

# S U M M A R I A   D I S S E R T A T I O N U M

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## THE MUNICIPAL ELITES OF CAMPANIA IN THE ANTONINE-SEVERAN PERIOD\*

by

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In my doctoral dissertation I consider the elites of Campanian cities under the Antonines and Severans, a topic that has not yet been thoroughly covered in scholarly works. Even though certain researchers have recently begun to explore these issues in a more comprehensive manner – one should in particular mention the body of research undertaken by the Italian epigrapher G. CAMODECA *cum suis* – no one has ever published a wide-ranging work that analyses and discusses in-depth the higher social strata of Campania as a whole, as they were under the Antonines and Severans. My dissertation, supervised by Prof. Andrzej Łoś, is a deliberate attempt to fill this gap in our knowledge. However, before I start outlining the main points of my dissertation, I believe it would be prudent to define the chronological and geographical scope of my research as well as to provide a description of what comprises the term elite.

Campania, a southern part of Augustan *regio I*, was a densely urbanized region under the Principate, a land of importance in terms of cultural development and, at least during the first decades of the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, economic growth. Preserving a wealth of artefacts and inscriptions found at sites amongst which the towns of Puteoli, Capua, Naples and Vesuvian are the most important, the land has long attracted the scholarly attention of historians, archaeologists and epigraphers. Every ten square kilometre slice of Campania contains, on average, about 13 Latin *tituli*. At the especially rich site of Campi Flegrei, the actual amount of

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preserved inscriptions is almost twenty times the Campanian average<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, even excluding the area of Pompeii and Herculaneum, the remainder of the area contains no less than over seven thousand inscriptions<sup>2</sup>. In terms of my study, the sheer number of these inscriptions translates into a rich source of data on the municipal elites of Campania in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and early 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries CE. It is their number that has attracted so much scholarly attention to this region.

As for the geographical scope of my study, in defining the borders of Campania I have assumed, as a starting point, the administrative division of Italy made by Augustus and described by Pliny the Elder in his *Natural History*. Defined in such a manner, the administrative borders closely follow the natural ones and delimit Campania as an economically homogenous region. Conversely, in volume X of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, T. MOMMSEN divided Italy in a slightly different manner and, as a result, incorporated the towns of Allifae, Telesia and Saticula into the mountainous region of Samnium. In contrast to the famous German scholar, I have accepted with certain reservations the original Augustan division<sup>3</sup>. This framework lets me subdivide Campania into three zones, the maritime one (the cities of the Tyrrhenian coastal strip mostly in the vicinity of the *via Domitiana*, with Puteoli as the chief city), the central zone (with the *via Appia* as its spine and Capua as the principal city) and the hilly border zone (*civitates* in the Apennine foothills, such as Venafrum, Allifae and Telesia). In my view, such divisions provide a research perspective that is neither too broad nor too narrow. It groups the land into discernible regions unified by their geographical environment, links to the same commercial routes and hence, to the *Urbs*, but it is comprehensive enough to avoid the pitfalls of over-analysing one or two sites at the expense of neglecting the broader picture. Hereafter, I believe that any scholar who researches the social and economic phenomena of contemporaneous Campania would benefit from an approach that introduces a tripartite division, each part a clearly distinguishable zone that translates into an adequate research perspective, in contrast to the simplistic approach proposed

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<sup>1</sup> G. CAMODECA, F. NASTI, A. PARMA, A. TORTORIELLO, *Il patrimonio epigrafico latino della Campania e delle regioni II e III*, in: *XI Congresso Internazionale di Epigrafia Greca e Latina, Atti I, Roma, 18–24 IX 1997*, Roma 1999, pp. 671–678. The actual number of Campanian inscriptions may be even higher, as the Italian authors have not included inscriptions placed on *instrumentum domesticum, miliarii* or Greek inscriptions. Obviously, the authors could not include recently discovered inscriptions.

<sup>2</sup> A number estimated from the data found in the on-line inscription database Epigraphik Datenbank Clauss/Slaby ([http://db.edcs.eu/epigr/epi\\_de.php](http://db.edcs.eu/epigr/epi_de.php)).

<sup>3</sup> Similarly (with some differences in the southern part of the region) the borders of Campania were defined by the Danish historian R. THOMSEN (*The Italic Regions from Augustus to the Lombard Invasion*, Copenhagen 1947, pp. 21–23, 63 f., 71–76).

by J.R. PATTERSON and others, who subdivide Italian *regiones* into maritime zones and hinterlands<sup>4</sup>.

Moving to the chronological scope of my dissertation, I chose to limit my study to the period between 96 CE and 235 CE, bracketed by Nerva's ascension and Alexander Severus' death, to complement the work of my supervisor, A. ŁOŚ, who had already published a study of the Campanian elites in the period from Augustus to Domitian. It was my wish to build on his studies and research the higher strata of Campanian society in the period that followed Domitian's reign<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, the period that followed Nerva's reign and lasted at least until Marcus Aurelius' ascension can be palpably set apart as a time of relative tranquillity and renewal after the disastrous second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, when the region was ruined by two cataclysms: the earthquake of 62 CE and the Vesuvian eruption of 79 CE. Conversely, the death of Alexander Severus instigated a period of political destabilisation. The crisis of central rule eventually resulted in the imperial provinces finally gaining importance at the expense of Italy. Not without significance is also the fact that Alexander Severus' death was a watershed in terms of epigraphy. As much as the Antonine and Severan period was an epigraphic peak, so was the following a low period, with fewer and fewer public inscriptions carved in the years that followed. The rapid departure from the Roman epigraphic tradition in Campania was therefore selected as the *terminus ad quem* of my dissertation.

Consequently, the above timeframe showcases the municipal elites of Campania in a crucial and difficult period, a time in which – in the view of many leading twentieth century scholars of the Roman Empire – Italy was purportedly experiencing a serious economic crisis, which may have already begun in the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE<sup>6</sup>. However, this theory has many opponents among scholars<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, it would be judicious to investigate how the municipal elites in Campania functioned during the Antonine-Severan period.

Who were the members of the so-called elite? The term itself is notoriously difficult to delimit as sociologists tend to redefine it according to the

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<sup>4</sup> J.R. PATTERSON, *Landscapes and Cities: Rural Settlement and Civic Transformation in Early Imperial Italy*, Oxford 2006. PATTERSON rightly bases his historical analysis on small territorial units (such as *ager Cosanus* or *ager Falernus*); nonetheless, whenever he changes the scope to include larger areas, he invariably cleaves them into maritime zones and hinterlands.

<sup>5</sup> A. ŁOŚ, "Dobrze urodzeni" i "dorbkiewiczze". *Studium socjologiczne elit miast kampańskich od Augusta do Domicjana*, Wrocław 1996.

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., M.I. ROSTOVTSSEFF, *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*, Oxford 1957, pp. 194 f.; A. CARANDINI, *La villa romana e la piantagione schiavistica*, in: A. SCHIAVONE (ed.), *Storia di Roma*, vol. IV: *Caratteri e morfologie*, Torino 1989, p. 117.

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., PATTERSON, *op. cit.* (n. 4); A. TCHERNIA, *Les Romains et le commerce*, Naples 2011, pp. 370–372.

historical period and preferred methodological approach<sup>8</sup>. In my study, I employ (in a slightly modified form) the approach of D. SLOOTJES<sup>9</sup>, which was in turn based on M. MANN's four-part IEMP model<sup>10</sup>. Accordingly, I chose to distinguish two groups among the local Campanian elites. The first one comprises those who wielded political and occasionally ideological power, its members identified by purely formal criteria, for instance an epigraphically certified membership in the *ordines decurionum* or a recorded performance of certain civic duties and public religious ceremonies. The second group was formed by freedmen and others who could not become decurions, as they were barred by their low socio-legal status and other factors. Nonetheless, I classified some of them as members of the municipal elites due to the fact that they wielded not inconsiderable economic power; affluent and generous, they engaged in acts of euergetism, supporting their local communities by financing, e.g. public works, feasts or distributions from their private funds (the *augustales* and others).

The main research aim of my dissertation was to systematically analyse and discuss the lives of the Campanian municipal elites in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and early 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries CE. The first chapter ("*Campania felix* or *Campania deserta?* – remarks on the Campanian economy of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and early 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries") discusses the general economic status of the region under the Antonines and Severans. A dissertation focused on the local elite cannot omit the economy, and therefore, I present and consider four events that in popular opinion could have caused the economic recession in that region: (1) the earthquake of 62 CE and the Vesuvian eruption of 79 CE; (2) the so-called process of latifundisation; (3) the rebuilding of the port at Ostia under Trajan, thought to occur at the expense of the Campanian port at Puteoli, and (4) the Antonine plague, which ravaged Campania and purportedly irreparably damaged its economic potential.

Two natural disasters in the latter half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE are known to have devastated the Campanian heartland, with local cities and vineyards ruined or buried under volcanic ash<sup>11</sup>. Moreover, it has been claimed that Campanian coastal villas, formerly the popular resorts of the imperial elites, were almost

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<sup>8</sup> See ŁOŚ, *op.cit.* (n. 5), pp. 33–41.

<sup>9</sup> D. SLOOTJES, *Local Elites and the Power in the Roman World: Modern Theories and Models*, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* XLII 2011, pp. 235–249.

<sup>10</sup> Its name comes from four types of power distinguished by the model: ideological (I), economic (E), military (M) and political (P) power.

<sup>11</sup> The serious economic consequences of these natural disasters have been discussed by the following authors: F. WIDEMANN, *Implications économiques des désastres volcaniques. Le court et le long terme dans le cas de Pompéi*, in: C. ALBORE LIVADIE, F. WIDEMANN (eds.), *Volcanologie et archéologie: Actes des Ateliers Européens de Ravello, 19–27 novembre 1987 et 30–31 mars 1989*, Strasbourg–Ravello 1990, pp. 217–231; U. PAPPALARDO, *Vesuvio. Grandi eruzioni e reinsediamenti*, in: E. LO CASCIO, A. STORCHI MARINO (eds.), *Modalità insediative e strutture agrarie nell'Italia meridionale in età romana*, Bari 2001, pp. 435–453; TCHERNIA, *op. cit.* (n. 7), pp. 366 f.

completely abandoned after the catastrophes. The proponents of that view mention numerous deserted *villae maritimae* which were never rebuilt. Even though the data, especially the archaeological evidence, confirms the great extent of the damage, it also demonstrates that Campania was already experiencing a period of economic renewal under Trajan, with vineyards being established on the foothills of Vesuvius. To rise from the ashes in such a short period of time says something of the vitality of the Campanian economy<sup>12</sup>. In contrast to many other scholars, I argue that the damage might not have been long-lasting. Furthermore, Campanian seaside resorts retained at least part of their popularity even after the Vesuvian eruption, as we know of many an emperor frequenting the picturesque areas near Baiae. In addition, the hypothesis about the general crisis in Campanian vineyards in this period does not appear completely justified. Although the quantities of wine exported from Campania to Rome sharply decreased after 79 CE, it should be noted that Campanian wines were known and drunk in Rome at least until the end of the Severan period<sup>13</sup>. Moreover, Campanian wines, despite the growing popularity of provincial wines, especially Aegean ones, enjoyed a steady local demand and were, in all probability, the most popular product of this kind in the indigenous market.

Those supporting the hypothesis of the post-Vesuvian winemaking crisis in Campania argue that it was caused not only by the environmental destruction, but also by the process of “latifundisation” that began in the early Principate, which means the concentration of land in the hands of the imperial elite<sup>14</sup>. According to these scholars, the latifundia owners preferred to farm extensively and this resulted in them moving away from viticulture to other crops. Consequently, the medium sized estates, which were the main source of income for the local aristocracy, began to disappear. One of the results of this process was the pauperisation of municipal notables. The available pieces of archaeological evidence are not sufficiently substantial to allow us to fully understand how “latifundisation” progressed in Campania. It is quite certain that the depopulation of the countryside and the abandonment of villas in this region did take place. However, the process progressed unevenly and it did not affect all regions in the same manner. The lands around Sinuessa and Venafrum had already suffered from its effects by the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE. Conversely, some areas, such as parts of the *ager Falernus* and lands around Suessa Aurunca, started to experience its

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<sup>12</sup> See G. SORICELLI, *La regione vesuviana tra secondo e sesto secolo d.C.*, in: LO CASCIO, STORCHI MARINO (eds.), *op. cit.* (n. 11), pp. 455–472.

<sup>13</sup> See, e.g., C. PANELLA, A. TCHERNIA, *Agricultural Products Transported in Amphorae: Oil and Wine*, in: W. SCHEIDEL, S. VON REDEN (eds.), *The Ancient Economy*, Edinburgh 2002, pp. 173–188.

<sup>14</sup> The problem of latifundia was discussed during the round table conference in Bordeaux in 1992 (*Du latifundium au Latifondo: un héritage de Rome, une création médiévale ou moderne? : Actes de la Table Ronde Internationale du CNRS organisée à l'Université Michel de Montaigne – Bordeaux III les 17–19 décembre 1992*, Paris 1995).

results on a greater scale only during the last decades of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century and early 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE<sup>15</sup>. Nonetheless, even in the mid-third century CE the Campanian winemaking industry was robust enough to export wines to the British Isles<sup>16</sup>.

The third factor that supposedly contributed to the Campanian economic recession in the period under discussion was the extension and development of the port at Ostia under Trajan. According to many scholars, the expansion of trade at Ostia occurred at the expense of the Campanian port at Puteoli, which lost a major share of its profits and sank into recession<sup>17</sup>. Nonetheless, extant sources indicate that the negative influence of Ostia on Puteoli has been overemphasised. Certainly the Campanian port may have lost part of its profits, but apparently it retained an influential position among other Italian harbours at least until the end of the Severan period.

The last factor that is claimed to have damaged the contemporary Campanian economy was the plague that ravaged the Roman Empire at the end of the Antonine period. Some researchers assert that the plague caused irreparable demographic damage, while others are more circumspect in their appraisals<sup>18</sup>. It is hard to find compelling arguments in Campanian sources to support either of these approaches. In fact, the plague coincided with the disappearance of inscriptions carved in the *sacellum augustalium* in Misenum during those years, as well as the puzzlingly strong presence of *curatores rei publicae* recorded at Puteoli. Unfortunately, it is notoriously difficult to date epigraphic and archaeological pieces of evidence with any certainty. Consequently, the Antonine plague, supposedly spread by legions returning from the East, remains somewhat of an enigma.

The appraisal in the first chapter of the economic condition of Campania in the period under discussion provides the basis for the second chapter (“The Campanian elites: income and expenses”), in which I examine the income

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<sup>15</sup> Much ink has been spilled on interpreting Campanian archaeological digs and finds. However, the incompleteness of surveys and diversity of methodologies applied to analyse finds often end in scholars arriving at vastly different conclusions, see, e.g., P. ARTHUR, *Romans in Northern Campania: Settlement and Landuse around the Massico and the Garigliano Basin*, London 1991; J.P. VALLAT, *Temps long et temps court, structures et conjonctures dans l'économie rurale de la Campanie romaine*, in: LO CASCIO, STORCHI MARINO (eds.), *op. cit.* (n. 11), pp. 583–589.

<sup>16</sup> P. ARTHUR, D. WILLIAMS, *Campanian Wine, Roman Britain and the Third Century A.D.*, JRA V 1992, pp. 250–260.

<sup>17</sup> R. ANNECCHINO, *Storia di Pozzuoli e della zona flegrea*, Pozzuoli 1960, pp. 133 f.; S. DE CARO, *I Campi Felgrei in eta Romana*: in: F. ZEVİ *et al.* (eds.), *Museo Archeologico dei Campi flegrei, Catalogo generale*, vol. I: *Cumae*, Napoli 2008, p. 62.

<sup>18</sup> No consensus has yet been reached on what the consequences of the Antonine plague were for Italy. A well-balanced and neutral summary of the discussion to-date can be found in a recent publication edited by the renowned Italian historian, E. LO CASCIO (*L'impatto della "peste antonina"*, Bari 2012); the work acknowledges the voices of both the proponents and opponents of the so-called traditional approach to the long-term consequences of the plague.

sources of the Campanian municipal elites. The preserved evidence indicates that the main source of profits for the members of the municipal elites was corn farming. Some might have specialized in viticulture; a portion of them might have produced amphorae as well. The landowners occasionally owned estates located in more than one *civitas*. However, the estates were never far removed from the owners' permanent residences and were usually located in Campania or neighbouring regions. Those who did not originally earn a living from the agricultural sector could also buy lands. The richest of the *augustales* – who as a group usually derived their income from trade, craft and financial activity – occasionally bought such estates. Interestingly, local nobles also dabbled in those sectors, especially in trade. More often than not they were *homines novi*, usually sons of freedmen. Their inclination to practice trades more risky than those of farming could be explained by their specific position in the hierarchy of the *ordines decurionum*.

To be classified as a member of the municipal elite, one not only had to be affluent, but one also had to spend money in a specific manner and the subsequent section of my dissertation considers how the elites flaunted their social standing by conspicuous consumption and euergetism. The preserved pieces of information on the private expenditure of some Campanian elites are fragmentary and inconclusive. In contrast, works and contributions to the public good of the *augustales* and members of the *ordines decurionum* were well recorded. In the Late Republican and Julio-Claudian times, the local elites contributed to municipal finances relatively often by raising and repairing buildings. In contrast, the elites in the Antonine-Severan period preferred to distribute money and hold public feasts. In all probability, this shift did not happen because the members of municipal elites lost their wealth – in fact, many of them, as the sources show us, were exceedingly rich. In my opinion, a more probable – but still only hypothetical due to the complexity of the problem – explanation is that the emperors gradually monopolized the practice of funding public buildings<sup>19</sup>. Notably, the majority of recorded acts of euergetism were performed in the municipalities of the coastal strip, which proves that those *civitates* and their elite must have been relatively affluent, in comparison to *municipia* and *coloniae* from other parts of Campania.

In the key part of my dissertation, I analyse and discuss the organisation and everyday functioning of the Campanian elites (Chapter Three: “The structure of municipal elites”). The analysed material indicates that aristocratic families only infrequently retained their social standing for more than one generation. The hypothesis that particular *gentes* could not be ranked among the *ordines*

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<sup>19</sup> For more information about this hypothesis, see, e.g., J.R. PATTERSON, *The Emperor and the Cities of Italy*, in: K. LOMAS, T. CORNELL (eds.), *Bread and Circus. Euergetism and Municipal Patronage in Roman Italy*, London–New York 2002, pp. 89–104.

*decurionum* in a more permanent manner is in all probability not a result of the incomplete preservation of the source material. In Puteoli, where municipal records were the best preserved out of all the Campanian cities, only about 30 per cent of decurions in the Antonine-Severan period carried the same *nomen gentilicium* as the aristocrats of the preceding eras. The percentage is even smaller if one takes into account only the cases where the *praenomen* and *nomen gentilicium* are carried over together. There are also no findings that let one suppose that during the period of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and early 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries the *ordines decurionum* were dominated by members of a few powerful families. In my view, the scale of this process could actually be similar to that of the one in Pompeii in the mid-first century CE, which means it was relatively low<sup>20</sup>. Many *homines novi* held seats at the municipal councils, with up to 40 per cent of decurions coming from that social group. Again, descendants of freedmen formed the majority of *homines novi* in the municipal councils, although one might also mention the participation of many veterans and their offspring in Misenum or the presence of immigrants on the council of Puteoli. In contrast, the records mention relatively few *apparitores*. The aforementioned lack of generational continuity in Campania is especially visible in Capua.

In order to preserve their power and avert the dangers to succession from impoverishment or lack of offspring, the local nobles implemented long-term measures. Particularly efficient measures were those of adoptions and marriages. The inclusion of a person of a lower social status into the family by adoption or marriage apparently was not a concern for those wishing to prolong their social position and the well-being of their families.

In the light of these findings it can be claimed that the municipal elites of the times of the Antonines and Severans functioned in essentially the same way as their predecessors from the early Principate.

What changed was the structure of the *augustales*, whose descendants relatively often entered the *ordines decurionum*. It was clearly visible in the coastal Campanian cities, where former bodies of quasi-officials began to function as structured corporations. In many *civitates* of the coastal strip the *augustales* enjoyed a period of prosperity that lasted at least until the end of the Antonine age. Notably, in several cities, such as Misenum, the *augustales* gained a high degree of autonomy from the municipal councils; for instance they were granted the right to independently elect new members. The growing structural complexity of these *collegia* may be observed if one analyses the unique albums of the *augustales* from Liternum dated to the end of the Antonine period<sup>21</sup>. The records reflect an intricately organized group that was so untypically inclusive that it drew its members from men, women and slaves. There are not many pieces

<sup>20</sup> On the Pompeian *ordo decurionum*, see Łoś, *op. cit.* (n. 5), pp. 213 f.

<sup>21</sup> *AE* 2001, 853 = *SupIt* 25, 16; *AE* 2001, 854 = *SupIt* 25, 17.



of evidence supporting changes in the organization of the *augustales* in central Campania and in this light one can presume that local *collegia* were usually organized in a much more traditional way. The position of the *augustales* was especially strong in Capua, an important centre of regional and trans-regional trade. Interestingly, there are almost no public records of the activity of the *augustales* in many *civitates* situated in the hilly border zone; for instance, they are almost invisible in the epigraphic sources from Venafrum and Allifae from the 2<sup>nd</sup> and early 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries CE, even though these organisations often appear in the records from the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE. This may indeed indicate that this part of Campania experienced an economic downturn in the period under discussion.

In the final part of my dissertation, I discuss the members of the imperial elites who descend from the Campanian *civitates* (Chapter Four: “Equestrian and senatorial careers of Campanian citizens”). As we learn about their careers in the military, the imperial administration or the senate, we gain a better understanding of the initial social standing of the local elite and their promotion opportunities. In comparison to the Julio-Claudian age, the Antonine-Severan period was marked by a significant drop in the number of equestrian officials, officers and senators from Campania. However, it should be noted that the numbers of Campanian *equites* employed in the imperial administration rose sharply under the Severans, possibly due to the fact that the Severan emperors often visited the resort at Baiae. Also these *virii consulares* (the elite of the senate) who traced their descent from Campania were similarly numerous in the early Principate as in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century and the first decades of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE. In summary, Campania might have lost something of its former glory under the Antonines and Severans, but it was still a land that produced many outstanding members of the imperial elites.

This part of the dissertation is also where I discuss *curatores rei publicae* that were active in Campania. Almost all were members of the senatorial elites not previously linked to Campania. The records mention nineteen officials who, without any doubt, acted in the capacity of *curatores rei publicae*, the majority of them appointed under the late Antonines and then under the Severans. Their quite numerous representations in some places are not surprising if one considers how deeply these *civitates* (such as Nola) were affected by the economic downturn. One might wonder about their relatively strong recorded presence in affluent Puteoli. Since the curators were appointed to handle short-term financial crises, it is possible that they were ordered to deal with the transitory downturn brought on by the Antonine plague; the city itself probably did not experience serious economic difficulties<sup>22</sup>. Significantly, no record about the *curatores rei*

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<sup>22</sup> Older publications interpret the appearance of *curatores rei publicae* as proof of the city having lost its autonomy (see, e.g., F.F. ABBOT, A.C. JOHNSON, *Municipal Administration in the Roman Empire*, Princeton 1926, pp. 63, 112 f., 229–231). Nowadays, such strong opinions are usually

*publicae* appointed for Capua appears until the mid-third century CE. Many senators traced their descent from Capua and it cannot be ruled out that they might have given their city the financial assistance it required.

What therefore were the changes in the condition of the Campanian municipal elites in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and early 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries CE? It appears that the elites of the coastal cities, where the prosperity of the *augustales* and many acts of euergetism were recorded, were in the most favourable situation in Campania with regard to the economic sphere. This is also the area from which numerous members of the imperial elites traced their descent. The Antonine plague was a minor disturbance which was offset by the relative stability of the Severan period. The above is especially true for the *civitates* of the Bay of Naples. Conversely, the northern cities of the coastal strip such as Sinuessa were in all probability suffering from the effect of the recession that began in the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE. More difficult, compared to the coastal zone, was the situation of the cities of central Campania. Some of them, such as Nola or Nuceria, never recaptured their splendid past after the eruption of Vesuvius; other *civitates* suffered a crisis after the decline of prominent families who had played an important role in the Empire (e.g. Cales). The old capital of Campania, Capua, under the Severans at the latest, was also badly affected as indicated by the dramatic drop in the number of equestrians from this colony. The worst case scenario occurred in the hilly border zone. Almost no records of the *augustales* of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and early 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE survive from that region. In some towns – such as Allifae and Abellinum – in contrast to the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, we find only very few names of local aristocrats. Venafrum might have fared slightly better – but only just. These remote cities and their elites must have been devastated by the economic downturn that this part of Campania experienced at that time. In light of these findings, the Antonine-Severan age in Campania must have been a period of transition, from glory to downfall, both the highs and lows of the land inextricably bound with those of its municipal elites.

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questioned; see, e.g., G. CAMODECA, *Ricerche sui curatores rei publicae*, ANRW XIII (1980), pp. 488 f.; H. GALSTERER, *Local and Provincial Institutions and Government*, in: *CAH* XI (2000), p. 346.