Praising Athens under Rome: The case of Aelius Aristides' Panathenaicus

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Introduction

> ἰδίᾳ μὲν ἄλλους ἄλλοις εἶναι τροφέας, οὓς ἂν ἡ τύχη καὶ ὁ συμπίπτων χρόνος ἑκάστοις παρασκευάσῃ, κοινοὺς δὲ ἁπάντων τροφέας ὑμᾶς εἶναι καὶ μόνους καὶ πρό γε αὐτῶν ἔτι τῶν τροφέων, ὥσπερ οὓς πατέρας πατέρων καλοῦσιν οἱ ποιηταί·
>
> Individually, there are for various people, various foster-parents, that luck and coincidence prepared for everyone, but you alone are the common foster-parents of all people, and even before the foster-parents themselves, like those whom the poets call fathers of fathers.[1]
>
> *Panathenaicus* 1

So begins Aelius Aristides his Panathenaic oration. His goal is naturally to praise the city of Athens as the most outstanding one, a notion swiftly introduced from the very beginning of his speech. *Encomia* for various cities were of course not a rarity in the ancient world and the genre flourished particularly under the orators of the imperial era. Aristides himself wrote many such speeches, praising, among others, his homeland Smyrna and Rome. It comes as no surprise that Athens features in such an encomium, given the prominent status of the city in the mindset of the second century AD.[2] Aristides seeks in the *Panathenaicus* to declare Athens as the font of virtue, culture and education, elevating it above all other cities. The Athenians are the common ancestors and foster-parents of everyone (ἁπάντων) and should be honoured accordingly. This repeated notion is not confined to Greeks but also includes the Romans. Contrary to Saïd's opinion that Aristides "transforms Athens into a second Rome", it will be argued that throughout the speech Rome appear subsequent and inferior to Athens.[3] In the process of extolling Athens, Aristides neglects and marginalizes the established Roman dominance over the Greek world, taking some implicit hits at the history, origins, legitimation and permanence of the empire, to enhance the antithesis with the greatness of Athens. The aim of this thesis is to explore the ways in which Aelius Aristides depicts Rome inside the *Panathenaicus* to praise Athens, in an era of Greek subjugation to the Romans, and consequently to examine his attitude towards the imperial center of power in this speech.

The complex relationship between Greece and Rome, which evolved after the Roman conquest of the Greek world, has been the subject of extensive research in the attempts of modern scholarship to analyze the Greco-Roman civilization. Especially in the last 25 years, scholars have paid due attention to the plethora of manifestations of this relationship, focusing on issues of citizenship, identity, cultural negotiation and literature.[4] Simultaneously, new approaches in the fields of literary theory, anthropology and sociology, have highlighted the fragility of oversimplistic generalizations (e.g. "the Greeks felt this way"), emphasizing the individuality of cases and the multiple factors that were at work in the interaction of different populations during the first three centuries CE. Concerning

[1] The Greek text is taken from Trapp's Loeb edition, who follows Lenz. Translations are my own unless noted otherwise, although at times I have consulted Oliver 1968, Behr 1981 and Trapp 2017.
[2] Cf. the movement of Atticism.
[3] Saïd 2001, 294.
[4] See Woolf 1994; Swain 1996; Goldhill 2001; Whitmarsh 2001; Spawforth 2012.

literature, scholars are less keen to ascribe specific views deducible from texts to authors, pointing out not only generic differences and literary conventions that change from text to text, but also the multiple ways in which each text interacts with the previous literary tradition to produce renewed perspectives of the world.[5] Aelius Aristides' case presents a unique combination of heterogeneous elements, since his multi-layered identity as Greek, Roman and a devotee of Asclepius enabled him to accentuate different characteristics at different times. This has led scholarship to maintain a wide perspective regarding the analysis of his works, underlining the different elements that coexist in his corpus.[6] This thesis will only deal with the specific case of Rome in the *Panathenaicus*, hoping to illuminate this particular point of contact between Greek and Roman cultures.

The first chapter is devoted to factors outside the *Panathenaicus* that influence and shaped Aristides' depiction of Rome. Firstly, his life is presented focusing on his relationship with the city, as well as other important milestones that affected his personal views and *modus vivendi*. Secondly, the intellectual framework of the so-called "Second Sophistic" is discussed, dealing with the literary production of Aristides' time, issues of (Greek) identity in the Roman empire, together with the disposition of contemporary authors towards Athens, classical Greece and Rome. Finally, Aristides' own relationship with Rome is analyzed, summarizing the orator's attitude in other speeches. The second chapter introduces the *Panathenaicus*. After a brief overview of the oration's content, structure and composition context, I summarize the main argument of this thesis regarding the position of Rome inside the speech. Lastly, the rhetorical technique of figured speech is presented and analyzed, a powerful heuristic tool which will help us detect and understand Aristides' allusive mentions to Rome. The third chapter contains the analysis of specific excerpts from the speech that exemplify Aristides' disposition towards Rome in the *Panathenaicus*. The margins of this thesis, as well as the allusive nature of the material, dictate a selection of the most important passages, and thus the analysis of small and marginal insinuations has been omitted.

Research so far has engaged with relevant questions from different standpoints. On the one hand, Aristides' position towards Rome has been identified as lacking interest in the city's history and past achievements, while praising the successful and impressive governance of the empire. This has led scholars to conclude that Aristides' relation with Rome revolves primarily around the present, engaging more with the ruling power that is Rome in the second century CE and the administrative effects of the empire in the Mediterranean world.[7] Such conclusions are based primarily on the speech *To Rome*, which naturally offers rich material; the *Panathenaicus* has only hastily been analyzed under this prism, focusing more on the rare direct references to Rome in the oration and omitting any subtle implications by Aristides. On the contrary, research on the *Panathenaicus* has devoted due pages to the Athenian preeminence against Rome in terms of piety and culture, abstaining from providing a complete account on the role of Rome or Aristides' attitude towards Roman rulership in the speech, while also excluding any discussion of legitimacy and citizenship by Aristides.[8] This thesis tries to cover this vacancy by exploring the role of

[5] Whitmarsh 2001, 29-32.
[6] See Harris & Holmes 2008.
[7] See Pernot 2008.
[8] Oudot 2005; Kelly 2011.

Rome in the *Panathenaicus* at its entirety, encompassing but not repeating the results of previous research.

1. Aelius Aristides and Rome

1.1 Aelius Aristides

P. Aelius Aristides Theodorus was born in what was later called Hadriani in Mysia on 117 CE, when Hadrian became emperor.[9] Hadrian visited Mysia in 123 CE[10] for administrative reasons and gave Aristides' city its name, alongside Roman citizenship to him and his father Eudaemon.[11] His father was a wealthy landowner and provided his son with a proper rhetorical education. Aristides studied in Smyrna, Pergamum and Athens. His teachers were considered the best of their time, including among others Alexander of Cotiaeum, the teacher of future emperors L. Verus and M. Aurelius, and the famous Herodes Atticus, who also taught M. Aurelius and later became a senator.[12] After a year-long travel to Egypt from 141 to 142 CE where he first fell sick, Aristides travelled to Rome in 144 CE, only to see his condition worsen, not allowing him to pursue his rhetorical career in the capital. This dismay affected the progress of his oratory and consequently his relationship with the city; as Behr notes, "Rome, the stage of his ambitions, became the cemetery of his hopes".[13] His illness turned out to be chronic and severe, forcing him to spend two years in the sanctuary of Asclepius in Pergamum, an experience that was later recounted in his S*acred Tales*. Aristides' relationship with the god would advance further during his lifetime, as he devoted himself to his worship. He spent most of his remaining time between Smyrna and his estate at Laneion in Mysia, while also undertaking several travels when his health allowed him to, delivering orations in many cities. During one of those travels in 155 CE, Behr suggested that Aristides visited Athens and Rome, delivering his speeches *Panathenaicus* and *To Rome* respectively.[14] He died between 180-185 CE.[15]

Aristides' posthumous reception was enthusiastic, quickly establishing his works among the classics.[16] The later sophist and biographer Philostratus included him in his *Lives of the Sophists*, a questionable choice since Aristides actively tried to portray himself as the

[9] For a detailed determination of Aristides' date and place of birth (calculated to the time of his birth) see Behr 1994, 1141-1155. For a full account of his life see Behr 1968, 1-115. My account is based on Behr 1968 & 1994 and Trapp 2017.

[10] Behr 1968, 4. Trapp 2017, x although following Behr, prints 131/132, in favour of locating Aristides' citizenship in Hadrian's second journey to the region (?). Hadrian first crossed Asia Minor on his way from Antioch to the Danube shorty after ascending to the throne, and later made two journeys to the region: one in 123-124 and one in 129-131. For Hadrian's journeys see Magie 1950, 613-621, with an overview of relevant scholarship on 1470 n. 6.

[11] Aristides and his father were also citizens of Smyrna, Behr 1968, 4.

[12] Behr 1968, 10-12.

[13] Behr 1968, 24.

[14] Behr 1968, 88-90 in view of Aristides' condition in the first journey, supports a second visit in Rome during this trip, in which *To Rome* was delivered. Other scholars prefer the earlier date of 144 CE, see Pernot 1997, 163-170.

[15] Trapp 2017, xv.

[16] For some preliminary accounts on Aristides' reception see Jones 2008, 2009; Cribiore 2008.

good equivalent (ῥήτωρ) of this inferior art.[17] However, Aristides is traditionally regarded by modern scholarship as a paradigmatic member of the so-called "Second Sophistic" movement, to which we will now turn. The inclusion of Aristides in this group of literati facilitates a better understanding of the intellectual atmosphere of his time, which undoubtedly shaped and influenced to a certain degree his ideas, literary production, and rhetorical career.

1.2 The Second Sophistic

The term "Second Sophistic" traditionally referred to a supposed intellectual movement that flourished in the Greek part of the Roman Empire during the first three centuries CE. The term was used since the 19th century to describe an alleged resurgence of Greek letters, albeit styled in the form of "postindustrial nationalism".[18] This period, characterized historically by stability, peace and a generally smooth succession of the imperial throne, led indeed to a bloom of Greek education and literary production from many significant authors.[19] This bloom was perceived as a renaissance of Greek letters and an overall elevated literary and philosophical atmosphere that was cultivated in the Greek cities, aided by Roman *philhellenes* and wealthy Greek citizens.[20] However, modern scholarship has pointed out that this Greek purity is predominantly a modern concept projected into the past, rather than the historical reality of the Greek literature during the Roman Empire.[21] It has been argued that the "Second Sophistic" did not constitute a renaissance of Hellenism (in whatever sense we are to perceive "Greekness"), but that the literature developed in this period formed one of the possible spaces to construct, adopt and negotiate a Greek identity, which received a wide interest from the educated elites of the Greek cities.[22]

The term was coined by the biographer Philostratus in his *Lives of the Sophists,* and it originally marked a particular literary style that focused heavily on epideictic oratory, rather than the chronological period of the first three centuries CE.[23] However, ancient writers do not exhibit a sense of belonging to a homogenous group with shared characteristics. On the contrary, the word "sophist" retained a negative quality and some authors differentiated themselves from it, expressing their disdain for sophistry and its practitioners.[24] Aristides, as we have seen, refrained from labelling himself as "sophist", although aware of the difficulty to render one single meaning to the term.[25] In Philostratus'

[17] Cf. *Or.* 33.29. Behr 1994, 1171; Trapp 2017, xvi; Stanton 1973, 355 supports that Aristides would not have been pleased to be named a sophist. Whitmarsh 2005, 18-19, notes Aristides' awareness for the word's multiplicity of meanings.
[18] Whitmarsh 2013, 3.
[19] Authors traditionally considered members of the Second Sophistic include, amongst others, Dio Chrysostom, Herodes Atticus, Polemo and Favorinus.
[20] Bowersock 1974, 1.
[21] Whitmarsh 2013, 3.
[22] Literary production of this period was heavily preoccupied with the optimal education that would form an identity comprised of "manliness, elitism and Greekness" (Whitmarsh 2005, 15). Literature was only one of the available means to assert this identity, with others including architecture, art and civic life (Whitmarsh 2001, 37).
[23] Philostratus *VS* 481 explicitly states that the right term for the literary style he will analyze is "Second" instead of "New" Sophistic, since it is in fact ancient, dating back to Aeschines; Whitmarsh 2001, 42.
[24] Whitmarsh 2005, 17.
[25] Whitmarsh 2005, 19.

attempt to narrate the lives of prominent, educated authors from the first three centuries CE, very different writers and gernes are put together, often with no concrete criterion.[26] Even in modern scholarship, there is not a univocal consensus about the definition of "Second Sophistic". The term is mostly used to denote the literary production of the first three centuries CE, emphasizing not only the importance of rhetorical training, but also the close correspondence of declamatory topics with the time of the sophists and the classical world.[27] However, the term itself gives a disproportionate weight on rhetoric, which consequently neglects the rest -very rich- literary production of the era.[28]

By "Greek" and "Roman" I do not necessarily mean two pure and clearly separatable groups that did not mix and overlap with each other;[29] Aristides was after all a Roman citizen, and we cannot speculate that he always dismissed this part of his identity.[30] Rather, these categories better represent cultural identities that were constructed and assumed, but also contested and negotiated amongst members of the imperatorial elite.[31] In other words, there was more to Greek identity than simply presupposing it as a common characteristic of inhabitants of Greek cities. Language played an important role in assuming the cultural identity of "the Greek", which in turn had significant connotations in the struggle for status inside the social hierarchy of the empire. For Greeks under Roman rule this assumption was primarily carried out through literature and oratory. "Greekness" then, could take up a dual dimension, with the latter transgressing the boundaries of ethnicity and claiming superiority in culture and civilization.[32] Thus, understanding Greek identity of the period is embedded in literary analysis and interpretation.[33] In our case, Aristides' focus on Greek subjects in his speeches, together with his refusal of actively participating in political life (a usual field to assume "Greekness"), is taken by scholars as an exemplary case to study the Greek identity he constructs through his texts.[34]

[26] Goldhill 2001, 14.

[27] Whitmarsh 2005, 4. The advantages are listed in Goldhill 2001, 14, who thinks that they do not outweigh the problems created by the term. For the modern use denoting a specific period see Whitmarsh 2001, 43-45. The term will be used as such from now on, omitting the quotation marks.

[28] Whitmarsh 2013, 188. Cf. for example the satirical works of Lucian, who, although also a practiced sophist himself, was left out from Philostratus' work.

[29] The most apparent example of overlapping is emperor Hadrian, whose appearance and admiration of Greek civilization earned him the nickname "Graeculus". For Hadrian's relationship with Greece and Athens, especially focusing on cultural aspects, see Spawforth 2012, 244-261.

[30] Cf. the inscription bearing his full name Πόπλιος Αἴλιος Ἀριστείδης Θεόδωρος (OGIS 709) and Whitmarsh's 2001, 22 observation that even Plutarch, this unassailable Greek, would be proud to demonstrate his Roman identity and citizenship inside a civic context.

[31] Whitmarsh 2001 37-38, 190 stresses this ongoing negotiation, emphasizing that the texts under examination do not conclusively define, but participate in an everlasting process of defining these categories. Thus, the terms Greek and Roman will be used throughout this thesis as markers of this effort to construct a certain identity, instead of hinting at ethnic or other criteria.

[32] Whitmarsh 2001b, 272-273.

[33] Whitmarsh 2001, 2, 17; Whitmarsh 2005, 1.

[34] Bowersock 1969, 1 sees Aristides as a reflection of the sophistic world, while Whitmarsh 2013, 4 highlights that claims to Greekness should take into consideration individual circumstances of author, text and aims.

Philostratus' Second Sophistic hints back at the first sophists of the 5th and 4th century BCE, whose contribution to areas such as philosophy and rhetoric shaped the idealized concept of classical Greek education (παιδεία).[35] The sophists of the later period, like their predecessors, had students, taught mostly rhetoric and declamation and were involved in the public life.[36] Historical themes were favoured as subjects for declamation in sophistic performances: Athenian history, especially the time between the Persian Wars and Alexander the Great, became a regular feature in these orations. In contrast with their Latin counterparts, where more contemporary history found its way to the *suasoriae* practiced by students, in Greek schools, Hellenistic and Roman history were generally avoided.[37] It is then no wonder that Aristides heavily preoccupied himself with the praise of Athenian history in the *Panathenaicus*, emphasizing the glorious win over the Persians and omitting less favourable historical instances.

This emphasis on the Greek past and the historical as well as cultural achievements of classical Greece has been explained in terms of political restraints: since the extant political situation of the first three centuries CE left no space for autonomous political decisions, sophists resorted to classical times to escape from the restricted present.[38] Bowie argued that this cultural practice was directly affected by the political decline, as the previous cultural and political achievements were inseparably produced together.[39] Greeks of the empire concerned themselves with the political achievements of their predecessors, not to actively expostulate with the present reality, but to bridge the gap between the glorious past and the dependent present.[40] While the contradiction between the present state of the Greek world and its previous greatness offered not only a sense of continuity, but a gap that needed to be bridged, Whitmarsh also argued that Greek authors located themselves inside a classical context to reinterpret the traditional relationships between citizens and their poleis to a more suiting scheme for the empire.[41]

Sophists played an important role in the intellectual life of their period, but their influence expanded beyond their writings. They had a financial contribution to their cities, both as benefactors, but also mediators between the Greek world and Roman administration. Although the political epicenter of the Greco-Roman world had shifted from the individual polis of the classical era to the center of the imperial power in Rome, thus hindering any chances for real and active participation in decision making, these eminent intellectuals were often prominent members of the local elite, holding public offices and ascending to the existing social hierarchy. Some claimed their place in the Roman administration, following the *cursus honorum* and rising even to senatorial status.[42] They often represented their cities' causes with delegations to Roman officials and the emperor.[43]

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[35] Modern scholarship regards Philostratus as a sophist himself, making him a member of the movement he described (Bowersock 1969, 2).

[36] The refusal of Aristides to undertake any public office is notoriously elaborated in many of his speeches. He also mentions the existence of students, although he must have taught privately and not systematically, cf. Philostratus, *VS* 583.

[37] Kennedy 1974, 19.

[38] Bowie 1970, 18.

[39] Bowie 1970, 23.

[40] Bowie 1970, 40-41.

[41] Whitmarsh 2001b, 271-273. Oudot 2005 follows a similar idea in her analysis of the *Panathenaicus*.

[42] E.g. the friend of Aristides C. Avidius Heliodorus who became prefect of Egypt (Bowersock 1969, 50-51).

[43] Bowersock 1969, 43.

This proximity and friendship with important figures of the Roman court granted them a special status amongst the elites of the Empire.[44] However, this intellectual atmosphere was often disrupted by personal feuds between prominent sophists, that took the form of academic confrontation. Such contests could receive the character of an intra-city rivalry, fighting not only for intellectual primacy, but also for preeminence inside the Greek world.[45]

In a dipole already constructed by ancient authors, Greece represented culture and Rome power, administration and security.[46] This division, although limiting and oversimplistic for modern scholarship, served from a Roman perspective to deprive Greeks from the role of ruler, by confining them to the role of educator.[47] Greek authors on the other hand, portrayed themselves as educated and cultured, as education was a constituent component of the identity they strove for, a mix of "manliness, elitism and Greekness".[48] This provided a space for ambitious authors to demonstrate their intellectual capacity, although the significant political power was now in the hands of the Romans.[49] As we shall see, the case of the *Panathenaicus* is different: although the Athenian achievements in education and culture are constantly stressed, Rome is rarely depicted as the center of power, and when it is, the laudatory comments should not be taken at face value.[50] With the negation of this traditional division Aristides is reshaping these fixed roles, striping the Romans almost completely of their power, not only because an encomium demands the unconfined praise of the subject matter, but also because in the orator's viewpoint Athens represented the cultural and political ideal to strive for.[51]

The role of Athens inside this literary tradition was central. Attic Greek was the common language of the literate elites, distinguishing them from common people and their works from everyday speech. Many authors praised the city for its political achievements, but also due to its role in cultivating literature and oratory during the classical period. Athens gained the role of the exemplified Greece: nostalgia for the past became associated with the Athenian history and any laudation to Athens could vice versa be extended to include Greece as a whole.[52] For the Second Sophistic, democratic Athens is something "both familiar and alien, and self-definition in the present involves both the appropriation and the transcendence of the paradigms of the past".[53] Thus, when Aristides distinguishes the

[44] See the corresponding two chapters regarding the relationship of the sophists with their Roman friends and the emperors in Bowersock 1969, ch. IV & VI.

[45] Such is the case of the rivalry between Polemo of Smyrna and Favorinus of Ephesus, that soon became a fight between the two intellectual centers. Bowersock 1969, 90 observes that in the second century "Empty titles and imagined superiority meant much to the local citizenry". However, the manifestations of such disputes extended well beyond hollow claims of superiority: Philostratus (*VS* 531) preserves a favouring rule of Hadrian for Smyrna over Ephesus, that bestowed ten million drachmas to the city, which were used to build the corn-market, the city's gymnasium and a temple.

[46] Sterz 1994, 1269.

[47] This is not to suggest that there did not exist genuine admiration of Greek culture by Romans. Spawforth 2012, 239-240 points out Pliny's and Tacitus' recognition of the Greek contribution "to the development of a civilization of which Rome was in some ways the heir".

[48] Whitmarsh 2005, 13-15.

[49] Whitmarsh 2001, 20, 34.

[50] See the analysis on paragraphs 332-335.

[51] Aristides was generally fond of Roman administration, see next subchapter.

[52] Bowie 1970, 28-30, listing several ancient treatises about the attic language and the Athenian past. Other authors however, like Strabo and Dio, tried to devoid Athens from its culturally preeminent status to favour other cities (Spawforth 2012, 240).

[53] Whitmarsh 2001b, 273.

Athenians amongst the Greeks, his intention is to praise the Greek cultural identity as he attempts to shape the silhouette of the exceptional Greek into the "realm of the imaginary", where the Roman conquest shifted it.[54]

Views of sophistic literature towards Rome have been explained either through agreement or opposition.[55] Bowersock claimed that we should not assume a serious clash between the two cultures, as the engagement with classical Greece was not sparked to establish a separate greatness, contradictory to the Roman one.[56] Greeks could embrace their Roman status without refuting their Greek cultural identity. For him, Rome and Athens were part of the same world, forming what would become "increasingly a Graeco-Roman unity" and Greek and Roman elites coexisted successfully inside the given hierarchical structures.[57] Swain, on the other hand, emphasized the imbalance between the cultural and the political power of the Greek elites, stressing the alien and sometimes unnecessary nature of Roman culture inside the Greek world of this period.[58] He overcame the contradictions found inside corpora of certain authors by employing different levels of attitude towards Roman rule: one could support Rome in the public affairs but hold a different opinion in his private life.[59] More recently, Whitmarsh focused on the construction of the Greek identity through literature, emphasizing how each text of this period reflects upon and contributes to its composition.[60] He rejected any attempts to extract the authors' genuine feelings from their texts, granting literature an autonomous existence.[61] It is precisely this elaborate process of identity-negotiation that enables different aspects of one's identity to be expressed at different contexts. If, as Whitmarsh argued, "identity is *constituted by* social discourse" in the sense of literature, then any text contributing to this discourse forms an expression of said identity;[62] thus, self-fashioning inside literary texts is a manifestation of specific characteristics of an author's identity as "the Hellenism of the Greek literature of the period is neither natural nor self-evident: it is, rather, artfully created".[63] This thesis will engage primarily with the expression of Aristides' constructed Greek identity in the *Panathenaicus* at the expense of Rome.

In such a sophisticated world like the one of the first three centuries CE, one should not expect these literary realizations of identity to have a simple form.[64] In the case of the *Panathenaicus*, Aristides is taking up the identity of Athenian (that is, the exemplary Greek) and by negatively constructing the polar opposite of Romanness, he seeks to elevate not only his constructed identity of Greekness, but also himself as the one responsible for raising it to the height it belonged, by providing its fullest account.[65] Whitmarsh argued that one of the primary goals of sophistic literature and declamation was the ascension in social

[54] Whitmarsh 2001, 21. In a dream in the fragmentary sixth Sacred Tale, Aristides records Musonius Rufus commanding him to "save himself for the city of the Athenians, that is the Greeks", *Or.* 52.3.
[55] Whitmarsh 2001, 2.
[56] Bowersock 1969, 15.
[57] Bowersock 1969, 16, 44.
[58] Swain 1996, 3.
[59] Swain 1996, 70.
[60] Whitmarsh 2001, 2.
[61] Whitmarsh 2001, 29-32.
[62] Whitmarsh 2001, 31.
[63] Whitmarsh 2001, 22.
[64] Whitmarsh 2001, 33. Hence our approach to detect the figured speech inside the *Panathenaicus*, see below.
[65] *Or.* 1.3-6, 401.

hierarchy and the claim of Roman citizenship.[66] However, Aristides' already established Roman citizenship, high status and rigorous attempts to deny public offices and thus social power must imply a different motive behind his engagement with oratory: his interests lie more on asserting his power and mastery on a rhetorical level, a sort of rhetoric for rhetoric.[67] By praising Athens, he is also praising himself.[68] The *Panathenaicus* is a celebration of Hellenism in the sense of skilled and elaborate rhetoric, and Rome incarnates in the speech the sterile bureaucratic administration that lack the possibility of success in this field.

1.3 Relationship with Rome

During his life, Aristides lived through five emperors (Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, Lucius Verus, Marcus Aurelius, and Commodus), three of which would later be categorized amongst the "five good emperors".[69] He was able to experience the Roman Empire reaching its outmost territorial expansion, spanning from Britain to Syria, with a population of ca 60 million and a surface of 5 million square kilometers.[70] The general stability, peace and prosperity of the second century CE led Aristides to develop an admiration for Romans, especially for the administration and governance of the empire.[71] This admiration, present in many orations but most profoundly in his encomium *To Rome*, has led scholars to identify his views towards Rome as "an ideology of concord and consensus", portraying him as a characteristic example of the peaceful coexistence between Greek and Roman elites.[72] Like other Greek sophists of the provinces, Aristides maintained connections to the Roman administration and the emperors themselves: his efforts to be granted exemption from holding public offices exemplify his contacts with the local authorities and the imperial court. Again, when Smyrna was destroyed by an earthquake in 178 CE, it was his successful letter to Marcus and Commodus which resulted in the city's rebuilding.[73] Swain emphasized the orator's acceptance of the current world order and the Roman dominance, stating that he "has nothing negative to say about Rome in any way".[74]

However, scholars have also warned against accepting Aristides' appreciation for Romans unquestioningly. Pernot has indicated two reasons that might have sparked hesitations towards Rome.[75] Firstly, his personal experience of Rome was far from good: his

[66] Whitmarsh 2005, 38.

[67] Aristides himself confirms the view, as he "did not engage with oratory because of wealth, fame, honour, marriage, dynasty or any other gain, but by being truly its lover" *Or.* 33.19. Aristides' susceptible-to-illness nature led him to establish a connection between rhetoric and healing, see Behr 1968, 44-49. However, he was quick to resort to his eloquence when faced with unwanted public offices, writing not only to governors, but to the emperor himself (Behr 1968, 63-68, 77-79).

[68] In *Or.* 1.8 he asserts the audience that if he is regarded an Athenian because the encomium seems directed to his own city, this will not bring them shame.

[69] Machiavelli coined the term in 1531 in his *Discourses on Livy*, 49.

[70] Kelly 2006, 1.

[71] As he stated in *To Rome* (*Or.* 26.51) "before you the knowledge of governing did not exist yet". Aristides' preoccupation with Roman administration has been noted by several scholars, see below.

[72] Pernot 2008, 175.

[73] Bowersock 1969, 46, where he comments on Aristides' claims that he had regular correspondence with the emperors, that "it is hard to believe that the emperor derived much pleasure from Aristides' company".

[74] Swain 1996, 259, but this view will be contested during this thesis.

[75] Pernot 2008, 176.

sickness stroke for the first time during his travel to the city in 144 CE and he himself describes the experience as a failure. He travelled to the capital to develop his rhetoric potential, but the trip ended up disastrous. Secondly, the fact that Greeks cooperated with and accepted the Roman rule, did not automatically result in an uncontested admiration of Roman culture. Greeks felt superior, even from the Romans, and this feeling could result in expressions of critique.[76] This is not to suggest necessarily a direct anti-Roman opposition from Aristides, but rather a complex stance towards Rome that at times encompassed subtle criticism.

Although Aristides' orations have been seen as propaganda in favour of the peace and flourishment of the Greeks under the Roman empire of the second century CE, his political views do not coincide with those of other members of the Second Sophistic. Sterz supported that many of them praised the emperor and monarchy as the ideal form of governing, but Aristides preferred a democratic polity.[77] The orator parallelized the Roman administration with democratic Athens for their unique combination of democratic, aristocratic and monarchic elements.[78] In doing so, he was not particularly interested in retaining the historical reality of classical Athens; rather he idealized the form of government that produced such cultural wealth in classical times, mixing it with his admiration for the present Roman administration.[79] His ideal political system was at least in theory democracy.[80] Contradictory to this preference to democracy, Aristides accepts time and again the law of the strongest, indicating that his admiration for democracy did not stem from a concrete political ideology, but from the fact that democratic Athens produced the authors and orators he so admired and imitated.[81] Aristides is not dissatisfied with the present situation, but his ideal society lied in the classical past.[82] Sterz supported an ambivalent approach of Aristides towards Rome, namely that his admiration regarding the benefits of Roman administration for the empire, came in contrast with his political preferences and his "Greek dislike for foreign rule".[83]

For Swain and Pernot, Aristides' praise for Rome is based on his personal benefits of avoiding public offices and the prosperity that comes from a peaceful era.[84] Aristides praised Rome due to his self-interest on the existing status quo and not because of some "deep loyalty" to Rome.[85] In assessing Aristides' connection with Romans, Swain claimed that their common territory was the mutual appreciation of Greek culture, since most of them were eastern and Hellenized, although Pernot, did not fail to emphasize his contacts with important Romans and the court.[86] However that may be, Aristides' any interest in Rome originated in the control it exerted over the Greek speaking world: for Aristides Roman rule, however beneficial, is a forced reality that must be endured, albeit the Greek disinclination to Roman culture.[87] In his works, the orator was not trying to reject Rome actively and

[76] Pernot 2008, 176.
[77] Sterz 1994, 1250-1253.
[78] *Or.* 1.384-389, 26.90 in Sterz 1994, 1253.
[79] Sterz 1994, 1254.
[80] Sterz 1994, 1252.
[81] Sterz 1994, 1258; cf. *Or.* 2.191 ff., 27.123 ff., 34.53 in Behr 1981 vol. 2, 370 n.47.
[82] Sterz 1994, 1267.
[83] Sterz 1994, 1270.
[84] Swain 1996, 260; Pernot 2008, 189-190.
[85] Swain 1996, 283.
[86] Swain 1996, 259-260; Pernot 2008, 175.
[87] Pernot 2008, 190.

completely, but his interest in classical rhetoric, democratic Athens and Greek culture resulted at times in hesitations to Roman reign.[88] Scholars agree that throughout his works the orator's focus, as well as his cultural identity, remain unmistakably Greek.[89]

Aelius' relationship with Rome is primarily assumed through his Roman oration.[90] This speech has been accused of lacking a deeper political meaning behind it and being nothing more than a mere admiration of Rome full of commonplaces, by an orator focused more on his rhetoric art rather than the content. Sterz dismissed these accusations as anachronistic, stressing however, that rhetorical conventions must be kept in mind when analyzing Aristides' speeches, especially when engaging with inconsistencies between orations written for different occasions at different times.[91] Swain, in his effort to distinguish Aristides' "real" feelings from the conventions of his rhetorical works, pointed out that the encomiastic nature of *To Rome* might not reveal his true thoughts.[92] The speech is rather praising the empire than the city itself: the superiority of Romans in governance is constantly stressed, but the praise of the flourishing empire focuses on the familiar Greek part of Ionia.[93] In general, Aristides does not deal with Roman history, but with the present.[94] When reinterpreting the classic division of Greeks and barbarians to Romans and non-Romans, Aristides carefully distinguishes himself by employing a second person narrative.[95] Additionally, Sterz observed that the emperor's praise is held to a minimum, perhaps signifying that his importance lies on being a bigger version of an Athenian *archon*.[96] Pernot detected Aristides' hesitations in *To Rome* from his omissions:[97] while praising the city, he omits any reference to its founding, history or culture, as well as any connection with the Greeks, alongside any Latin words, although he makes a lot of references to Greek mythology. Thus, he only engages with Rome as the center of the imperial power and the way rule was exercised to the eastern, Greek provinces, not openly criticizing Roman culture, but simply refusing to engage with the Roman identity, "imposing a Hellenocentric point of view on the speech".[98]

Other works also contain instances revealing Aristides' reservations towards Rome. In the oneiric encounters with the emperor in the *Sacred Tales*, it seems important for

[88] Sterz 1994, 1269.

[89] Sterz 1994, 1270; Swain 1996, 279 circles around Aristides' own Roman citizenship, by stating that Aristides "never refers to himself as Roman", 297; Pernot 2008, 199; Kelly 2011, 73. In view of Whitmarsh's discussion on the complexity of issues of identity during the first three centuries CE, one could object in ascribing a single national identity to Aristides. However, through his texts, his cultural identity is univocally constructed as exemplary Greek. Agreeing with Whitmarsh that literature offers a place for constructing an identity, one could claim a carefully projected Greek identity inside Aristides' orations.

[90] See e.g. Vannier 1976.

[91] See Bowersock, Peardon and Kennedy in Sterz 1994, 1249, who points out the different position of the Greeks in the *Panathenaicus* and in *To Rome*.

[92] Swain 1996, 255. Swain claims have been rightly criticized by Whitmarsh 2001, 3.

[93] Swain 1996, 276-279, *Or.* 26.94-95.

[94] Swain 1996, 260. An instance where he does, but not for an encomiastic reason is found in *Or.* 19.9.

[95] *Or.* 26.63 "You do not divide now the nations in Greeks and barbarias (…) but you separate them in Romans and non-Romans".

[96] Sterz 1994, 1257.

[97] Pernot 2008, 189, omissions fall under the devices of figured speech, which will be discussed below.

[98] Pernot 2008, 188-189. The effect is highlighted by neglecting to mention the conquest of Greece by the Romans.

Aristides to stress the superiority of Asclepius over all humans, including the emperor.[99] Aristides' neglect towards the imperial protocol stems from his devotion to the gods, which made even the emperors recognize their inferiority. As a devotee, he is used to see above the mortal, temporal authority, something that enables him to maintain a distant superiority when meeting human rulers.[100] When asked by his fellow citizens, Aristides refused to take on public duties, as his devotion to the gods was his primary concern.[101] He even refused the priesthood of Asclepius, as he claimed unable to do anything that the god did not compel him.[102] He thus marginalized himself in the boundaries, or even outside, the political life of his period, which included a degree of engaging with Roman authority.[103] In the *Sicilian Orations* the idea that subjugated nations are oppressed but regard the absence of greater disaster as prosperity, could bear resemblance with Aristides' present political situation.[104] This passage hints to the ephemeral character of every empire, carrying a significant connotation: as the Athenian rule failed, so will the Roman, since every empire lacks "philanthropy and immortality".[105]

In other aspects of his life, Aristides was in accordance with the Romans: for Sterz, Aristides' reservations towards Rome might not form a unified and detailed system, but they sometimes result in inner contradictions that can partly be explained from the rhetorical aspect of his works.[106] Pernot argued that this absence of systematization implies only certain thoughts that stem from his identity as Greek and devotee to Asclepius. Aristides belonged to a subjugated nation, but the Greek historical, linguistic and cultural achievements of the past bequeathed a feeling of superiority to later generations.[107]

Although relevant scholarship has focused more on *To Rome*, the contradictory nature between *To Rome* and the *Panathenaicus* has also been noted: how can Athens retain its glory in a period when Roman achievements undermine all others? Apart from the rhetorical context of *encomia* (which demands absolute exaltation of the subject from the speaker) and the established division between administration and culture, Oudot engages in her analysis of the *Panathenaicus* with the question of an *encomium* "acceptable" to Rome.[108] The speech is not meant to be a plain series of historical events, but rather a celebration of Athens' moral qualities. Aristides is redefining Athens into a cultural and linguistic empire, choosing as a fundamental quality of the Athenians not their power (δύναμις) like Thucydides, but their humanity (φιλανθρωπία), which dictates all the actions taken by Athens, unifying the city's history.[109] Athens functions inside the speech as a center of preservation and transmission of Hellenism: the history of Athens is thus the history of an

[99] *Or.* 47.23 analyzed in Swain 1996, 263; Pernot 2008, 178. The former supports as emperor Marcus, while the latter Pius. A similar incident can be found in Philostratus *VS* 582.
[100] Pernot 2008, 180 *Or.* 47.23,38.
[101] Pernot 2008, 183.
[102] Pernot 2008, 184 also mentions financial reasons for this refusal.
[103] Pernot 2008, 184.
[104] *Or.* 5.39 in Pernot 2008, 196.
[105] Pernot 2008, 196-197. For the role of *philanthropia* in the *Panathenaicus* see the analysis of Oudot 2005 below.
[106] Sterz 1994, 1267, 1269.
[107] Pernot 2008, 199, similarly to Swain, supposes that his analysis reveals partly the "inner tensions of Aristides' mind".
[108] Oudot 2005, 319-320, following the dichotomy of Roman power and Greek culture found in Oliver 1953, 1968 and Sterz 1994.
[109] Oudot 2005, 322-323.

inseparably hegemonic and philanthropic city.[110] Athens' power is not its military force or domination over others; instead, it is the dissemination of Greek values preserved in their purity.[111] The true power of Athens is that of culture.[112] Hence, since Aristides is not praising the deceased of a war (like Pericles in his funeral encomium for Athens), his focus is to celebrate the education of the Athenians; this could not have been done more fittingly than through a speech, given the city's contribution to eloquence and rhetoric.[113] However, political speech has ceased to exist in Aristides' times: Athens is the center of eloquence of the imperial era.[114] Oudot sees the *Panathenaicus* as a place where the past is not a refuge from the present political reality, but is rather renegotiated to provide values and concepts that can be made operational in the present.[115] Athens' power is now an intellectual one and this excludes the possibility of political speech.[116] Ultimately, Oudot argued that Aristides is reshaping Athens and its qualities to match the present era: he chooses the characteristics that model a political behavior based on consent and support, to integrate Athens into an imperial world.[117]

Kelly on the other hand, examined the religious connotations of the oration. He argued that Aristides is reluctant to allow Rome the monopoly of piety.[118] The objection of the Athenians to Roman religious supremacy is based on their established status as the most pious city.[119] Since Romans believed their rule was a result of their piety, Aristides is trying to fight Rome's contest of the Athenian supremacy.[120] He is focusing on Greek games and mysteries ignoring those organized by the Romans, like the Panhellenia.[121] Most importantly, Aristides is attributing Athens the mediating role between Gods and humankind, a role traditionally ascribed to the emperor.[122] Athens is parallelized with Rome, since its piety enabled the city to win over the Persians, a military achievement equal to those of Romans.[123] Kelly argued that Aristides is trying to elevate Athens in a religious level, to assume a mediating role between gods and mortals. In this way, Athens is challenging Rome's dominant primacy through military power, which stems from its piety.

In general, there is no complete account on the role of Rome or Arisitdes' attitude towards it in the *Panathenaicus*. When engaging with Aristides' relationship with Rome, scholars have either focused on *To Rome*, or only hastily discussed the *Panathenaicus*, focusing on limited passages.[124] On the contrary, when analyzing the *Panathenaicus*, scholarship has either attempted to detect a transformation of values to fit the imperial world of the second century CE (Oudot) or highlighted Aristides' attempt to reestablish Athens as the epicenter of piety (Kelly). Our thesis aims to provide a comprehensive analysis

[110] Oudot 2005, 324.
[111] Oudot 2005, 328.
[112] Oudot 2005, 328.
[113] Oudot 2005, 329-330.
[114] Oudot 2005, 330.
[115] Oudot 2005, 331.
[116] Oudot 2005, 331.
[117] Oudot 2005, §332.
[118] Kelly 2011, 52.
[119] Kelly 2011, 53.
[120] Kelly 2011, 54.
[121] Kelly 2011, 60 ff.
[122] Kelly 2011, 66 & 70-71.
[123] Kelly 2011, 68.
[124] E.g. Pernot's analyzes only two paragraphs from the *Panathenaicus* (332-335).

of Rome as constructed in the *Panathenaicus*, to demonstrate its use from Aristides not only as an unfavourable dipole to Athens, but also as an opportunity to showcase the orator's rhetorical skills that stem from his superior cultural heritage.

2. Aelius Aristides' *Panathenaicus*

2.1 *Panathenaicus*: Topic, Performance and Structure

The *Panathenaicus*, as its name suggests, was set to be delivered in the festival of Panathenaea, Athens' greatest celebration.[125] Most scholars accept a declamation of some sort, although a performance of the entire text, which is divided into two days of the festival, is doubted.[126] Our present knowledge for the Panathenaea in the second century CE contains no similar rhetorical performances during the festival.[127] The two-day division can be explained by the wealth of content, which in turn corresponds to the ancient perception that great size added value to an artistic work.[128] Regardless of how one may answer this question, the text we have today, precisely due to its size, must have been edited and adapted for reading and publishing; thus, as Trapp suggests, we ought to read and analyze it, above all, as a written text.[129] Regarding the date of its composition, Behr argued for a performance in 155 CE, while Oliver claimed that the speech was composed in 167 CE.[130]

The central topic of the *Panathenaicus* is the glory of Athens. The speech is an encomium of the city's achievements, its geographical location, its origin, and its contribution to civilization, arts and letters. In Aristides' own words, the speech is the consecrated robe (πέπλος) given to Athena during Panathenaea, but in words.[131] The short prologue (1-6) is followed by three central sections, each with its own special subject.[132] The first section (7-24) is concerned with Athens' physical location and the charms of the Attic nature. The second section (25–330), which takes up most of the speech, revolves around the city's distinctions, focusing heavily on its triumphant military history. The extremely large account of Athenian achievements at war (75-321) emphasizes mostly the victory over the Persians, while the loss at the Peloponnesian War and the subjugation to Philip are only briefly mentioned. Amidst it, Aristides interrupts his flow with a second prologue (185–188), necessitated by the overwhelming size of the speech, supposedly to ask for the audience's leniency, since it is the magnitude of Athens' achievements that forces him to present such extensive praise. At the end of this section, the Attic dialect and literature are praised as the capstone of the Athenian contribution to the Greek world and posterity, according with the Atticizing style of Aristides found here and elsewhere.[133] Lastly, the third section (331–401) compares Athens with other states to reveal its superiority over them, from which comes the city's special position. The speech concludes with a remarkably brief epilogue (402-404) that proclaims any laudation for Athens common for all Greeks, so that they should hold no grudges against the city.

Being one of the largest works of Aristides and placed first in the standard manuscript tradition, the *Panathenaicus* is a "star piece" of the Aristidean corpus, revealing

[125] Explicitly mentioned in the speech, *Or*. 1.186, 230.
[126] Behr 1968, 87; Oliver 1968, 34. The two-day division comes from the speech itself, *Or*. 1.185-188.
[127] Trapp 2017, 4 also includes other possibilities.
[128] Oliver 1968, 7.
[129] Trapp 2017, 5.
[130] Behr 1968, 86-88; Oliver 1968, 34.
[131] *Or.* 1.404.
[132] I am following the structure proposed in Trapp 2017, 5, 12-13.
[133] See Berardi 2016.

him as a "champion of Hellenism and oratory".[134] The homonymous title with the famous oration of Isocrates, led scholarship to associate the two texts from an early stage: the first two editions of Isocrates by Manutius were supplemented with Aristides' *Panathenaicus* and *To Rome*, at a time when his works did not yet have an edition of their own. This has encouraged scholars to examine *Panathenaicus*' intertextuality and reception of earlier classical authors, most notably Isocrates and Thucydides.[135]

2.2 This Thesis: Rome in the *Panathenaicus*

This thesis will concentrate on Aristides' contemporary context, in particular the reality of the Roman world: I will examine the role of Rome inside the *Panathenaicus*. I will investigate the rhetorical functions of references to Rome, the relationship between Rome and Athens as suggested by Aelius Aristides, as well as Aristides' own predisposition and stance towards Rome and Roman culture. Detecting the evident criticism towards Rome, I will argue that Aristides uses Rome as a counter pole to exalt the Greek cultural heritage (here identified with the Athenian one) in a higher position and to accentuate the preeminence of the Greeks over the Romans, despite the latter's political dominance over the former. Subsequently, I will locate the allusions to Rome into the general context of Aelius' disposition towards the Empire, arguing that in the *Panathenaicus*, more than in any other oration, the orator is giving voice to his hesitations regarding Roman authority. Scholars have ascribed to Aristides a genuine admiration for Roman administration, but they have also noted that Aristides is less enthusiastic about Roman culture and contributions to civilization. The aim of this thesis is to show how *Panathenaicus* exemplifies Aelius Aristides' views on Rome and Greece.

2.3 Figured Speech

This thesis will close-read passages of the *Panathenaicus* that explicitly or implicitly refer to Rome. Following Pernot, and since Rome is mentioned directly only two times inside the speech, I will suggest that Aristides employs the rhetorical device of the so-called "figured speech" (λόγος ἐσχηματισμένος) to construct his desired image of Rome.[136] Regarding this technique, Quintilian preserves the opinion of Zoilus that *schema* can be found in passages where "what is said is different from what appears to be said".[137] This rhetorical strategy, simply put, consists of saying one thing but meaning another, either suggesting it indirectly (κατ' ἔμφασιν), obliquely (πλαγίως) or by saying the contrary of what you mean (τὰ ἐναντία).[138] The rhetorician Pseudo-Demetrius argues that "the speech in which the fact itself reveals its severity seems much more forceful than the one when the speaker makes

[134] Trapp 2017, xviii.

[135] Oliver 1968, 6 traces Aristides' relationship with previous literature, while arguing for a double agency of the speech, answering both to the Augustan *Res Gestae* and to Christian literature. Oudot 2008 examines the connections with Thucydides.

[136] Pernot 2008. The use of ἐσχηματισμένος λόγος as a means of delivering concealed criticism from Graeco-Roman orators has already been pointed out by H. E. Elsom (in Sterz 1994, 1268 n. 87).

[137] Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 9.1.14.

[138] Pernot 2005, 221. Cf. also Demetrius, *On Style* 287–295 and Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 9.2.65-66.

the revelation".[139] On the other hand, speaking directly can be not only dangerous, but also less effective.[140]

This device of figured speech appears to have been successful in Hellenistic and Roman rhetoric, especially in situations where speakers were addressing tyrannical rulers and people of power.[141] Writers who were closer to the emperor and the center of power needed to be cautious in their addresses, as their words could have more direct consequences; their use of figured speech was thus more elaborate and refined.[142] However, any criticism towards Rome should be expressed in a veiled way: Aristides, although less susceptible to suffer severe negative consequences from his works, could very well lose his position in society if his critique was exceedingly open.[143] In addition, since these reservation of Aristides did not form a unified ideology, he could be reluctant to admit them even to himself, leading in indirect and small implications rather than a detailed denigration of Rome.[144] The use of figured speech provided safety and compliance with certain rules. In the case of *Panathenaicus*, Aristides is in a way reversing its function: employment of figured speech required a reason, namely one center (or man) of power that could be easily angered by direct criticism.[145] If his audience detected the use of figured speech, then they would understand the indication of Romans as oppressors. Aelius himself is safe, because the concealed criticism is only completed in the minds of his readers; they are the ones who assume the allusions to Rome.[146]

However, even in antiquity, the usefulness of figured speech was debated. Quintilian points out that if it was understood, it could be understood by everyone, and if not, then its use was meaningless.[147] Of course, ἐσχηματισμένος λόγος needs a rhetorically trained audience that can understand the allusions as such, which leads us to one additional aim of Aristides. The contrary of figured speech, plainly stating your opinions, is not an art, let alone the art of a skillful and learned rhetor; conversely, his art is to shape words in the best way possible. This could be one reason why Aristides is not directly criticizing Rome in the *Panathenaicus*. Apart from not being his central focus, it is also not the duty of a good orator. He would rather employ indirect and subtle criticism, hidden behind allusions and figured speech, aimed not only to express any reservations he personally had about Roman culture, but also to bring him forth as a master rhetorician, who knows how, when and in what proportions to shape his reproval. Figured speech should not be too obvious or too often, or else its effect is gone.[148] Aristides proves with the *Panathenaicus* his oratorial skill, capable of not only praising Athens, but delivering subtle criticism to its contemporary antagonist, when appropriate.

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[139] Demetrius, *On Style* 288.
[140] Ahl 1984, 174.
[141] Philostratus *VS* 500 even criticizes Antiphon for speaking directly at Dionysius and not employing figured speech, a neglection that ultimately got him killed.
[142] Ahl 1984, 207.
[143] Pernot 2008, 185.
[144] Sterz 1994, 1267.
[145] Aristides was aware of the technique and used it himself, Pernot 2008, 186-187.
[146] Ahl 1984, 187. Figured speech is constructed in a way that even they who understand its allusions, should not be able to prove them, Pernot 2008, 198.
[147] Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 5.10.70
[148] Ahl 1984, 196 quoting Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 9.2.69-70.

Aristides' aims differ from the usual goals of an orator employing figured speech to indirectly advise people of power without potential danger; this is not the case of a man speaking before a tyrannical ruler. Rather, he expresses his personal hesitations concerning Rome, which, although not intrinsically bad, cannot match the glory of Athens. It would be anachronistic to try to define Aelius' views towards Rome as either concretely positive or negative. Scholarship has noted that in the orator's case, the praise of certain Roman attributes could simultaneously coexist with a feeling of cultural superiority. If the speech *To Rome* is fitting to praise the empire (again, not without a hint of reservation) then the laudation of the uttermost symbol of Greek culture, i.e. Athens in the *Panathenaicus*, invites criticism to come forth. Besides, in roughly the same period, Lucian wrote that not saying what you mean is a sign of being Athenian.[149] In that sense, Aristides in this speech is more than anyone becoming an Athenian. He shows himself to be a particularly skilled orator, praising the city that fostered and cultivated rhetoric like no other, while –through a device that was developed in Athens– giving voice to subtle criticism on the city that is now dominating the world, at least in the political sense.

[149] Goldhill 2001, 3-4.

3. *Panathenaicus* on Rome

Denial of Roman conquest

…οὔθ' ἡ γῆ πρέπουσα ἑτέρων εἶναι, οὔκουν οὐδὲ ἐγένετο, οὔτε οἱ ἄνδρες ἄλλης ἀντὶ ταύτης ἄξιοι, οὔκουν οὐδὲ ἠλλάξαντο, ἀλλ' ἔμειναν ἐφ' ἧς εἶχον.

…nor is this land fitting for other people, and so it never belong to others, nor were the people worthy of any other land than this, and so they never changed it, but remained in what they had.

Panathenaicus 8

The first allusion to Rome appears relatively early in the speech (paragraph 8). While praising the Attic landscape and its nature, Aristides remarks that it rightfully belongs only to the Athenians and is not made for anyone else. Is Aristides here denying the Roman conquest? Although Roman rule was firmly established, civic identities of various Greek cities retained their importance, as citizens felt part of a specific city rather than the empire.[150] Aelius proclaims the uninterrupted dwelling of Athenians in Attica, unaffected from any subjugation to Rome; although it might control the political situation in the present, and although one can assume a significant number of Romans living in the city during the second century, Athens remains unmistakably Athenian. This notion echoes the well-known claim of Athenian autochthony, a source of glory for the citizens and criticism to all wandering nations that did not inhabit their territory from ancient times.[151] Aristides makes a first, indirect hint at Rome in passing, whose founding myth contains travelling and settling to a foreign land, a flaw further explored in paragraphs 25-30.

Legitimacy for the Athenian empire

αἱ δὲ ἐπίκεινται πανταχόθεν πεποικιλμέναι Κυκλάδες καὶ Σποράδες περὶ τὴν Ἀττικήν, (…) μεῖζον φέρουσαι κέρδος ἢ ὅσον παρέχουσιν, λέγω δὴ τοῦ προσοικεῖν. δι' ἃ δὴ καὶ μόνῃ τῇ πόλει κυρίως ἄν τις φαίη τὴν ἀρχὴν αὐτῶν συμβῆναι καὶ γνησίαν ἐπὶ τῶν Ἑλληνικῶν, τοὺς δ' ἄλλους νόθους εἰς τὴν θάλατταν ἐμβῆναι, ὥσπερ ὑποβολιμαίους, οὐ πατρικαῖς ταῖς νήσοις ἐπιθεμένους, ἀλλ' ἁρπάσαντας τύχης ἀλογίᾳ, ὅπερ αὐτοὺς καὶ ταχέως πάλιν ἐξήλασε.

The adorned Cyclades and Sporades lie on all sides of Attica, benefitting greatly from their proximity to Athens, even more than Athens benefitted from them. For this reason, one could say that the rule over them belonged in the proper sense of the word and genuinely to the city alone in the days of Greeks. Others illegitimately invaded the sea, like supposititious children, attacking the islands not by fatherly claim, but occupying them by an absurdity of luck, that quickly drove them out again.

Panathenaicus 11

[150] Bowie 1970, 19 as evident from efforts of sophists to be identified with their native city.
[151] See Rosivach 1987.

Aristides proceeds to praise not only Attica, but also the places where Athenian power was exerted the most: the islands, and especially those close to Athens (Cyclades and Sporades), over which the Athenians had a legitimate and almost fatherly claim. This made any non-Athenian rulership illegitimate; by others (τοὺς δ' ἄλλους) Aristides primarily means those who seized the islands after the downfall of the Athenian hegemony, the Peloponnesians and, subsequently, the Macedonians. Not having any legitimacy to step into the sea, traditionally the stronghold of Athenian power, they claimed the islands only by luck, leading them to lose them again quickly.[152] Since the conquest of others, although Greeks, was illegitimate for Aristides, the present Roman dominance could have even less legitimization. Romans were no traditional naval force and although their control over the islands did not vanish rapidly, the orator was aware of the perishability of empires.[153] On this note, Aristides highlights the Greek character of the islands (ἐπὶ τῶν Ἑλληνικῶν), which is directly opposed to the present situation. It is noteworthy that the passage contains a plethora of words associated with family: γνήσιος is used for children born in wedlock, while νόθος and ὑποβολιμαῖος for the contrary. Athenian rulership over the islands if hereditary and paternal (πατρικαῖς). The portrayal of Athens as a parent-figure is a regular *topos* throughout the speech, implying the city's primary importance not only as a common ancestor for Greeks, but for all humans (and thus Romans) alike.[154]

> …οὕτως ἐφειλκύσατο αὐτούς, οὐκ ἄδικον τὴν ἀρχὴν παρασχομένη οὐδ', ὥσπερ οἱ ὕστερον διαβάντες εἰς τὴν Ἀσίαν, ἔρωτι τοῦ πλείονος, ἀλλ' ἤδη τότε ἀμυνομένη καὶ δίκην ἀξιοῦσα λαβεῖν…
>
> …[Athens] gathered [the Greeks under its command to fight the barbarians] in this way, not sparking the start of the conflict unjustly, nor like the ones who later invaded Asia because of greed, but in self-defense and seeking to avenge…
>
> *Panathenaicus* 93

The justification of Athenian hegemony and invasions returns when recounting the triggering cause of the Persian wars. Athens' invasion of Asia was justified because its purpose was to defend the Ionians from the retaliation of the Persian king, thus acting like a protective shield to Greeks against the barbarians. Later invaders, however, were unjust and greedy and their military expedition was prompted by their lust for gain. This includes, as before, not only Alexander but also the Roman generals that conquered Asia, an especially rich and fruitful province. Aristides seems to imply that the Athenian rule over these territories was far more justifiable than the Roman one. Either through paternal claims or in self-defense, Athens appears as a humane power that did not have the goal to invade and

[152] Cf. *Or*. 1.281, where the Spartans claim the sea only after the Athenian downfall.
[153] See *Or.* 1.25.
[154] See also below on paragraph 332.

conquer cities, revealing, as Oudot argued, the exemplary φιλανθρωπία that turns Athens into an empire of culture.[155]

Athens as the center of the world

ὥστε οὐ τὰ μὲν πρὸς ἄρκτον ἂν εἴποι τις εἶναι τῆς χώρας, τὰ δὲ πρὸς μεσημβρίαν ὀνομάζων, (…) ἀλλ' ἄνευ τῆς προσθήκης ἔξεστιν ὁρίσασθαι τὰ μὲν ἔνθεν αὐτῆς ἄρκτον εἶναι, τὰ δὲ ἔνθεν μεσημβρίαν ἤδη, (…) αὐτὴν δ' εἶναι πάντων ὡσπερεὶ μεθόριον, κοινόν τινα χῶρον, οὗ πάντα τὰ τμήματα συγκεράννυται ὑπ' αὐτὴν ὡς εἰπεῖν τὴν ἀκρόπολιν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ τὴν τοῦ Διὸς ἀρχήν, ὡς ἀληθῶς γιγνομένην λῆξιν τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς καὶ τῶν ταύτης ἔργων τε καὶ θρεμμάτων τόπον οἰκεῖον.

So that one could not say that this part of the city lies towards the north and this towards the south (…) but without this addition it is possible to define that the places from this side are north, from the other south (…) and the city is like a boundary to every place, a common space where every part of the world mixes together under this so-called acropolis of the heaven and the rule of Zeus, becoming truly the lot of Athena and a proper home to her deeds and nurslings.

Panathenaicus 19

The location of Athens is so prominent, that towards the end of the first central section Aristides regards it as the center of the world; the city is not defined by cardinal directions, but rather it defines them. Athens is in this way the boundary from which all geographical characterizations stem from, an ancient equivalent of Greenwich, a point zero that defines and also unites every other region of the world.[156] It presides over the world like the palace of Zeus in Olympus; the inevitable parallelism with the Athenian acropolis is clear: the Athenian acropolis towers over the city, like the city over the world. Every part of the city is defined and unified under the awe-inspiring hill, just like every part of the world is united under Athens. In this sense, Aristides seems eager to replace Rome, the center of the empire, with Athens, the much more important center the world, by which the former is also defined.

Athens is also brought in very close relation with the gods.[157] Not only does it serve as the acropolis of the gods, but it is also the inheritance of Athena that fosters the goddess' deeds and children (the Athenians). This proximity elevates the city's status to godlike, as the most important gods (Zeus and Athena) regard her as their own. As Kelly argued, Athens in the *Panathenaicus* becomes the mediator between humanity and the divine, overtaking the duties and the role of the emperor.[158] Aristides portrays Athens as the new emperor and as such, no longer susceptible to foreign subjugation. Once again, the possibility of refuting Roman dominance is supported by another subtle insinuation in the speech: the orator's emphasis on the divine status of Athens suggests that the city is ultimately ruled only by a far superior force, namely the gods. Athens' status is such, that Zeus is appointed as the

[155] Oudot 2005, 328.
[156] Trapp 2017, 37 n. 20 insightfully presents this analogy, commenting "so much for the *Roma caput mundi*!".
[157] A common association throughout the speech, cf. Athens as god in 34, 110, 330.
[158] Kelly 2011, 65-66.

ruler, a claim difficult to match by mortal emperors. Concerning the word for rule that Aristides uses (ἀρχή), it is effectively the same describing the Athenian preeminence in the Greek world (11), but also the Persian (204) and Roman (332) empires.

Issues of autochthony and legitimacy

The biggest section of the *Panathenaicus* is devoted to the Athenian achievements of the past (25-330). Firstly, as appropriate, Aristides discusses the origins of Athens, that coincide with those of the human race. Five paragraphs (25-30) are devoted to the city's autochthony (a *topos* already in classical times) and contribution to the whole mankind, since the first humans were born in Athens. This primordial benefaction of Athens to humanity grants it a truly exemplary and unmatched status amongst the cities of the world, one that will remain uncontested in eternity, since the city will forever remain the first homeland of humans. In the process, Aristides draws an unfavourable comparison with the origins of Rome, actively diminishing not only the Roman founding myth, but also any possible claims of legitimacy in citizenship. The orator is using negation to construct the desired image; by granting Athenians privileges that no one else can claim, he is striping Romans away from the opportunity to be elevated in an equal status. Aristides avoids explicitly mentioning Rome and resorts to figured speech to achieve the comparison of the two cities.

τὴν δὲ ὑμετέραν χώραν κοσμεῖ τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς τὸ κάλλιστον. (…) πρώτη γὰρ ἤνεγκεν ἄνθρωπον καὶ πρώτη πατρίς ἐστιν ἀνθρώπου, καὶ ὅπερ τοῖς πᾶσι ζῴοις τοῖς ἐγγείοις ἐστὶν ἡ πᾶσα γῆ, τοῦτο ἤδε νενίκηκεν εἶναι τῷ τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένει, μήτηρ καὶ τροφὸς κοινὴ καὶ τῆς φύσεως ἀφορμή, χῶρός τις ἀνθρώπων ἴδιος ἐκ πάσης γῆς ἐξῃρημένος, ὥσπερ οἱ τῶν τεμενῶν ὅροι. διὸ δὴ καὶ πάντα κρατίστους καὶ τῆς γιγνομένης ἀρετῆς ἐπὶ πλεῖστον ἥκοντας ἤνεγκεν, ἅτε οἰκείας αὐτῇ τῆς φορᾶς οὔσης, οὐκ ἐπεισάκτου.

The most beautiful adornment on earth embellishes your country. (…) it was the first who brought forth the human race and the first homeland of people. What the whole earth is to all terrestrial animals, this it has already won to be for the race of humans: a mother and a common foster-parent and the starting-point of their nature, a place chosen from the whole earth to be human's own, like the enclosures in the temples. For this reason, it brought forth men best in every way and coming as close to the proper virtue as possible, because this crop was domestic to the land and not imported.

Panathenaicus 25

Aristides claims that the Athenians did not only spring from the same land that became their city, but were also the first humans to be born on earth, making Athens simultaneously the homeland of all humanity (πρώτη πατρίς ἐστιν ἀνθρώπου), its common mother and foster parent (μήτηρ καὶ τροφὸς κοινή), and a sort of sacred enclosure found in temples (ὥσπερ οἱ τῶν τεμενῶν ὅροι). The excellence of Athens stems from the city's preeminent origin: the men it bore were superior and the most virtuous due to their autochthony. In addition, the aforementioned *topos* of Athenian proximity with the divine is also stressed, as Athens is parallelized with the sacred enclosures of temples. The passage evokes the praise of Athens in classical oratory: the use of the words πατρίς, τροφός and μητέρα bears a close resemblance with Isocrates' *Panegyricus* (24-25), where the Athenian

autochthony grants its citizens the right to give the city the same names as their dearest people.[159] Aristides stresses that Athenians were not "imported" (ἐπεισάκτου), as non-autochthonous people could not be comparable in terms of virtue. This correlation of virtue with autochthony will constitute the argumentative foundation for the paragraphs to follow, in which Rome serves allusively as a comparison.

> οὐ γὰρ πλάνην καταλύσαντες οὐδὲ ὥσπερ ἐπὶ σκότους πατρίδα ζητοῦντες διὰ πάσης γῆς καὶ θαλάττης, οὐδὲ δυοῖν δυστυχίαιν ἡγησαμέναιν, κατέσχον τὴν χώραν, βιασάμενοι τὴν ἐπωνυμίαν, εἴξαντες μὲν τοῖς κρείττοσιν, ἐκβαλόντες δὲ τοὺς ἥττους.
>
> They did not seize the land, violating its name, after ending their wandering or as in the dark searching for a country through every land and sea, nor after having been led by two misfortunes, yielding before better people and expelling the worse.
>
> *Panathenaicus* 25

Although not explicitly mentioning any case in particular, Aristides sketches the outline of the Roman founding myth.[160] The allusions to Aeneas' journeys are apparent: the remaining Trojans had to wander (πλάνην) after their defeat from the superior Greeks (εἴξαντες μὲν τοῖς κρείττοσιν), and only settled in Latium after expelling the inferior local Rutuli (ἐκβαλόντες δὲ τοὺς ἥττους). The foundational mythology of Rome is used by Aristides to construct an unfavourable opposite of the autochthonous Athenians, whose pride and glory derives precisely from their contrast with the Romans. The latter are depicted seeking desperately a new fatherland through all earth and sea (πατρίδα ζητοῦντες διὰ πάσης γῆς καὶ θαλάττης). Contrary to the glorious narration of these wanders in Virgil, here they appear to search in darkness (ὥσπερ ἐπὶ σκότους), a direct contradiction with the unusually bright light that illuminates the wonders of Attica in paragraph 12: "and a light brighter than usual comes into the eyes [of travelers coming into Attica] … so that the spectacles are like a dreamy merriment".

If we accept an allusion to Rome, Aristides seems to imply a four-fold inferiority of Rome to Athens. First and foremost, Romans are inferior to Athenians, whose origins and precedence over humans elevate them above every city and nation. Secondly, the Romans not only lack autochthony, but they also established their land compelled by a defeat from superior people. Thirdly, the land they possess was previously occupied by inferiors that had to be expelled in order for them to occupy it, so that the origins and history of the land remain inferior. Lastly, the Romans had to violate the name of "fatherland", as they were compelled to change the previous name of the place they occupied and impose their own, artificially creating a "homeland" by force.

Aristides is carefully figuring his speech here. He avoids any explicit mention to Rome and is content to use one of the devices of figured speech, namely to speak indirectly (κατ' ἔμφασιν) and let the desired meaning be deduced from the content. The profound parallelism with Rome would hardly go unnoticed by the audience, but, at the same time,

[159] Oliver 1968, 100. The same wording can be found in Plato's *Republic* 414e. Note the recurring vocabulary connected with family (*Or.* 1.11 and below 1.29).
[160] Oliver 1968, 100 detects here an allusion to Christianity and the wanderings of Mary and Joseph.

through figured speech Aristides is safe from any possible accusations; the notion that migrations are the result of defeat by larger groups exists already in Thucydides 1.2.1 and the orator could easily deny any implication to Rome by claiming to follow earlier historical sources.

καὶ ξένοι καὶ πολῖται μόνῃ τῇ γῇ ταύτῃ πρέπουσι διῃρῆσθαι. οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἄλλοι καθάπερ θέαν καταλαβόντες οὕτω ταῦτα κρίνουσιν, οὐ τῷ μᾶλλον ἄλλων ἑαυτοῖς προσήκειν τῶν χωρίων τοὺς ἄλλους ἀφορίζοντες, ἀλλὰ τῷ φθῆναι κατασχόντες, καὶ ξένους ὀνομάζουσι τοὺς δευτέρους ἐλθόντας, ἀγνοοῦντες ὅτι πάντες ὁμοίως εἰσὶ ξένοι, μᾶλλον δὲ αὐτοὶ ξένοι πρῶτοι, καὶ τοσοῦτον τῶν δημοποιήτων, οὓς αὐτοὶ ποιοῦνται, διαφέρουσιν, ὅσον οὐ κριθέντες ἄξιοι τῆς πολιτείας, ἀλλ' εἰσβιασάμενοι προὐβάλοντο τὴν πατρίδα, ὥσπερ ὅπλων ἀπορίᾳ τῷ φανέντι χρησάμενοι· μόνοις δ' ὑμῖν ὑπάρχει καθαρὰν εὐγένειάν τε καὶ πολιτείαν αὐχῆσαι, (27) καὶ δυοῖν ὄντοιν ὀνομάτοιν ἑκάτερον κυριόν ἐστι τῇ χώρᾳ διὰ τὸ ἕτερον. (28) οὔκουν ἐξούλης γε μόνοις ὑμῖν, εἰ οἷόν τ' ἐστὶν εἰπεῖν, οὐδ' ἂν εἷς λάχοι τῆς γῆς, οὐ μᾶλλόν γε ἢ τῆς μητρός τινι. (29) καὶ τοίνυν μόνοις τοῖς τῇδε γενομένοις δημοποιήτοις οὐκ ἔπεστι γέλως· ὄντες γὰρ ἅπαντες φύσει πολῖται τῆς χώρας νόμῳ τοῖς ἄλλοις τὴν τιμὴν ἀπενείματε· τῶν δ' ἄλλων οἱ πλεῖστοι κινδυνεύουσι νόθοι νόθους εἰσποιεῖσθαι, χρόνῳ τὴν ἀρχαίαν φύσιν διαφθείραντες, ὥσπερ ἐν συνοικίᾳ τῇ πάσῃ γῇ ζῶντες, ἐκ περιόδων καλοῦντες οἰκείαν οἱ τελευταῖοι τῶν ἄλλων οἰκησάμενοι.

And the division in foreigners and citizens should be made only according to this land. Because other people make this distinction as if they occupied a seat in the theater, casting others out not because the place belongs to themselves more than others, but because they seized it first; and they name foreigners the ones who came second, ignoring that all are foreigners alike, or rather that they themselves were foreigners first, and differ from the people they make citizens only by that much, that they were not deemed worthy of the citizenship, but forcing their way in, they sheltered behind "the homeland", as if they used whatever was available because they lacked weapons. Only to you is possible to boast for a pure nobility of birth and citizenship, (27) and each of these two names is proper to this land through its contrast with the other. (28) Against you alone, if it is possible to speak as such, no one could file a suit for illegally possessing this land, no more than claiming that one has no connection with one's mother. (29) And therefore, only those who have been made citizens here are not ridiculed; because by being all of you citizens of the land by nature, you have bestowed this honour to others through the law. The majority of other people are in danger of enrolling illegitimate citizens while themselves are illegitimate, after losing their original nature through time; they dwell everywhere on earth as if living in a common settlement, that the last of people to settle there call it in turns their own.

Panathenaicus 26-29

The following passage also discusses the issue of legitimacy, this time focusing on citizenship. For Aristides, the distinction between citizens and foreigners is valid only in Athens, whose citizens live in the land that bore them. Other nations, and especially the Romans, do not have the authentication to distinguish between citizens and foreigners. This creates a paradox: people that occupied a territory, now calling it their city, are responsible for deeming other people worthy of obtaining their citizenship, an honour which themselves never acquired. Instead, they claimed it by force and later used it as a shield towards "foreigners" because of their lack of weapons. Athenians are the only ones who can boast of

unmixed noble birth and citizenship and, in a proper sense, "come" from a city (μόνοις δ' ὑμῖν ὑπάρχει καθαρὰν εὐγένειάν τε καὶ πολιτείαν αὐχῆσαι).[161] Thus, citizenship granted by another city is by definition illegitimate since granted by illegitimate people, and subsequently the newly made citizens are to be laughed at (μόνοις τοῖς τῇδε γενομένοις δημοποιήτοις οὐκ ἔπεστι γέλως).[162]

Aristides' argumentation reaches its climax by patently targeting Romans in multiple ways. Firstly, Romans who gained citizenship by any other means rather than birth are objects of ridicule, as individuals unworthy of an ancestral citizenship and only granted an illegitimate one (the Roman, as the only true one is the Athenian). Ironically, Aristides befalls himself in this category, as he was granted Roman citizenship approximately at the age of 14. How can then this part of the speech be compatible with his own personal identity? One possible explanation to avoid a self-attack is that Aristides is partly negating his Roman status here. This is in line with his aforementioned general disposition towards Rome: his interest in the empire is purely administrative and so is his citizenship; it benefits him legally and socially by granting him benefits, but in matters of culture and education he carefully constructs and maintains a Greek identity.

Secondly, Romans by birth who ascribe citizenship to others have no ancestral right to do so, as they themselves are illegitimate. Romans are depicted as latecomers to their own homeland, a nation that hinders behind their acquired nationality to label others as foreigners. Legitimation is thus downgraded to a matter of succession and ephemerality, as dominance changes in the course of time from one party to another. It is only by being last in succession that the Romans have gained the right to grand citizenship to other people. This periodicity of sovereignty deprives Romans from a perennial connection with their land. Rome was once the homeland of another nation and Aristides implies that this cycle might be renewed, since those who dwelled each land last (οἱ τελευταῖοι τῶν ἄλλων οἰκησάμενοι) might change from time to time.[163] The antithesis with Athens is strong: legitimate autochthony is bound to give eternal glory to Athens, regardless of which nation or city holds the political upper hand at any time.

καί μοι δοκεῖ τις ἂν εἰπεῖν παραιτησάμενος τὸν φθόνον ὅτι οἱ μὲν ἄλλοι τὰς πόλεις οἰκοῦσιν ὥσπερ στρατόπεδα, οἷς κατέλαβον ἐμμείναντες, μόνοις δὲ τοῖς ταύτης ἐγγόνοις τῆς χώρας ἡ πόλις ἐστὶ κυρία, καὶ μόνη πόλεων ἢ κομιδῇ γε ἐν ὀλίγαις ἑστίαν ἀκίνητον πρυτανείου δικαίως νέμει.

And it seems to me that one could say, after excusing the jealous comparison, that other people dwell the cities like army camps, confined in what they have occupied, and only those who were born from this land have a proper city, and that the city alone, or together with a few others, has the right to maintain an unmoved hearth in the magistrates' hall.

Panathenaicus 30

[161] Oliver 1968, 100: The word for noble birth (εὐγένεια), a regular topos in funeral orations, denotes superiority.

[162] In contrast with paragraph 51, where Athens legitimately enrolls incomers to its ranks, acting as the representative of gods on earth (καὶ τοὺς ἐπήλυδας αὕτη μετὰ τῶν ἄλλων ἐνέκρινεν, ὥσπερ συμπολιτευομένη τοῖς θεοῖς).

[163] In contrast with his wishes for eternal continuity of the empire, see below the analysis of paragraph 332.

The section concludes with the repetition that only the Athenians have a city in the proper sense (μόνοις δὲ τοῖς ταύτης ἐγγόνοις τῆς χώρας ἡ πόλις ἐστὶ κυρία). Aristides equates citizens of other cities with soldiers living in army camps, limiting themselves only to the conquered territory. If we account for the Roman military dominance at the time, then the traditional embodiment of Roman virtue, the military excellence of Roman troops, confines Romans to the narrow boundaries of the land they have conquered. Their present dwelling in cities does not have significant differences with the soldiers living in the Roman forts and army camps. It is the missing primordial connection with their land that condemns Romans to inferiority to Athenians.

Another source of praise for the Athenians is brought forth in expense to the Roman reality. The mention of the perennial hearth might allude to the hearth of Vesta in Rome.[164] If so, the importance of the temple of Vesta and the Vestal Virgins for the Roman history and religion might be undermined here, questioning their singularity and central status in Roman tradition. This aligns with Kelly's argument about the replacement of the emperor with Athens in the mediating role between the divine and the earthly order.[165] On a first level, Aristides seems to alleviate his claims about the uniqueness of Athens by admitting that other cities can have hearths too. However, based on all the previous observations regarding autochthony and legitimacy, Rome might not even qualify to be included in this list. Even if it does, Roman illegitimacy and lack of indigenousness gives a preeminent religious status to Athens, which in Greek tradition is recognized as the common altar of Greece.[166] On a second level, we can easily detect Aristides' undermining of this idea. The notion that other cities can legitimately justify their altars is not introduced directly as a factual truth, but is a parenthetical concession of Aristides, after his statement of Athenian uniqueness (καὶ μόνη πόλεων ἢ κομιδῇ γε ἐν ὀλίγαις); the orator seems hesitant to allow other cities to be equated with Athens. This could be an elaborate use of the "opposite" device of figured speech (τὰ ἐνάντια), since the preceding detailed account of Athenian superiority based on autochthony leaves no possible space for Rome (or indeed any other city) to claim an equal justification of their hearths.

Present situation

(332) ἥ τε νῦν ἀρχὴ γῆς τε καὶ θαλάττης, εἴη δὲ ἀθάνατος, οὐκ ἀναίνεται τὰς Ἀθήνας μὴ οὐκ ἐν διδασκάλων καὶ τροφέων μέρει κοσμεῖν, ἀλλὰ τοσαύτη τῶν τιμῶν ἐστιν ἡ περιουσία ὥστε τοσοῦτον ἑτέρως ἡ πόλις πράττει τὰ νῦν ὅσον οὐ πραγματεύεται. τὰ δὲ τῆς ἄλλης εὐδαιμονίας μικροῦ δεῖν παραπλήσιά ἐστιν αὐτῇ τοῖς ἐπ' ἐκείνων τῶν χρόνων, ὅτ' εἶχε τῆς Ἑλλάδος τὴν ἀρχήν. (…) (333) ὧν δὲ μόνων ἔδοξεν ἔλαττον ἔχειν ἐν τοῖς ὕστερον, τούτων τοσούτῳ κάλλιον ἀπήλλαξε καὶ εὐτυχέστερον εἰς τέλος, ὥστε τῶν μὲν αἱ πόλεις ἀπολώλασιν, ὅσαι δὲ καὶ λοιπαί, τῷ τῆς ἀρχῆς ἄγονται νόμῳ καὶ φόροις καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἀναγκαίοις ὑποκείμεναι ὑποτελεῖς· (…) (335) ἐπὶ δὲ τῆς πάντα ἀρίστης καὶ μεγίστης τῆς νυνὶ καθεστηκυίας τὰ πρεσβεῖα παντὸς ἔχει τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ καὶ πέπραγεν οὕτως ὥστε μὴ ῥᾳδίως ἄν τινα αὐτῇ τἀρχαῖα ἀντὶ τῶν παρόντων συνεύξασθαι.

(332) The present empire of land and sea, may it be immortal, does not refuse to

[164] Trapp 2017, 46 n.28.
[165] Kelly 2011, 65.
[166] Ael. *VH* 4.6; Ath. *Deipn*. 5.187d.

honour Athens as a teacher and a foster-parent, but the sum of honours is so great, that the only difference in the present situation of the city is that is has no active political life. In other aspects of prosperity, it is almost nearly equal to what it was at those times, when it had the rule of Greece. (…) (333) As for those cities to whom it alone seemed inferior later on, it was so much better ahead and prosperous at the end, so that these cities have perished, and the ones remaining are ruled by the law of the empire and are subject to taxes and other necessities. (…) (335) Under the best and greatest empire in everything, the one that now exists, it [Athens] has precedence over the Greek race and its state is such, that not easily could one wish for its old status and not the present.

Panathenaicus 332-335

At the beginning of the third central section, which focuses on the superiority of Athens over all other cities, Aristides finally turns to the present situation and the city's subordination to Rome. Rome pays tribute to Athens as its teacher and foster-parent. Aristides is on the one hand referring to the position of Athens as a common center of education, an idea expressed already by Pericles in his funeral oration, but also enhanced during Roman rulership.[167] Many prominent members of the Roman elite visited Athens to complete their philosophical education and by the time of Aurelius the city's connection with philosophy was such, that the emperor appointed official imperial chairs for professional philosophers.[168] On the other hand, Athens is depicted as the foster-parent of Rome. The analogy of Athens as a foster-parent is a central idea of the speech that appears already from its very first paragraph, sometimes restricted only to Greek context (*Or*. 1.1, 53, 110, 315) and others regarding all humanity (*Or*. 1.29, 31). In this way, Athens is depicted as a nurturing figure to Rome, one that precedes it not only in temporal primacy (Athens was the first of all cities, *Or*. 1.25), but also in education and culture. This superiority is recognized by Romans themselves, who honour Athens appropriately. The fostering role that Athens played for Rome results in its advantageous contemporary position. Amongst its antagonists in the past, it is the only one exempted from taxation and other obligations towards the empire.[169]

As Pernot argued, this section is elaborately figured, so that such an analysis can reveal a second layer of meaning.[170] When directly referring to Rome, Aristides seems in order with the present reality of the empire, even wishing that its rule would last forever. Although Aristides' appreciation of the stability and prosperity of the empire has already been noted, it is also possible that the orator here uses the device of figured speech named "the opposite" (τὰ ἐνάντια), thus undermining his wish. The claim can be corroborated if we consider instances where Aristides alludes to the fickleness of every empire. In an excerpt from the Sicilian orations, the never-ending circle of power between ruled and rulers insinuates the instability of sovereignty.[171] If Athens, the foster-parent, failed, so it is probable for Rome. In the relevant passage, rule lies on the unjust law of the stronger. This is a common idea in many orations of Aristides, discussed also at length in the *Panathenaicus*

[167] Thucydides 2.41.1. Athens is a center of education in *Panathenaicus* 330, 397.
[168] Oliver 1970, 80-84.
[169] Trapp 2017, 281 n.238: the Macedonians.
[170] Pernot 2008, 191-193.
[171] *Or.* 5.39. Pernot 2008, 195-197, detects a strong analogy between Athens and Rome.

(306-310).[172] There, Aristides defends the Athenian empire by explaining the hard reality of *Realpolitik*: stronger cities rule over the weaker like the gods rule over mortals and, although unfair, people should endure this reality. The unjustness of rule bears an uncanny resemblance to the state of Greek cities under Rome: subordinate people get their taxes collected, their laws enacted, their differences judged, are ordered, fight and are occupied by their rulers.[173] In the Sicilian orations however, the rule is dismissed: the expedition at Sicily fails and the Athenian empire, lacking philanthropy and immortality, is perished.[174] However, as Oudot argued, the *Panathenaicus* is the celebration of Athens as an immortal educational empire of humanity and Greek values.[175] Aristides certifies that in the next paragraph: "[Athenians] have followed the necessities of empire and although their power made them rulers from the beginning, their philanthropy led them to voluntarily renounce the fear of rule".[176] Thus, the desirable picture is painted; every rule resting on military force and dominance is temporary. Aristides is not wishing for the dissolution of the Roman empire, but when expressing wishes for eternity, he knows all too well the precariousness of empires; the Athenian failed and perhaps this will be Rome's fate too. But the cultural empire of Athens, one that rests in humanity and concern for mankind, will last forever.

The amount of honour Athens reaps at present allows Aristides to compare its status with the classical era, as Athens is "*almost nearly equal* to what it was at those times", which has as a result that "one could not *easily* wish for its old status and not the present". The way in which these small details reveal the figured speech of Aristides and change the meaning of the passage has already been noted by Pernot.[177] The figuring is enhanced by the use of the word πραγματεύεται; what constitutes the difference between the present and past of Athens is the city's absence from the political arena. This idea, arguably acceptable in imperial times, appears problematic inside a speech that insists in the active political decisions that make Athens great. In a classical context, the πολυπραγμοσύνη of the Athenians is what bestowed them their empire.[178] Aristides has already established and justified this essential quality when praising the city's omnipresent military involvement after the Persian victory.[179] Given the above and adding Aristides' appreciation for the cultural achievements that sprung from Athenian politics, the lack of political life cannot be easily dismissed as a minor issue.[180] Thus, this passage that seemingly accepts and praises the present situation might reveal Aristides' predisposition towards Rome in the *Panathenaicus* at its utmost clarity: however profitable the imperial administration is for Athens, the city's history and cultural significance are sufficient to grant it the greatest glory

[172] Cf. *Or.* 2.191, 24.35, 28.123, 34.53 in Behr 1981 v. II, 370 n. 24.

[173] *Or.* 1.306 "εἰ δὲ μή, πῶς ἴσον ἢ ποῦ δίκαιον ἢ φόρους ἐκλέγειν ἀπὸ τῆς ἀλλοτρίας ἢ νόμους τιθέναι τοῖς οὐδὲν δεομένοις ἢ κρίνειν τἀκείνων ἢ προστάττειν ἢ πολεμεῖν ἢ κτᾶσθαι τὰ μὴ προσήκοντα;".

[174] Pernot 2008, 197.

[175] Oudot 2005, 322, 328.

[176] *Or.* 1.308 "τῇ τῆς ἀρχῆς ἀκολουθήσας ἀνάγκῃ καὶ δυνάμει μὲν ἄρχων καταστὰς τὸ ἐξ ἀρχῆς, φιλανθρωπίᾳ δὲ τὸ τῆς ἀρχῆς δεδωκὼς ἑκὼν μεθεὶς".

[177] Pernot 2008, 191-193. One could only add that additionally with almost (μικροῦ δεῖν) the use of παραπλήσια (nearby, resembling) is important. The Athenians are not close to their original state, but close to being nearby it.

[178] Cf. Thucydides 2.40; In Aristophanes' *Birds* (44) the officiousness of Athenians is what drives Pisthetaerus and Euelpides out of the city.

[179] *Or.* 1.213-215.

[180] Eg. the political speeches of Isocrates and Demosthenes, the platonic philosophy concerning polity, the historiography of Thucydides etc., which Aristides knew and imitated.

amongst other cities. To paraphrase Aristides, one *could* (albeit only inside a rhetorical declamation), with some difficulty (μὴ ῥᾳδίως), wish for Athens' previous situation, when it was the center of political affairs.

Conclusion

The subject of the *Panathenaicus*, the praise of Athens, does not dictate any mentions to Rome or to Roman authority; Athens could be glorified without an allusive parallelism with Rome. One may then wonder about the necessity of this practice. Unavoidably, the issue of subjugation would have to be addressed, to bridge the gap between past and present: if the Athenian (that is to some extent, Greek) remarkable historical and cultural achievements that composed their illustrious identity failed to secure a perennial political and military dominance, could this be an indication of their inferiority? Aristides' implied references to Rome provide an answer to this question. His goal is to reveal Athens as the everlasting empire of culture and civilization that precedes over all others because of its philanthropy and piety. Thus, the context of the *Panathenaicus* was the perfect place for Aristides to give voice to his hesitation towards Rome, as it provides the opportunity to stress the preeminence of Athens with deliberate digs at Rome.

As expected, Rome's role in the speech is only marginal. The goal is not to construct a detailed debate between the two cities, something that would give Rome a bigger role than needed and would require sophisticated argumentation and the refute of the present political situation. With this type of mentions, indirectly, in passing, Aristides avoids any possible backlash from the oration and overcomes the comparison Rome rather hastily. The implications are corroborated from the lack of an in-depth analysis, as the audience has little time to engage with Aristides' argumentation. This practice agrees with a fractured ideology regarding Rome, namely the absence of a systematic and concrete standpoint pro or against. Better, it reveals a stance satisfied with the practical merits of the imperial administration but centered around Greek culture and intellectual production on a much deeper level. Aristides was and tried to present himself as Greek, whatever this would mean to him and his contemporaries, who valued his culture for the utmost height it once reached. This is the primary reason for Rome's unfavourable depiction inside the *Panathenaicus*. In other instances, the praise of the imperial administration was appropriate; but in the encomium of Athens, Rome is destined to appear inferior, for its achievements could not by any means be matched with the Athenian.

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