

AKTI VIII. MEĐUNARODNOG KOLOKVIJA O PROBLEMIMA RIMSKOG PROVINCIJALNOG UMJETNIČKOG STVARALAŠTVA

AKTEN DES VIII. INTERNATIONALEN KOLLOQUIUMS ÜBER PROBLEME DES PROVINZIALRÖMISCHEN KUNSTSCHAFFENS

THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE 8TH INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM ON PROBLEMS OF ROMAN PROVINCIAL ART

LES ACTES DU VIII^{ÈME} COLLOQUE INTERNATIONAL SUR LES PROBLÈMES DE L'ART PROVINCIAL ROMAIN

ZAGREB 5.-8. V. 2003.

RELIGIJA I MIT KAO POTICAJ RIMSKOJ PROVINCIJALNOJ PLASTICI

RELIGION UND MYTHOS ALS ANREGUNG FÜR DIE PROVINZIALRÖMISCHE PLASTIK

RELIGION AND MYTH AS AN IMPETUS FOR THE ROMAN PROVINCIAL SCULPTURE

LA RELIGION ET LE MYTHE COMME INSPIRATION POUR LA SCULPTURE ROMAINE PROVINCIALE

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(snimio Tonći Seser, fotograf Arheološkog muzeja – Split)

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PROVINCIALE

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Zagreb, 2005.

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PAST AND PRESENT: NOTES ON THE IDENTITY OF ROMAN IMPERIAL SMYRNA

BY CARLO FRANCO

“The First City of Asia in beauty and size, and the most brilliant... the ornament of Ionia”, so proudly sounded the official titulature of Smyrna in the age of the Roman Empire, as witnessed in official inscriptions and coin legends. The long and troublesome history of the city has left only very feeble vestiges of that lavish and remarkable beauty: today only a part of the Agora, which was first excavated in the thirties of the last century, stands as proof of the ancient glory. Because of certain events, such as the re-use of ancient stones and modern urban development, most of the ruins recorded or seen in the 19th century have since then disappeared. The remaining archaeological evidence is now, for the most part, collected in the İzmir Archaeological Museum.

So the possibility of visually recovering the actual face of ancient Smyrna is a rather poor one. Coins and inscriptions, to be sure, can provide a first integration to the missing or scarcely preserved archaeological remains. But more interesting suggestions come from literary sources. Worthy of mention is the important portrait of Smyrna offered by Strabo in the 14th book of his *Geographikà*: connecting, as usual, history and geography, the writer from Amaseia traced a rich description, both of the natural location and of the urbanistic shape of the city as it appeared in the late Hellenistic or early imperial age. Here the connection between the past and present of Smyrna is to be observed at best. Strabo records the re-founding of Smyrna, with the transferring of the city from its ancient to its modern location, the synoecism by Antigonus Monophtalmos and Lysimachus, the urban structure with paved streets, porticoes, temples, public buildings, and a memorial to Homer. A short sketch is also provided about the historical events during the Aristonicus’ revolt and the civil wars after Caesar’s murder. Strabo’s account is both

intriguing and deceptive, for it gives important hints about the local history and the cultural achievements of ancient Smyrna: to the modern reader, however, his synthesis may seem perhaps too harsh and telescoped.

A longer and less considered source of knowledge on the city can be found in the works of a most influential orator of the 2nd century AD, Aelius Aristides. Born in Hadrianoutherai, in Mysia, Aelius spent a large part of his life as a celebrated teacher and lecturer in Smyrna. The importance of rhetoric training in Roman imperial society, especially in the Greek speaking part of the Empire, does not need to be stressed here: the so called ‘second Sophistic’ is by now largely recognized as a pivotal element in the social and cultural life of the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD. Smyrna was among the greatest centers of that phenomenon: in his ‘Lives of the Sophists’, Flavius Philostratus collected large evidence concerning the rhetors who lived and/or performed in Smyrna. So this sort of ‘Sophistopolis’ was important for the intellectual biography of Aelius Aristides as well.

Many references to Smyranean places and buildings can be detected in the ‘Sacred Tales’, the diary of Aristides’ illness and salvation on behalf of the god Asclepius. Just at the beginning of the work, there is a reference to a temple of Asclepius near the gymnasium [1.17], then the thermae, not far from the Ephesian Gate [1.18ff], as well as the celebrated river Meles [2.18]: a dramatic dream is located in the galleries going to the Agora [1.22]. The public institutions and the cultural achievements also have a place in the diaries: so the reader meets the civic council (boulé) and assembly (ekkllesia) [4.87 etc; 4.100], as well as the poetic festivals [1.42] or the lectures in the odeion close to the harbor [5.29].

That the *Sacred Tales* do not provide a reliable picture of Aristides’ life has long been recognized: the

events, which are also recorded by the neurotic writer, may be not completely true: especially the exact chronology and the personal role of Aristides in the different situations are debated. On the contrary, the general image of Smyrna as a cultural center, crowded and rich, is beyond any doubt. Very remarkable is also the role of the Roman authorities: peculiarly stressing his personal contacts with the powerful men of his age, Aristides never omits to mention his (real or imaginary) meetings with the provincial governors or with the emperors themselves. So he gives us a very lively impression of the actual place of Roman power within the civic life of a prominent provincial city. The dual image of a proud local identity and of a special link with the central power is to be noticed here.

Nor are the 'Sacred Tales' an isolated example in Aristides' corpus. Among his writings, five texts are preserved, which deal directly with Smyrna and give other careful descriptions, both of the city and of its cultural identity: these are the nn. 17 to 21 in Keil's edition, which is, about one century after its publication, the most reliable as to the philological matter concerned. According to the chronological order, as first comes the 'Smyrnan Oration' (17 Keil) delivered in the late fifties as the reception speech for a Roman governor approaching Smyrna; some years later, perhaps in 178 AD, Aristides wrote the 'Monody' on Smyrna (18 Keil), a pathetic lamentation composed immediately after the earthquake which in that year had destroyed the city. In the same year, if not the same days, pertains the 'Letter' to Emperors Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus begging for the reconstruction of Smyrna (19 Keil). A short time elapsed before the writer, in bad physical and psychological condition, composed the 'Palinody' (20 Keil), which was read at the provincial council as a celebration and thanksgiving for the 'resurrection' of the city due to the imperial and provincial help. Some years later, Aristides composed a second 'Smyrnan Oration' (21 Keil), again a reception speech for a governor, actually the son of the recipient of the first one. This was perhaps the last work written by the celebrated orator before death.

These texts, because of their nature, could be considered from different points of view, rhetoric or historic: much work has been done, especially since a real interest arose among scholars for the sophistic movement and civic life in imperial Asia Minor. But the Aristides' Smyrnan speeches also have a special interest from an archaeological perspective. Even a sort of autobiography, like the 'Sacred Tales', can be studied in this per-

spective. This is much more profitable in the case of Aristides' speeches. Two of them, indeed, are a verbal guide to Smyrna, thus providing us with a thorough description of what can not be actually seen nor recognized, since in ruins.

Following the rhetoric rules, which we can so carefully borrow from the later treaties of Menander the Rhetor [3rd AD], Aristides shaped his reception speech for the Roman governors first as praise for Smyrna. This was the kind of oration which a man of power when entering a city was supposed to, and due to, listen to. The meaning of such ceremonies should not be dismissed as a simple and boring routine. On these occasions the language of symbols, rituals and words played a public and decisive role in mutually defining the disposition of the rulers and the ruled, showing reciprocal acceptance and exhibiting concord and esteem. It would be out of place to evaluate these ceremonies in terms of 'sincerity' or 'spontaneity': the problem was (and is) that in rituals, rules and not feelings are expressed. As the governor or the Emperor himself visited a city, during the spectacular reception ceremony (*adventus*), the local community demanded an official speaker to deliver his oration. Let us read what Ulpianus, in his book 'On the proconsular duties', wrote on that point: "When the governor approaches a major city or the administrative center of his province, he must listen patiently to the oration in praise of the city and avoid being bored, since for the inhabitants of the province it is of high importance as their honour is concerned" [Dig. 1.16.7].

A complete series of topic themes was supposed to be exploited on such occasions, such as: the climatic conditions, geographic position, natural resources, ancient history and cultural achievements of the praised city. This path was carefully and masterly followed by Aristides in the praise of Smyrna. So with fluent clauses he describes the unique beauty of the Smyrnan Gulf, the shape of the city on the sea together with the hills, the remarkable size and richness of the temples, the glory and frequency of gymnasia and theaters, the special importance of porticoes and squares, the huge number of thermal buildings and the natural virtues of pools and fountains. We come face to face here with the life of great provincial towns in Roman imperial ages. But a purely rhetorical description could not have been so relevant, had the speech been composed only of elegant topics. This is not the case: the actual image of the city was neither obscured nor mystified by Aristides under rhetoric cogency.

Of course, we can no more connect his words with the monuments, except for the case of the Agora (which survives in a reconstruction later than Aristides' epoch): but the role played by cultural and entertaining buildings like gymnasia and theaters and odea can be easily recognized in other sources, primarily in inscriptions. The grandeur of the city temples, for example, can be seen at best in the numismatic evidence. The place of squares and porticoes as the best area for civic 'sociability' was thoroughly studied for other Roman cities: so we may confidently transfer such results to Smyrna. The problem is therefore not in the rhetoric and topical character of Aristides' Smyrna: his praise of the city covers real aspects of the actual city life. Nonetheless, what could be seen as affecting the reliability of this portrait is Aristides' omissions. Describing and praising the city, the speaker was supposed to avoid mentioning unimportant or improper details. The search for the rhetorical opportunity (*kairos*), led obviously to emphasize the best face of the subject. Therefore, when recognizing the reliability of what is said, one may consider, or try to discover, what Aristides did not see (or did not say) in his praise of Smyrna.

The first element is probably that of the 'Roman' buildings. Let us consider here the whole group of five orations. One of them, the *Letter*, was addressed to a 'Roman' recipient; two of them to a 'mixed' audience (the Roman governor and the populace of Smyrna), the another two to a purely Greek public (the city of Smyrna and the delegates of the provincial Council). It is worth noticing, that in all the *Smyranean Orations* Smyrna is described as a city whose exterior aspect is mainly (or only) a Greek one. As is common knowledge, the impact of the Roman rule on provincial art and architecture in Asia Minor is not so easy to recognize. This matter was discussed in the seminal book edited by Susan Alcock some years ago, and more recent books still add themes to the analysis of this topic. Now, no bridges and no roads are recorded as part of the image of Smyrna in Aristides' writings. But, we know that he was well aware of the peculiar importance of these structures in the construction of a 'Roman' identity: in his great speech 'In praise of Rome' Aristides shows specific interest in them. Nothing of it is to be found in the Smyranean texts: nevertheless, we learn from other sources that those structures did actually exist in the city, as they are recorded especially in the epigraphic evidence. The same is true for a third missing aspect: no amphitheaters, which mean no gladiatorial games,

are recorded by Aristides. However, we actually know that those games were held, and attended to by large audiences: but the cultural, not only the monumental image of Smyrna, is built only with Greek bricks.

This creates a sort of 'deformation', which is provided with significance. Among the 'Roman buildings', only the provincial temple is alluded to by Aristides in his Letter to the Emperors (that is to say, in the most 'Roman' of these texts): but this reference too is cautious, hidden in an elaborated periphrasis which conceals which sort of cult was worshipped in it (namely that of Rome and the Emperors). And the mention of this temple, indeed, is made as it reveals the peculiar and consistent Roman support for the city: "[Smyrna] was said to have obtained the temple, which has now sunk beneath the ground, with such distinction, that while Asia was preferred to all other provinces in the contests, Smyrna was preferred to the cities in Asia to such an extent, that the rest of Asia took only seven votes, but the city alone received four hundred" (19.13). The reliability of this account is granted by Tacitus (*Ann.* 4.56), who preserves the context, too, of this wondrous achievement: the competition between the major cities of Asia for the right of having the provincial temple installed. It was the year 26 AD. More than one century later, Smyrna could celebrate that event as a sign of distinction, not of submission. The shape of the temple, whose location is not precisely recognized, was represented on Smyranean coins, which displayed the proud title of Smyrna as 'temple-warden' (*neokoros*) of the provincial temple. Later, under Hadrian's reign, the city gained the dignity of a second 'neokoria', which is passed under silence by Aristides.

So we are forced to admit that the description of the city conceals the actuality of Roman rule when the speech is held in front of a Greek as well as Roman audience. The present of Smyrna, as referred to in the words of Aristides, shows feeble or any sign of modification because of Rome. Anticipating here a point to be discussed later, we may believe that, paradoxically, Rome is visible more in the past, which is to say, in the historic memory of Smyrna, than in the present. The only Roman figure is that of the Emperor: but in this case as well, he is described in a 'Hellenistic' way, marking no stress on the Empire. Imperial visits to the city, of course, are recorded by Aristides, but they are not so different from the 'parousia' of a Hellenistic king, and their significance is stressed mostly as a premise of personal gracefulness, and as proof of Smyranean greatness.

Other reticences too can be discovered in the rhetoric image of the city: Smyrna is evoked as a unit, but in other sources we can find obscure hints to a division between the ‘hightown’ and ‘downtown’, and the epigraphic evidence also refers to smaller unities [*geitoniai*] as characterizing social life in Smyrna. Nothing of that is considered by Aristides. His own is, one may say, an abstract view. Aristides does not focus any difference among the population: non-Greek inhabitants are simply ignored, even if we know from literary sources that many citizens from abroad (included many Romans, and Jews) lived in Smyrna. The same may be true of the hasty treatment of the ‘practical’, or ‘banausical’ side of the city: very few and generic words are devoted to the harbor and to the economic life of Smyrna. This depends perhaps from a cultural despise towards ‘practical life’, but becomes also another element of distortion. The ‘jewel of Ionia’ appears perfect and isolated – perfect because isolated. Therefore, a further striking sign of the highly selective (and ‘ideological’) portrait of Smyrna in Aristides’ writings, can be recognized in the dichotomy between city and territory, which is contrary to the Greek perception of that reality. Smyrnan suburbs, well known to Aristides, and sometimes referred to in other writings of his, are strictly excluded from his praise of Smyrna. Again, the image of the city is constructed not only by reshaping the reality according to the rhetorical rules, but also omitting what could be unfair or improper to mention. So, the picture we gather from the five speeches is a significant one, not only because of what is expressed, but also because of what is silenced.

Let us consider now the other panel of my ‘dyptich’, I mean the past. Reconsidering the ‘historic’ sections included in the Smyrnan Orations enables us to understand the form of the cultural image and identity, which the Smyrneans proposed to themselves, to their provincial neighbors, and to their Roman rulers. Selective and significant hints to the past are supposed to be at their place in the official speeches, as the ‘origins’ of the city were among the appropriated topics to be treated in those texts. But the other orations, too, that is to say the ‘Monody’, the ‘Letter’ and the ‘Palinody’, show keen interest to the past of Smyrna, in a wide range of historical allusions, going from the remote time of the mythical past to the recent events of the Hellenistic and Roman times. Their aim was not that of a systematic reconstruction of the local history, much more that of providing a collection of exemplary deeds and of cast-

ing the frame of values, that should tie speaker and audience into a community.

The selection of the past shows a large prevailing of the archaic epoch, doubtless to be connected to the archaistic revival in the 2nd century AD. Then we find references to Alexander the Great and the Diadochoi, and some hints to the age of the Roman wars in Asia Minor. The rich reservoir of local Smyrnan legends offered many opportunities: the rhetoric training accustomed both speaker and audience to a sort of ‘mythological opportunism’, suggesting which version of the legend could be proposed as best fitting the situation (*kairos*). Therefore, on different occasions the rhetor could change his mind relating different (and definitely inconsistent) mythical versions. Nothing to do, to be sure, with history: since there was no research on the past. The form proper to the historical exemplum was always assertive, not problematic. Nor could this shifting image disturb any alleged ‘rational’ Roman approach: as Simon Swain fittingly said, “tradition was also what the Romans wanted to find in the Greek world”.

Smyrne was proud of its ancient foundation: the cult of mythical *oikistai* is a typical aspect of civic identity in the Greek cities of the Roman Empire, as numismatic evidence shows at length. More than praising autochthony, like in the Athenian model, the Smyrneans exalted the threefold origin of their city, and the miraculous blend of its inhabitants. Smyrna was “like a colony and a mother city to itself” [17.2ss], giving Pelops to the Peloponnese, but receiving Theseus from Athens. First was the city founded on the Sypilos mountain, then the ‘middle’ town, third the modern one. Aristides’ interest in Alt-Smyrna, the spot in modern Bayrakli excavated by Akurgal, is due only to the glorious legends connected to that spot. One may ask whether this most ancient part of the civic history was recovered in order to strengthen the Hellenic nature of the city. This could be of importance, due to the revaluation of ‘ancient Greekness’ especially in connection with the Hadrian’s Panhellenic program. But to our knowledge, Smyrna was not member of the Panhellenic league, and we cannot ascertain why. The multifarious tale of the Smyrnan antiquities allowed, nevertheless, a large variety of tales. While speaking to different audiences, Aristides chose in his Orations different versions of the ancient Smyrnan legends, varying the mythical approach within the same conceptual frame.

The second moment recognized as highly significant in this selection of the local past was the age of Alexander.

As stated by Strabo himself, the Macedonian conqueror was considered the (re)founder of modern Smyrna. It was traditionally believed that he moved the city to its present location, as a consequence of a wondrous and ominous dream. So Aristides [20.7]: “It is told that the sleep of Alexander was the prelude to the city’s foundation”. The legend is at best to be read in Pausanias [7.5.1]. “Alexander was hunting on the Pagus mountain: on the way back, it is told, he arrived to the shrine of the Nemeseis, and found in front of it a pool and a plate–tree, which grew close to the water. And as he was asleep under the tree, the Nemeseis appeared to him, and ordered him to found a town on that spot, moving there the Smyrneans from their previous city”. The oracle of Claros gave a good answer, and the city had its rebirth.

The scene of the young conqueror sleeping is known from several Smyranean coins of the imperial age. The circularity between texts and coins is remarkably strong: a civic monument, perhaps located in the vicinity of the Agora, is supposed to form the basis of both tales and coins. Together with Alexander, the two local goddesses, the Nemeseis, are linking past and present: the peculiar double divinity was worshipped in Smyrna, as shown by many dedications, mainly from the Agora. In that legend, so often repeated, we see the meaning of the past for the present identity of Roman Smyrna. The glory of having been (re)founded by Alexander was beyond any doubt considered a premise of the superiority of Smyrna in comparison to the other cities of Asia. The quarrel which divided for a long time Ephesus, Pergamum and Smyrna, is witnessed inside the corpus of Aristides: a special oration (23 Keil) is just devoted ‘To the concord’ between the three cities. In the Smyranean Orations the pride of the city is expressed without being hindered by political opportunity. Thus the re–founding by Alexander could be celebrated without caring about its historicity. A less famed, but more reliable tradition, attributed the transfer of Smyrna, depopulated or reduced to a village after the Cymmerian invasions in 7th century B. C., to Lysimachus, the precarious king of Thrace and Western Asia Minor, fallen in battle at Cyroupedion in 281 B. C. This deed is preserved by Strabo, but survives neither in the tradition of 2nd century AD, nor in other monumental, epigraphic or numismatic evidence. Lysimachus, it is true, was a rather shadowy personality, which did not attract local traditions, being largely overwhelmed by the more popular myth of Alexander. Only in Ephesus, in the age of Trajan, was the souvenir of Lysimachus still regarded as significant,

and included in civic festivals. In Aristides’s speeches, therefore, Lysimachus is barely mentioned. So, two great heroes, Theseus and Alexander, are praised as ancestors of the present glory. Their greatness could not be overwhelmed by any other greatness. With one exception: that of the Roman Emperor. Writing to Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Commodus and begging support for Smyrna after the earthquake which had completely destroyed the city, Aristides chose a very different path, and created a peculiar climax from the ancients to the modern benefactor: [19.11]: “No longer speak to me of Lysimachus or Alexander himself, or Theseus and such myths. But do become the founders of the city yourselves, make it new again, let the whole city in every respect belong to you”.

Dismissing Alexander, Lysimachus and Theseus (in reverse order of chronology and ‘historicity’), on behalf of the ‘new’ founders, Aristides did not only pay homage to a rhetorical commonplace, nor was he simply trying to flatter the Roman masters. His praise for the Emperors was indeed conceived as the best way of connecting past and present: the new heroes, the Caesars, are asked to become the last step in the glorious history of Smyrna. In fact the intervention requested of the Roman rulers is described by Aristides in a pure Hellenistic way. The Emperors are not the symbol of a State, but the newest incarnation of the long series of the benefactors. Their role as civic heroes is perfectly located, and at the top position, in a continuity of wonderful and special attention of greatest men for a great Smyrna.

The imperial aid for the city is connected also with the history of the Roman–Smyranean relations. But the asserted relation between that past and this present is in fact dismissed since, as we saw, the present is not really, but only virtually rooted in the past. What is true for the description of Smyrna, is true also for its Roman link. In the words he addressed to the Emperors, Aristides followed the normal technique of petitions, linking his actual request in the previous relations with the Emperor (as he himself was concerned) and Rome (as the city was concerned). In this occasion, unlike the *Smyranean Speeches*, what we may call the ‘Roman side’ of Smyrna could be fully displayed by Aristides. In Asia Minor Smyrna had been among the first cities to create a strong diplomatic alliance with Rome, early in the 2nd century B.C. It may be noticed here, that such a remote event is presented as a dangerous challenge for Smyrna. The city is said to have faced at that time the opposition of other Asian cities because of its choice towards Rome. This is a

common rhetorical assessment: the braveness shown in the past becomes now the strongest argument to ask for Roman help. The same is true for the other allusions to the mutual relations. Only favorable deeds, to be sure, are recorded, without any hint to the 'real' contexts. For example, the troubled years of the Aristonicus revolt, after Attalus' legacy to Rome, became in Aristides' words simply a proof of Smyranean loyalty towards Rome, without mention of any ambiguous attitude, which we know from other sources. Even worse, perhaps, is the case of Mithradates. No reference to the popularity gained by the 'Cappadocian' king among the Greeks of Asia, no allusion to the Smyrneans collaborating with the enemy, no hint to the fact that Smyrna actually fell under Mithradates' rule, no record of the bloody pogrom against the Italics, nor of the harsh and repressive Roman reconquista. A unique episode is exhibited [19.11]:

"The city deserves to be saved not only for its appearance, but also for the goodwill which it displayed toward you Romans at all times, joining you in the war against Antiochus, joining you in the one against Aristonicus, enduring sieges and fighting in no small battles, of which there were still now memorials in its gates. Further, when your army needed clothing and your general had been slain, they brought the general into the city and buried him within the present gates, and they distributed their shirts to the soldiers, one man giving his one to another".

Despite its anecdotal flavor, this last episode had a central significance in the 'diplomatic' history of Smyranean-Roman relations: it reoccurred, in fact, more or less in the same form, in the speech of the Smyranean delegates in front of the Senate in the years of Tiberius, asking for permission to build the temple consecrated to the cult of Rome (Tac. *ann.* 4.56). It is easy to understand the reasons which brought Smyrna to construct a story of consistent and continuous goodwill towards Rome, without affecting the dignity of the ancient, free, and proud Greek polis. Let us remember, by the way, that in these lines of the letter another small 'archaeological' element calls for attention. I mean the 'memorials', the *hypomnemata*, referred to both by Aristides and Tacitus. One may think of epigraphic dossiers, like in Aphrodisias, displaying in a public place the documents on which rested the rights and privileges of city. Nor

should we see in that fact a 'Roman' sign: it is fully a 'Hellenistic' one, as in the case of the Athena temple in Priene, for example.

As it was the case of the provincial temple, which was discussed above, it is civic identity that plays the first role in organizing the memory of the past and constructing by that way the conscience of the present. That implies obvious reticence. When he wrote to the Emperors calling for help after the terrible earthquake of 178 AD, Aristides chose again a 'Hellenistic' rather than a 'Roman' way of doing it, since he spoke of Roman Emperors as citizens, seeking to restore their own polis, rather than representatives of a 'foreign' dominating state. So he could again describe Smyrna as if it still were the 'traditional', autonomous city, embedding and concealing in the same time the reality of the Roman rule. He did not quote previous imperial donations to the city, as the large gift of marbles and columns granted to Smyrna by Hadrian when the great Polemon asked for it: Aristides tried to show that Smyrna was worth every care by the Emperors, and that their evergetism towards the loyal city was a duty as well.

It was a subtle and fragile attempt, it is true: among the moderns, it arose suspect, or despise. But we cannot dismiss it. No balance of false and true is at its place here. The old and destroyed Smyrna, as well as the new city born to a new life for the concurrent help of Roman government and of provincial structures, built its identity through a peculiar and selective choice of deeds, more linked to shared memory than to historical reality. Before and after the fall, Smyranean evaluation of a past conciliated the civic pride and identity with the loyalty to Rome.

The archaeological history of Smyrna hinders at the moment (as perhaps in the future) an autoptic control of the actual situation: in reassessing the importance of Aristides' speeches I tried to propose a slightly modified version of Louis Robert's advice. The great French epigraphist stressed the necessity of connecting 'the earth and the paper', *la terre et le papier*, that is to say ancient monumental and written evidence. For Smyrna we may dare to do the reverse, connecting the paper (Aristides' orations, as well as other texts) to the earth (the archaeological evidence), in order to understand the historical importance of literary tradition and in the same moment to recover an image of the destroyed city. Thus we may hope to restore a virtual image, of course: as virtual was, after all, the one spoken by Aristides, too.

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