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THE POLITICAL VOCABULARY OF THE IMPERIAL-PERIOD GREEK ELITE: SOME NOTES ON THE TITLE ἀξιολογώτατος

GEORGIOS E. MOURATIDIS

Researchers who study imperial-period Greek inscriptions, and more specifically, official and unofficial titles of the Roman Period, most probably have seen that the adjective ἀξιολογώτατος was part of the political vocabulary of the Greek elite during the Imperial Period.¹ Scholarship in its majority agrees that ἀξιολογώτατος was a title used exclusively by distinguished Greek citizens after the second century of the common era. However, the title ἀξιολογώτατος has been studied relatively superficially, even though there are several noteworthy studies on honorific titles and designations and extensive epigraphic material available.² The lack of a thorough, systematic study of the relevant evidence has led scholarship to succumb, in my opinion, to certain inaccuracies regarding the dating of the title and, by extension, its historical interpretation.³

¹ The term ἀξιολογώτατος can also be found, in very few cases, with the different spelling ἀξιολογότατος (indicatively, *IGLSyr* III 2 1118 and *Lef.* 597). I am very grateful to prof Pantelis Nidgelis, Jason König, Heather Reid, and Androniki Oikonomaki, for their very useful observations and valuable feedback in different stages of my research.

² F. Quaß, *Die Honoratiorenschicht in den Städten des griechischen Ostens*, Stuttgart 1993; M. Peachin, *Roman Imperial Titulature and Chronology, A.D. 235–284*, Amsterdam 1990; H. J. Mason, *Greek terms for Roman Institutions; a lexicon and analysis*, Toronto 1974; O. Hornickel, *Ehren- und Rangprädikate in den Papyrusurkunden. Ein Beitrag zum römischen und byzantinischen Titelwesen*, Giessen 1930; O. Hirschfeld, “Die Rangentitel der Römischen Kaiserzeit“, in *Kleine Schriften*, Berlin 1913, 646–681; D. Magie, *De romanorum juris publici sacrique vocabulis sollemnibus in graecum sermonem conversis*, Leipzig 1905.

³ Scholarship so far has researched the title’s dating, its official character, its Latin origin and the possibility of ἀξιολογώτατος being used exclusively by citizens of equestrian and senatorial status. Some of the most important contributions are: C. Brélaz, *Corpus des Inscriptions Grecques*

This paper, aiming to address these issues, is divided in two parts. The first consists of an analysis of the origin of the title and a re-assessment of the chronology suggested by earlier scholarship for use of the title. The second part shows how a reassessment of the title's chronology can raise issues about the reconstruction of the adjective ἀξιόλογος in damaged inscriptions. Ἀξιολογώτατος, I argue, can be a useful tool to assist epigraphers in dating evidence based on the people who were characterised by that title.

The origin of the title

The superlative of the adjective ἀξιόλογος (ἀξιολογώτατος) is attested both in literary and epigraphic evidence. In ancient literature, it can be traced as far back as Thucydides' age.⁴ Tuci has argued that the adjective ἀξιόλογος was frequently used in Greek historiography, mainly in a military context.⁵ That is not the case for the epigraphic evidence though. As Jones rightly noted, ἀξιολογώτατος as a civic title was used only after the end of the second and throughout the third

et Latines de Philippes II. La colonie romaine. Partie 1, La vie publique de la colonie, Athènes 2014, no 54; E. Lewartowski, "Les membres des *koina* sous le Principat (I^{er}–III^e siècles): quelques exemples d'intégration dans la vie locale", in M. Cébeillac-Gervasoni - L. Lamoire (éds), *Les élites et leurs facettes. Les élites locales dans monde hellénistique et romaine*, Rome 2003, 207–222 (page 217); T. Hauken, *Petition and Response. An Epigraphic study of petitions to Roman emperors*, Bergen 1998, 200; Quaß (above n.2) 53 and note 159; S. Şahin, *Die Inschriften von Arykanda (IK 48)*, Bonn 1994, no 59; A. J. S. Spawforth, "Families at roman Sparta and Epidaurus: Some prosopographical notes", *ABSA* 80 (1985) 191–258 (page 237); H. Geremek, "P. Iandana 99: Italian Wines in Egypt", *JJP* 16-17 (1971) 159–171; H. G. Pflaum, "Titulature et rang social Durant le Haut-Empire", in *Recherches sur les Structures Sociaux dans l'Antiquité Classique*, Paris 1970, 182; L. Robert, *Études Anatoliennes: Recherches sur les inscriptions grecques de l'Asie mineure*, Paris 1937, 342; Hornickel (above n.2), 3; A. Zehetmair, *De appellationibus honorificis in papyris Graecis obviis*, 1912, 44.

⁴ In his second book we read: ζυγκαλέσας τοὺς στρατηγούς τῶν πόλεων πασῶν καὶ τοὺς μάλιστα ἐν τέλει καὶ ἀξιολογώτατους παρήνει τοιάδε. Thuc. 2,10,3.

⁵ P. A. Tuci, "Carptim memoria digna perscribere. Criteri di selezione del material nella storiografia greca monografica e universal", in U. Roberto - L. Mecella (ed.), *Dalla storiografia ellenistica alla storiografia tardoantica: aspetti, problem, prospective* (Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi Roma, 23–25 ottobre 2008), Rubbettino 2010, 61–63.

century of our common era.⁶ Both in honorific inscriptions and in papyrological evidence the title was used in a similar way; preceding or following either the name of a distinguished individual or the office they held.⁷ This paper, aiming to shed light on the title ἀξιολογώτατος, concerns the study of only epigraphic evidence and not literary.

The first question that emerges is whether the title had a Greek or a Latin origin. Scholars over the years have repeatedly tried to give an answer, with the majority identifying a Latin equivalent and therefore suggesting a Latin origin. The number of different opinions on the subject, in my opinion, is characteristic of the difficulty of such an effort.

Magie, in his work on Latin titles and their Greek equivalents, first claimed that ἀξιολογώτατος is translation of the Latin *perfectissimus*.⁸ Another idea was offered by Mason, who suggested that ἀξιολογώτατος is a synonym for ἐξοχώτατος, which has the Latin equivalent *eminentissimus*.⁹ Pilhofer agrees with Mason,¹⁰ and *eminentissimus* is also considered to be ἀξιολογώτατος's Latin equivalent by Hatzopoulos.¹¹ On the other hand, Hauken, summarising the research of Hornickel and Geremek, suggested the Latin original *splendidissimus*.¹² *Honestissimus* was suggested by Nollé and Pflaum, with the latter also supporting the possibility that the title's Latin translation was *perfectissimus*.¹³

⁶ C. P. Jones, "Polybius of Sardis", *CPh* 91 (1996), 250, with several references to secondary literature in note 22.

⁷ Indicatively, see *IG X²* 1 38 (Βαίβιον Τερραίων Νεικό/στρατον τὸν ἀξιολογώτατον · γραμμα/τέα τῶν Πυθίων); *FD III* 1 534 (ἡ λαμπροτάτη Δελ/φῶν πόλις τὸν ἀξι/ολογώτατον Κλαύ/διον Σπαρτιατικόν); *SEG LV* 1469 (Αὐρήλιο[ν Πάνφιλον / Ἀπολλωνίου τοῦ / Πίγρητος, τὸν ἀξι/ολογώτατον Λυκι]/ἀρχην, εὐεργέτην / καὶ τῆς ἡμετέ/ρας πόλεως / ἡ βουλή // καὶ ὁ δῆμος); *P.Oxy XXXIV* 2705 (μοι ἐπέστειλεν [Καλπούρ]νιος Πετρωνιανὸς ὁ ἀξιολογώτατος ἔναρχος ἀρχιδικαστῆς). Of particular interest are cases like the *P.Oxy* 1490 and 2153, two letters and in which the receiver is greeted with the title ἀξιολογώτατος (Ἡρακλε[ίδης Σαρ]απίωνι τῷ ἀξιολογωτάτῳ χαίρειν and τῷ ἀξιολογωτάτῳ Ἀπόλλωνι / Δίδυμος χαίρειν).

⁸ Magie (above n.2) 106. Unfortunately, his arguments are not included in the research. Petzl also agrees with Magie (*I.Smyrna* II 1 594).

⁹ Mason (above n.2) 23.

¹⁰ *Phillipi* II² 381.

¹¹ *I.Leukopetra* 107.

¹² Hauken (above n.3) 200.

¹³ J. Nollé, "Forschungen in Pisidien", in *Asia Minor Studien* 6, Bonn 1992, 115 and Pflaum (above

Finally, Merkelbach and Engelmann translated ἀξιολογώτατος as *honestus*, which, however, is not in superlative form. Additionally, in none of the studies on imperial-period titles is any Latin title matched with ἀξιολογώτατος. Stein and Hirschfeld match *perfectissimus* with the Greek διασημότατος, *clarissimus* with λαμπρότατος, *eminentissimus* with ἐξοχώτατος, and *egregious* with κράτιστος.¹⁴

We find the same discrepancy among scholars in their attempt to translate the adjective in modern languages. A simple review of the words that researchers use to translate the epithet is enough to show how difficult it is to capture the meaning of the term.¹⁵ This difficulty, by extension, creates problems in understanding the nature of the title.

A possible argument for the Latin origin of the title is the fact that a significant number of inscriptions comes from cities that were *coloniae*.¹⁶ That would require the Romans that resided in those cities to know about the title and accept its use. A second argument is that the title seems to have been held exclusively by Greeks with Roman citizenship, as the epigraphic evidence suggests.¹⁷ Finally, use of the superlative itself characterizes the *titulature* of the Roman Period as Hirschfeld and Pflaum have shown.¹⁸

Up to this day, no one has ever challenged ἀξιολογώτατος's Latin origin. Based on the difficulty of earlier scholarship to reach a consensus for ἀξιολογώτατος's Latin equivalent and the use of the adjective as a term for important persons during the Classical, Hellenistic and Late Hellenistic periods,¹⁹ I would like this article to trigger further discussion on the subject by suggesting that a Greek origin must be considered a possibility. Ἀξιολογώτατος could

n.3) 184.

¹⁴ A. Stein, Griechische Rangtitel in der Römischer Kaizerzeit, *Wiener Studien* 34 (1912) 161. In his work *Der Römische Ritterstand: ein Beitrag zur sozial- und Personengeschichte des Römischen Reiches* (München 1963), there is no mention of the title ἀξιολογώτατος; See also Hirschfeld (above n.2) 646–681.

¹⁵ Some of the words that are used to translate ἀξιολογώτατος in modern languages are: *most honorable, most distinguished, angesehensten, berühmte, Besten, très eminent*.

¹⁶ Indicatively, Corinth, see *Corinth* VIII.3 230; Phillipi, see P. Lemerle, “Inscriptions latines et grecques de Philippes (suite)”, *BCH* 59 (1935) 140.40; Cremna in Pisidia, see *IK Central Pisidia* 25.

¹⁷ Indicatively, *IG* IV 490, *IG* X 2 1 38, *IG* XII 1 832 and *SEG* XLIII 865.

¹⁸ Hirschfeld (above n.2) 646–681 and Pflaum (above n.3) 182 respectively.

¹⁹ Jones (above n.6) 250 and Tuci (above n.5) 61–63.

have been a Greek title, simply used in the way Romans honored their elite, in superlative form. Probably only a bilingual inscription could offer an undisputed solution to the problem; however, to my knowledge none has yet been found.

Redefining the chronological frame of the title

The first and most significant effort to define the period during which the ἀξιολογώτατος was used in honorific inscriptions is L. Robert's, who suggested that the title was part of the political vocabulary of the Greek elite during the end of the 2nd and the 3rd c. CE.²⁰ L. Robert's thesis was adopted by the majority of scholars who commented on the title, including Lewartowski, Sahin, Hussein & Wagner, Roueche and Kanatsoulis.²¹ A different suggestion has been made by scholarship studying papyrological evidence, however. Geremek, taking into consideration the older studies of Hornickel and Zehetmair, argued that the title should be dated between the years 196–8 and 316 CE, a chronology derived from the dating of the oldest and the newest surviving papyri that include the title ἀξιολογώτατος.²² Contrary to the difference in the *terminus ante quem* of the title (316 CE instead of the end of the 3rd century CE that L. Robert suggested), there is no other discordance in earlier scholarship regarding its dating.

A quantitative study of the evidence, however, suggests different dating. Even though the bulk of the 307 inscriptions that include the title – all the evidence I managed to bring together for this study – was dated during the second and third century of our common era, there is epigraphic evidence that dictates a reexamination of the time-frame set for the title. More specifically, there are 5 inscriptions which indicate that ἀξιολογώτατος was introduced into the political vocabulary of elite Greek citizens almost half a century earlier than the *ter-*

²⁰ Robert (above n.3) 342.

²¹ Lewartowski (above n.3); Şahin (above n.3) no.59; A. Hussein - G. Wagner, "Une nouvelle dédicace grecque de la Grande Oasis", *ZPE* 95 (1993), 155; C. Roueche, *Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity: the late Roman and Byzantine inscriptions including texts from the excavations at Aphrodisias conducted by Kenan T. Erim*, London 1989, 10, no.4; K. Κανατσούλης, "Το κοινό των Μακεδόνων", *Μακεδονικά* 3 (1956) 27–102.

²² Geremek (above n.3) 162. She highlights thought that there are two exceptions; the papyri *SB* 4101 and *Lef.* 597 that are dated during the years of emperor Heracleus (610–641) and 785 respectively.

minus post quem suggested by L. Robert and Geremek. They also suggest that it was still in use by the late fourth century of common era.

The terminus post quem

The earliest testimony to the title comes from Delphi, from an honorific inscription which is nevertheless tentatively dated. Based on the paleography of the letters, the inscription was dated during the years of the reign of either the emperor Hadrian or Trajan (between 98 and 138 CE), almost a century earlier than the late 2nd century that L. Robert suggested to be the title's *terminus post quem*. Bourguet, in a newer edition of the inscription noted that the use of the *praenomen* Λούκιον as *cognomen* could be an indication that the inscription can be dated before the chronological spectrum that L. Robert has set for the title.²³

- 1 τὸν ἀξιολογώτατον Ἀμφι-
κτύονα γενόμενον Πυθι-
άδι Μαρ. Οὐλίπιον Δοκή-
τιον Λούκιον Νεικοπο-
5 λείτην διὰ τε ἥθους ἐπιεί-
κειαν καὶ διὰ τὴν σπουδὴν
ἦν ἐπεδείξατο ὑπὲρ τῆς σε-
μνότητος τοῦ ἀγῶνος τῶν
μεγάλων Πυθίων, προῖκα
10 πρεσβεύσαντα, οἰκείοις
τέλεσιν ἀναδεξάμενον
τὴν τοῦ ἀνδριάντος ἀνά-
στασιν.

The second inscription, almost contemporary with that from Delphi, comes from Arcadian Tegea.²⁴ Even though this inscription is destroyed in its greater part, it is possible to date it based on the word ἐπιδημίας in the third line; a *terminus technicus* used to describe the visits of the emperor Hadrian in Greece. Accord-

²³ CID IV 145.

²⁴ IG V 2 28.

ing to Halfmann's study on the tours of the Roman emperors, Hadrian's second visit to Greece (β' ἐν αὐτῇ ἐπιδημίας) took place in 128/129 CE.²⁵

[—].....σκ[— — — — —] / [—]..ς Μούσης τῆς [—
— — — —] / [—] .τῆς β' ἐν αὐτῇ ἐπ[ιδημίας —] / [—] .
να ἀξιολογοῦτα[τ— — — —] // [— ῆ]ς κατοικομένης [— —
— —] / [—] οἴκτος τῆ πόλει δι' ἧς [— — —].

The third oldest testimony of the title is, again, an honorific inscription for Embromos Pantainetou and his wife Aristaineti, from the Lycian Arykanda. This inscription, which is inscribed in two columns on a statue base, was dated by Schüler in 130–150 CE based on prosopographic evidence²⁶. Sahin, however, in the *editio princeps* suggested the reconstruction of συναρχιερατεύσασαν instead of γυμνασιαρχήσασαν in lines 5 and 6. He then dated the inscription based on the dating of the holding of the office of ἀρχιερέας by Embromos, during the reign of either the emperor Hadrian or Antonius Pius.²⁷ Nevertheless, in both cases the dating of the inscription precedes L. Robert's *terminus post quem* for the title.

Left column of *I.Arykanda* 47:

- 1 [Ἀρισταινέτην τῆς Πίγρητος Ἀρυκανδίνδα κτλ]

-----unknown number of lines lost -----

- 5 ταῖς δε[υταίραι]ς τειμαῖς, γυμ[νασια]ρχ[ή]-
σασαν δι ὄλου τοῦ φιλοτείμως
μετά τοῦ ἀξιολογοτάτου ἀνδρός α[ύτης]
Ἐμβρόμου τοῦ Πανταινέτου vacat

²⁵ H. Halfmann, *Itinera Principum: Geschichte und Typologie der Kaiserreisen im Römischen Reich*, Stuttgart 1986, 188–210.

²⁶ C. Schüler, “Der Archiereus Embromos aus Arykanda und seine Familie”, in T. Korkut, *Anadolu da Dogu. Festschrift für Fabri Isik zum 60. Geburtstag*, Istanbul 2004 = *SEG* LIV 1396.

²⁷ *I.Arykanda* 47.

An inscription dated roughly around the same time as the latter, includes 3 decrees that honor a Iason Neikostratou. This evidence comes from the region of Kyaneai in Lycia and was dated between 123 and 156 CE based on prosopographic evidence.²⁸

Indicatively, I cite ten verses from the decree of the Patareans:

- 1 ἐπεὶ Ἰάσων Νεικοστράτου,
ὁ ἀξιολογώτατος πολεΐτης
ἡμῶν, οὐ μόνον ἐν τῷ λα<μ>προ-
τάτῳ Λυκίων ἔθνει τὴν ἑαυτοῦ
5 μεγαλοφροσύνην, δι' ἧς ἐτέλε-
σεν Λυκιοαρχείας, ἐπεδείξατο,
ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν ἡμετέραν πόλιν
διαφερόντως ταῖς τῆς ἀρχῆς
φιλο[τ]ειμίαις ἐκόσμησεν

Finally, the last inscription that precedes L. Robert's suggestion for the title's *terminus post quem* is from Sardes in Lycia. Written on a marble stele that is inscribed on both sides, this inscription preserves a protocol of a meeting of the *Areopagos*, concerning honours for Polybius. Its dating is unproblematic, *circa* 150 CE, based on prosopographic evidence.²⁹

- 1 ----- /
λειπέσθω· ἐπερώτ[ησεν -----]
ὁ πρόεδρος· δοκεῖ γραφῆναι τ[οῖς]
κρατίστοις Σαρδιανοῖς ὑπέρ το[ῦ]
5 ἀξιολογώτατου Πολυβίου· πᾶσ[ιν?]·
τί οἴεσθε· ὑπομνηματισιάσ[θω ?]·

²⁸ For the dating, see the *editio princeps* R. Heberdy - A. Wilhelm, *Reisen in Kilikien: ausgeführt 1891 und 1892 im Auftrage der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Wien 1896, 4. See also, SEG LI 1827bis for the dating that I follow here. For other information about the inscription, see C. Kokkinia, "Verdiente Ehren. Zu den Inschriften für Opramoas von Rhodiapolis und Iason von Kyaneai", *AW* 32 (2001), 17–23 and *JGR* III 704 with comments in Latin.

²⁹ SEG XLIII 864. For the chronology of the inscription, and a study on Polybius, see Jones (above n.6).

- 10 εἰσκληθεῖς εἶπε Πολύβιος · μεγ[α]-
 λειοτέραν τῆς παρούσης μοι εὐ-
 δαιμονίας οὐδεμίαν ἄλλην κρίν[ω],
 15 ἄνδρες Ἀρεοπαγεῖται · παρ' ὑμῖν εἰ[ὺ]-
 τύχηκα καὶ στήναι καὶ εἰπεῖν κα[ί]
 τῆς ἀφ' ὑμῶν ἀπολαῦσαι μαρτυ[ρί]-
 ας ἧς ποτε τυχόντες μέγα ἐφ[ρό]-
 νησαν καὶ θεοὶ · ἐξεβόησαν
 15 ἄξιος.

Based on the evidence presented above, I believe, it is safe to assume that the adjective ἀξιολογώτατος, as a title, was introduced to the political vocabulary of the Greek elite at least from the beginning of the 1st century CE, when the inscriptions from Delphi and Tegea are dated, and not from the end of the 2nd c. CE as L. Robert originally suggested.

The terminus ante quem

The *termini ante quem* of the title that were suggested by L. Robert and Geremek (the 3rd century CE and the year 316 CE, respectively) also seem to be problematic. This is because of epigraphic and papyrological evidence that suggests the title was in use at least until the end of the 4th century CE.

The first piece of evidence is an inscription for Marcus Aurelius Kiliorthes. The inscription was dated by the *editio princeps* during the years 324 and 337 CE, based on the mention of the word Καισάρων, which indicates the sons of Emperor Constantine.³⁰

- 1 Βουλῆς δήμου δόγματι·
 τὸν ἀξιολογώτατον καὶ ἐνδοξό-
 τατον καὶ εἰρήνης προστάτην, ἀρχι-
 ερέα γενόμενον τοῦ ἀνεϊκῆτου Σεβαστοῦ
 5 καὶ τῶν ἐπιφανεστάτων Καισάρων καὶ πᾶσαν λει-
 τουργίαν τελέσα<ντα> Μᾶρ(κον) Αὐρ(ήλιον) Κιλιόρτην,

³⁰ SEG XLI 1390. Here lines 1–7.

υῖόν τοῦ γεν-
ομένου Μάρ(κου) Αὐρ(ηλίου) Ἐρμαίου Ἀσκουρέω[ς.

The second piece of evidence is a bilingual inscription from Catania in Sicily. This inscription, however, should be treated with caution since it is the only attestation of the title west of the Adriatic Sea. Furthermore, the stone is damaged in the place where the first 5 letters of the word are. Its reconstruction was made by Manganaro who suggested the ἀξιολογώτατη instead of Feissel's ἐλλογώτατη.³¹ It is an honorific inscription for Claudia absolutely dated to the year 455 CE.³²

- 1 Dep(osita) [illo die]
cons(ulatu) d. [n. or d]ivi Valentiniani Aug. VIII]
fecit i[n coniugio ann. VI III e.g. addicti uni]
sorti, man[ifesta animorum consensione etc.]
- 5 Κλ(αυδία) [- - -]
ἐν[θάδ]ε κίτε ἐν ἰ[ρήν]η - - -]
ἡ [ἀξιολο]γοῦσάτη ἥτις [ἔ]ζησεν ἔ[-
[τη τριά]κοντα· τελευτῶ [τῆ πρό]-
[- - εἰδῶ]ν Ὀκτωβρίων ὑπ(ατία) Βα[λεν]-
10 [τινιαν]οῦ Ἀγούστου τό ἡ, ἔζ[η]-
[σεν αὐτ]ή μετ' ἐμοῦ ἀξ(ίως) προσ[η]-
[γορίας ? ἐ]ν ὁμοζυγία ἔτη θ' †.

The next piece of evidence, which provides the latest epigraphic testimony of the title, is a funerary epigram for Calpurnius Collega Macedon. This inscription from Pisidian Antioch was dated by the editors of *SEG* to the 4th and perhaps the 5th c. CE.³³

³¹ *SEG* XXXVI 843.

³² *SEG* XXXVI 843. Unfortunately, the Latin text differs from the Greek and we do not have the chance to see the title's Latin equivalent.

³³ *SEG* XXXII 1302. Ramsay suggests ἀξιόλο[γον ἡρωα] instead of ἀξιολο[γώτατον], but to my knowledge there is no parallel in the epigraphic record.

- 1 Γ. Καλπ(ούρνιον) Κολλῆγαν Μακεδόνα βουλευτήν, ἄνδρα
ἀξιολο[γώτατον],
ὃς ἐγένετο ἐν πάσῃ ἀρετῇ, ὡς φησιν ὁ ἀρχαῖ[ος — — —],
ῥήτορα ἐν τοῖς δέκα Ἀθηναίων πρώτοις ΚΑ[— — —],
φιλόσοφον τὰ Πλάτωνος καὶ Σωκράτους ΕΠΙΑ[— — —],
- 5 ἀρχίατρον ἐν λόγοις καὶ ἔργοις τὰ Ἴπποκράτους ΤΟ[— — —],
γενόμενον ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἔτη τριάκοντα καὶ ἡμ[έρας — — —],
θεοῦ προνοία καὶ ἱερῶν ἀγγελῶν συνοδία ΜΕ[— — —]
εἰς [ο]ύρανὸν ἐξ ἀνθρώπων, θάπτον ἢ ἔδει τοὺς Γ[— — —]
καταλιπόντα, τὸν π[ή]λινο[ν] χιτῶνα ἐνταυθοῖ ΠΕΡΙ[— — —],
- 10 κατασκευάσας τὸ ἡρῶν τῷ γλυκυτάτῳ καὶ πο[θινοτάτῳ]
καὶ [— — —] Γ. Καλπούρνιος Μ[ακεδών].

Ἀξιολογώτατος characterizing prominent citizens is also attested in papyri, even during the Middle Byzantine Period (610–1204). A papyrus, noted both by Hornickel and Geremek, was dated during the reign of Emperor Heraclius (610–641).³⁴ The latest testimony, though, is from a papyrus that was found in *Filai* of Egypt and was dated to 785.³⁵ Due to the lack of other contemporary sources and taking into consideration a three-century gap from the bulk of the inscriptions (2nd and 3rd c. CE), I believe that the Middle Byzantine Period should not be considered a *terminus ante quem*. The beginning of the loss of the title's splendor in the 2nd half of the 3rd century was noted by Geremek, who argued that ἀξιολογώτατος gradually ceased to be a desirable and distinctive title.³⁶ Even though Geremek's study was based almost entirely on papyri, epigraphic evidence confirms this hypothesis.

From the dating of the evidence presented above, we can safely conclude that ἀξιολογώτατος, as an honorific title, was introduced into imperial-age Greek political vocabulary more than half a century earlier than the date L. Robert suggested. I propose, therefore, that the title's *terminus post quem* should be the beginning of the 2nd c. CE; the period when the first evidence for the title is dated. Three out of 307 inscriptions are dated to the 4th c. CE, a fact which indicates, in my opinion, that the title stopped being used by the Greek elite after

³⁴ *S.B.* 4101, see Hornickel (above n. 2) 3 and Geremek (above n. 3) 162.

³⁵ *Lef.* 597.

³⁶ Geremek (above n. 3) 163.

that point, which therefore should be the title's *terminus ante quem*. A notable exception is the inscription from Catania that was dated to 455CE.

Some notes on the inscription L. Robert, *La Carie*, p.163, no.40 in the light of the new suggested dating for the title

The new assessment of the chronological limits of this title compels us to reexamine certain cases in which the place on the stone where the word was originally written is damaged and the reconstruction was based on older hypotheses about the title's dating. Such a case is an inscription from Heraclia Salbake in Caria, dated by L. Robert in the year 170 CE.

- 1 [ἡ βουλή καὶ ὁ δῆμος ἐτίμησαν Τ(ίτον) Στ(ατίλιον) Ἀπολλινάριον ἥρωα διὰ τοῦ] ὑπογεγραμμένου ψηφίσματος.
[εἰσηγησαμένου —]ωνος, ἐπιψηφισαμένου Ἀριστοδ[ῆ]
[μου τοῦ —]ρευθη· ἐπειδὴ Τ(ίτος) Στ(ατίλιος) Ἀπολλινάριο[ς]
[— προγόνω]ν ἐπιφανες<τά>των ὑπάρχων καὶ συνε-
- 5 [κτικώτων τὴν πόλιν —]υ, ἀύξησάντων δὲ καὶ ἀνυπερβλήτ[ως]
τὸν δῆμον — τειμαῖς — το]ῦ κ[υ]ρίου αὐτοκράτορος Καίσαρος Τρα-
[ϊανοῦ Σεβαστοῦ — αὐτός τ]ε παρὰ πάντα τὸν βίον καὶ διὰ λόγων καὶ
δ[ι']
[ἔργων — ἐπιεικεῖ πρὸς ἅπαντας ἦθει κεχηρημένος ἀνεθρ[έ]-
[ψατο υἱοὺς δύο, Σόλωνα μὲν — γενόμενον πριμ]ιπειλάριον καὶ
στρατο[π]εδάρχην κατα
- 10 [— τοῦ αὐτ]οκράτορος ἐ<ν> στρατείαις ἐνκεχειρηκότα
[— σ]τρατ[ε]ία]ν, αὐτός τε πρῶτον μὲν χειλια[ρ]-
[χειας, —, ἔπειτα δὲ ἐπαρχείας — κ]αὶ ταύτ[α]ς ἐπιφανῶς ἐπιτελέσας,
πισ-
[τευθεῖς δὲ ἐπιτροπειάν — Λυκίας,] Παμφυλίας, Κύπρου καὶ ταύτην
μετὰ
[πάσης σπουδῆς — ἐπιτελέσας ὡς ὑπὸ —] μαρτυρηθῆναι, τὰ νῦν
μετήλλαχεν καὶ κα-
- 15 [ταλέλοιπεν πένθος? — δεδόχθαι τῇ βουλῇ καὶ τῷ δήμω·
τιμῆσαι] Τ(ίτον) Στ(ατίλιον) Ἀπολλινάριον ἥρωα ταῖς καλλίσ-

[ταις τειμαῖς — παραμυθήσασθαι δὲ καὶ τὴν γυναῖκα
 αὐτοῦ] Στ(ατιλίαν) Τατίαν καὶ τοὺς κρατίστους καὶ ἄ-
 [ξιολόγους υἱοὺς — καὶ — ἐξεῖναι δὲ αὐτοῖς καὶ εἰκόνας ἐπιχρῶ]
 σους καὶ ἀνδριάντας ἀναθεῖναι
 [— ἐπι δὲ τούτων γενέσθαι τὰς ἀναλογούσας ἐπιγραφὰς] τούτῳ τῷ
 ψηφίσματι. ἔτους εν[σ´]
 [—]γένης, Ἄδραστος Λυκίου
 20 [— ὑ]πέγραψα.³⁷

Before proceeding with the analysis, however, we should acknowledge the danger of any restoration, since from the word ἄξιολόγους only the initial *α* has survived. The rest is a reconstruction by L. Robert, who offered an important historical interpretation of the evidence and suggested the use ἄξιολόγους instead of ἀειμνήστους, which was the term given in the *editio princeps*³⁸. He argued that ἀειμνήστους is an arbitrary restitution since it would be very unusual to have the living and dead both honoured in the same way, as they would have been in this case. L. Robert's suggestion was that the letter *α* would be at the end of the line 16 and the rest of the word would continue to line 17 ([ξιολόγους υἱοὺς...]).³⁹ He also proposed to use the regular form of the adjective and not its superlative because the use of the title is very uncommon during that time; therefore, he decided that the regular form (ἄξιολόγους) is probably the correct one.⁴⁰

The evidence presented in the first part of this paper suggests otherwise, however. The title ἄξιολογώτατος was already used by the Greek elite from the beginning of the 2nd century CE. The region of Caria is not excluded from

³⁷ L. Robert, *La Carie: histoire et géographie historique avec le recueil des inscriptions antiques*, Paris 1954, 163 no.40. For other editions, see *MAMA VI 97* et *Pl.19* (Ed.pr.); L.Robert, *Hellenica: Recueil d'épigraphie, de numismatique et d'antiquités grecques III*, Paris 1946, 10–28; *BE* (1948) 212.

³⁸ L. Robert (above n.37) 15–17.

³⁹ L. Robert (above n.37) 11. The text, as given in the *editio princeps* by Buckler and Calder, in the lines 16 and 17 of interest to this paper, is as follows: The line 16 has 66 letters; the last 3 of which are the *α* of the word ἀειμνήστους and the *ε* and *ι* of the suggested reconstruction ἀ[ετ-]. The rest of the word continues in line 17 ([μνήστους υἱοὺς...]), which has 65 letters in total. See *MAMA VI 97*.

⁴⁰ “Le superlatif ἄξιολογώτατος me semble, peut-être à tort, appartenir de préférence à une époque un peu plus tardive, la fin du siècle suivant”. The inscription discussed is dated in 170 AD.

this rule. There is epigraphic evidence contemporary with this inscription – if not earlier – which suggests that the title was in use in the region at that time.⁴¹ Assuming that L. Robert’s choice of the adjective ἀξιόλογος instead of another (ἀγαθός for example⁴²) is correct, the possibility that the adjective was in superlative form originally should remain open.

The reconstruction in the *editio princeps* was made *exempli gratia*, “because the approximate length of the lines (about 65-67 letters) is to be inferred from ll. 12, 14, 18, and the substance of the portion lost is deducible from those that survive”.⁴³ L. Robert, though, with whom I agree in this case, showed that this suggestion is very problematic. The stone is destroyed both on the left and the right side; thus, it is very difficult to make any hypotheses on the length of the lines. The text, as reconstructed by L. Robert, is 81 letters long in line 16, while the 17th line has at least 74 letters. My suggestion for the use of the adjective in its superlative form (ἀξιολογωτάτους) does not create any problems in terms of space since it only has 4 letters more than ἀξιολόγους, making line 17, in total, 78 letters, 3 less than line 16, which would remain as it is.

There are other indications, as well, supporting my argument for using the title ἀξιολογωτάτους instead of L. Robert’s ἀξιολόγους. The phrase ἀξιολόγους υἱούς, or in general the adjective in its regular form followed by the noun υἱός, regardless of its grammatical case, has no parallel in the epigraphic material. On the contrary, the title ἀξιολογώτατος has more than one parallel case. In an inscription from Apameia in Phrygia, the phrase ἀξιολογωτάτους υἱούς is preserved⁴⁴. Similarly, in an honorific inscription for Grania Attikilla, made by her sons, we read in the 9th and 10th verse, ἀξιολογώτατοι υἱοί.⁴⁵ A third example is the honorific inscription for Bryonianus Iasonianus Seleukos from the 3rd century CE. In the lines 3–5, we read: τὸν ἀξιολο/γώτατον υἱὸν Βρυωνία/νοῦ Λολλιανοῦ.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Indicatively, see *SEG* L 1109 (2nd c. AD), *I.Labraunda* 59 (2nd c. AD), *I.Stratonikeia* 15 and 293 (both dated in the 2nd c. AD).

⁴² See *IK Perge* 327 (3rd c. CE), ll.2–3: [τ]ὸν κράτιστον / καὶ ἀγαθόν.

⁴³ *MAMA* VI 97 et Pl.19.

⁴⁴ *MAMA* VI List 146,114, Imperial Period.

⁴⁵ *Milet* I 3 176.

⁴⁶ *IK Side* 110.

The fact that the sons of Apollinarius belonged to the equestrian class, as the title κράτιστος indicates,⁴⁷ may also be a useful indication. Members of the equestrian and senatorial class were usually honoured with titles in the superlative form, as Pflaum suggested.⁴⁸ A quantitative study on the epigraphic evidence comparing the title ἀξιολογώτατος with ἀξιόλογος shows that there is not a single case of an equestrian or senatorial-status citizen being honoured as merely ἀξιόλογος.

On the contrary, there are many ἀξιολογώτατοι men and women that we know belonged to the equestrian or senatorial class. Let us trace only a few of a considerable number of such cases in Lydia, Lycaonia and Pisidia.⁴⁹ The number of ἀξιολογώτατοι having equestrian status will be considerably increased if we accept Quaß's suggestion to see all those who held the office of the high priest of the imperial cult in a *koinon*, as men of equestrian or senatorial status.⁵⁰ In further support of this argument, I refer to Pflaum's thesis, which considers the use of the superlative form in honorific titles and epithets as a means to separate equites and senators from the rest of the prominent citizens who did not have such a status.⁵¹ With only a few exceptions, the epigraphic evidence confirms Pflaum's opinion. A quantitative analysis of the relevant material shows that each time the adjective ἀξιόλογος is used for people we know belonged to the equestrian class of the Roman Empire, it is always in its superlative form – i.e. as a title – and such, I believe, is also the case for the inscription from Heracleia Salbake.⁵²

⁴⁷ For the title κράτιστος and its connection with the equestrian class, see C. Brunn, "Some Comments on the Status of Imperial Freedmen", *ZPE* 82 (1990) 272–274; F. Millar, "Empire and City, Augustus to Julian: Obligations, excuses and status", *JRS* 73 (1983) 90–91; Pflaum (above n.3) 159–185; J. Deininger, *Die Provinziallandtage der römischen Kaiserzeit*, München 1965, 152, 178; A. Stein, *Der Römische Ritterstand: ein Beitrag zur sozial- und Personengeschichte des Römischen Reiches*, München 1963; Stein (above n.14) 160–170; Hirschfeld (above n.2) 646–681.

⁴⁸ Pflaum (above n.3) 182.

⁴⁹ Indicatively see *SEG* XLIII 865 for Lydia, *SEG* VI 452 for Lycaonia and *SEG* VI 588 for Pisidia.

⁵⁰ F. Quaß, "Zur politischen Tätigkeit der kommunalen Aristokratie des griechischen Ostens in der Kaiserzeit", *Historia* 31 (1982) 188–213.

⁵¹ Pflaum (above n.3) 182.

⁵² There is only one exception to this rule. The *IG* V 1 464 from the city of Sparta. In that inscription, dated during the first quarter of the 3rd century AD, Sextus Pompeius Theoxenos, the ἀξιολογώτατος, is also ἀγαθός and δίκαιος. It is worth mentioning that while the adjective ἀγαθός

Finally, there is no parallel in the epigraphic record for someone to have held both the title of ἀξιόλογος and κράτιστος, while there are such parallels for ἀξιολογώτατος. The first example is an invitation for a spectacle organized by Claudius Rufrius Menon and his wife, Vaivia Magna, from third-century Thessaloniki.⁵³ In this inscription, Menon bears the title κράτιστος. Menon's case is very interesting because in an inscription with the same context, an invitation to spectacles in Thessaloniki which was dated eight years before the *SEG* XLIX 817, instead of being presented as κράτιστος, he and his wife were presented as ἀξιολογώτατοι.⁵⁴ I believe that it is safe to assume that Menon held both titles. Additionally, an inscription from Corinth in which, a Cornelius is presented as ἀξιολογώτατος and as κράτιστος can also work as a parallel.⁵⁵ We should be extremely cautious with that case, though, since the entire word ἀξιολογώτατος is a reconstruction.⁵⁶

Assuming that L. Robert's suggestion to use the adjective ἀξιόλογος instead of ἀειμνήστους is correct, I believe it is safer to use the adjective's superlative form. I support this based (1) on the contemporary use of the title in the region of Caria, which *ipso facto* contradicts L. Robert's main argument to use the regular instead of the superlative form; (2) by using the *MAMA* VI List 146, 114 and *Milet* I 3 176 inscriptions from Apameia and Miletus respectively, as parallels for the use of the title in epigraphic evidence along with the noun υἱός; (3) by showing that members of the equestrian class were never honoured as ἀξιόλογοι but conversely, there is evidence that they were honoured as

is never attested at that period in superlative form. On the contrary, the adjective δίκαιος is. In the same city, during the same period, the adjective δικαιοτάτος is used for Iulius Pauleinus (*IG* V 1 538, end of 2nd/3rd c. AD). It is interesting that Pauleinus also held the title of ἀξιολογώτατος and probably had equestrian status. That information can be extracted by the same inscription, in which it is written that he had risen to the office of ἑπαρχος (ἄρξαντα τὴν ἀρχὴν τῶν ἀξιολογωτάτων ἐπαρχῶν); therefore, as an ἑπαρχος, he was ἀξιολογώτατος. The office of ἑπαρχος is identified as that of *praefectus* by Mason, an office that was manned by members of the equestrian and senatorial class. See Mason (above n.2) 138–140, 145.

⁵³ *SEG* XLIX 817, September 260 AD.

⁵⁴ *SEG* XLIX 815, Thessaloniki, 252 AD. A similar case is that of Iason Neikostratou (*IGR* III 704) that was mentioned in the first part of this paper.

⁵⁵ *Corinth* VIII 3 230 (between 225 and 260 AD).

⁵⁶ In another example, the aforementioned honorific inscription for Bryonianus, we see that the two titles appear again in the same inscription. However, this case is slightly different since the κράτιστος characterises Bryonianus and the ἀξιολογώτατος his son. See *IK Side* 110.

ἀξιολογώτατοι; and 4) the case of Menon from Thessaloniki and – with extra caution – the case of Cornelius from Corinth, that show individuals having both the title of κράτιστος and ἀξιολογώτατος.

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