the competition to obtain favours from the rulers was particularly intense.

Keywords: Neapolis, Caracalla, Greek identity, *coloniae*, *municipia*

Grazie all'iscrizione su una base di statua che gli abitanti di Napoli dedicarono a Severo Alessandro, sappiamo che la città aveva acquistato il nome ufficiale di *Colonia Aurelia Augusta Antoniniana Felix Neapolis*. L'identità dell'imperatore che promosse Napoli al rango di colonia rimane però oggetto di discussione. Un esame delle occorrenze dei titoli *colonia Aurelia Antoniniana* e *municipium Aurelium Antoninianum* in iscrizioni del Nord Africa, delle province danubiane e della Siria mostra che la maggior parte degli epiteti *Antoniniana* e *Antoninianum* furono adottati da città che avevano ottenuto un nuovo status grazie a Caracalla. Riguardo ad *Augusta* e *Felix*, sembra probabile che Napoli volle emulare i titoli di altre città campane che erano state promosse al rango di colonie da Augusto e dai Flavi. Il confronto con altre regioni dove gli imperatori crearono numerosi *municipia* e *coloniae* rivela che le città erano autorizzate a scegliere i loro titoli con una certa libertà, specialmente quando la competizione per ottenere favori dai sovrani era particolarmente intensa.

Parole chiave: Napoli, Caracalla, identità greca, *coloniae*, *municipia*