



Imperial Cult and Imperial Representation in Roman Cyprus

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Takashi Fujii

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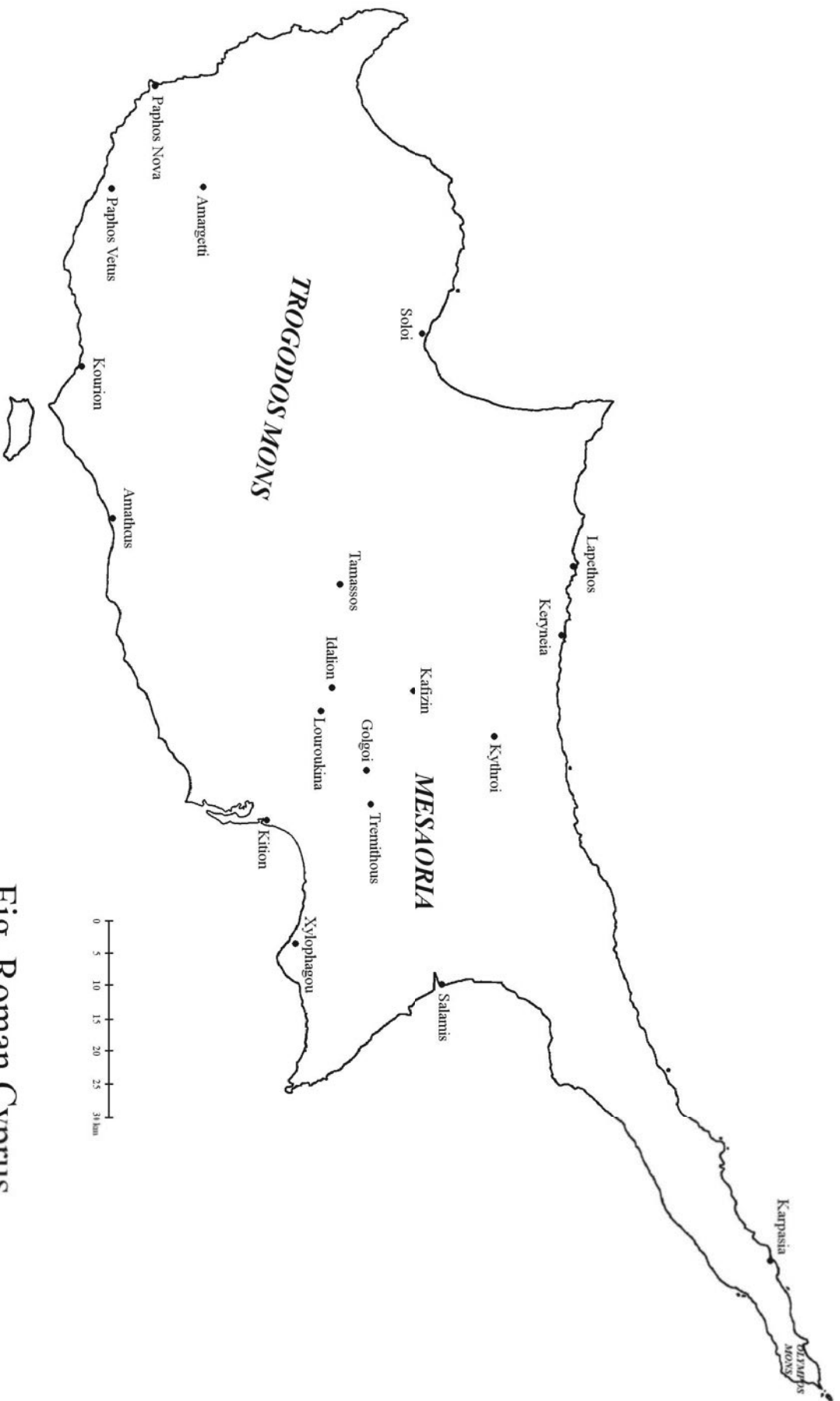


Fig. Roman Cyprus

INTRODUCTION

1. THE AIM OF THE PRESENT STUDY AND ITS BACKGROUND

The aim of the present study is to examine the imperial cult and other types of imperial representation in Cyprus while it was under Roman rule from the end of the first century BCE to the end of the third century CE. Cyprus, the third largest island in the Mediterranean, came under Roman domination in the latter half of the first century BCE (see below), and worshipped the Roman emperor throughout the imperial period, as was the case in other provinces. The Cypriots set up imperial statues, founded altars and sanctuaries to the emperor, undertook rituals and festivals in his honour, introduced a calendar in honour of imperial family members, and so on. The present study, based primarily on epigraphic evidence from the island, attempts to illustrate how the Cypriots worshipped and represented the Roman emperor and what kind of communication between the emperor and the Cypriots originated from the imperial cult, paying special attention to the local peculiarities of Cypriot society and its religious world as formative settings for the performance of the imperial cult (for Roman Cyprus, see figure).

This study can be placed at the confluence of two relatively recent trends in Ancient History, i.e. revised approaches to the imperial cult and the concept of Romanisation, with both of which scholars have vigorously been engaged since the latter half of the twentieth century.

The imperial cult, the worship of the emperor and his family members, was performed all over the Empire, both in its eastern and western parts, as well as in the Italian peninsula.¹ Cultic activities of provincials in honour of the emperor as god were (and still are in part) regarded as an expression of political loyalty and profane homage to the emperor, and not as a religious phenomenon.² The inhabitants of the Empire worshipped the emperor, but without the ‘intense mental par-

- 1 The concept of ‘the imperial cult’ as a cult demarcated by other types of cults did not exist in the Roman period, but is an invention of modern scholars. In the present study, ‘the imperial cult’ means a variety of cultic activities having dead and living emperors and imperial family members as its targets, often merging with cultic activities for traditional deities. For the definition of ‘the imperial cult’ and its problematic character, see Beard, North and Price 1998, 169; Scheid 2001, 85, n. 1; Gradel 2002, 1–26. For publications on the imperial cult until the mid-1970s, see Bickerman, Habicht et al. 1973; Herz 1978; Wlosok 1978. Also cf. Herz 2007b. Major works which have thereafter appeared include: Hopkins 1978, 197–242; Price 1984a; Price 1987; Fishwick 1987–2005; Wörrle 1988; Friesen 1993; Campanile 1994; Small 1996; Spawforth 1997; Beard, North and Price 1998, 348–63; Clauss 1999; Gradel 2002; Cancik and Hitzl 2003; Chaniotis 2003a; Burrell 2004; Millar 2004; Bernett 2007; Kantiréa 2007; Rüpke 2007; Witulski 2007; Pfeiffer 2010; Gordon 2011; Lozano 2011; Frija 2012.
- 2 Taylor 1931, 237–38; Nock 1934, 481–82; Bowersock 1965, 112–21; Liebeschuetz 1979, 77–79.

ticipation of the congregation at a Jewish or Christian service'.³ As for the Greek-speaking part of the Empire, in particular, a long-standing prejudice against the Greeks plays a role in evaluating the imperial cult there: the Greeks, having lost the true religiosity of 'ancient' Greece, degenerated into mere flatterers under the Roman Empire, and were, accordingly, never reluctant to venerate the emperor as god.⁴ The imperial cult was no more than a testimony of *Graeca adulatio*, i.e. servile flattery on the part of the Greeks living under Roman domination.⁵

Simon Price's seminal work on the imperial cult in Asia Minor, published in 1984, has forced these views of the imperial cult to be revised.⁶ According to him, seeing the cult of the emperor as a superficial religious skin covering real political purposes without any religious sincerity stems from the 'Christianizing' attitude of modern scholars, in whose view religiosity lies only in an individual's internal belief in God and this personal faith should be clearly separated from social and political dimensions of life. He argues instead that we must understand the cult of the emperor as an amalgam of religion and politics, which was thought of as inseparable in antiquity. The inhabitants of the eastern provinces intended to represent the political reality of the Empire to themselves by placing the emperor in their traditional *panthea* of gods, which, in turn, made it possible for them to communicate with each other and with the imperial centre by means of a religious vocabulary. The imperial cult, as a ritual aspect of power, constituted 'a major part of the web of power that formed the fabric of society'.⁷

The Romanisation of the provinces, which, in its broadest sense, denotes the extension of Roman and Italian civilisation, language and culture in the Empire, represents another theme underlying this study. Since the latter half of the twentieth century, particularly from the 1980s onwards, scholars have paid more attention to indigenous cultures and local elites as formative factors in building up provincial cultures (more or less) under Roman influence, rather than insisting on a monolithic picture of Romanisation as a unilateral civilising process from the centre to the periphery.⁸ This point is important, particularly with regard to the Romanisation of the eastern provinces, since they had already established well-developed political systems, sophisticated cultures and time-honoured religions before experiencing the process of Romanisation. Thus, Greg Woolf rightly concludes in his article on the Romanisation of the East that 'Greeks, however, seem to have been more selective [than the western provinces] in their adoption of styles and innovations of Roman origin'.⁹

3 Liebeschuetz 1979, 81–82. See also Latte 1960, 312–26.

4 Syme 1979, 570. Cf. Price 1984a, 17–19.

5 Syme 1939, 473–74. Cf. Bowersock 1965, 12.

6 Price 1984a.

7 Price 1984a, 248. Cf. Gordon 2011, 40–44.

8 For the history of studies on Romanisation, see Woolf 1998; Woolf 2001.

9 Woolf 1993–94, 127. Ostenfeld and Blomqvist have developed this point by arguing that 'they [i.e. the Greeks] did not give up their civilization and identity, but rather reinterpreted the Roman power in Greek terms: e.g. as a Hellenistic Empire' (see Ostenfeld and Blomqvist

Given the fact that the provincials worshipped the Roman emperor, who usually resided in the capital, it is no wonder that the imperial cult has been studied in close relation to the concept of Romanisation. For example, an article from the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* makes an explicit statement about the imperial cult in the eastern provinces of the Empire as an important indicator of Romanisation: ‘The Roman ruler-cult, [...] whose origins lay in a collaboration between the Roman authorities, especially provincial governors, and the upper classes of the eastern provinces, and which evolved a new form of politico-religious expression within the framework of imperial rule, had an enormous impact. [...] Much of the “Romanness” of a city of the eastern provinces during the imperial period could therefore be traced directly to the institution of emperor-worship’.¹⁰

However, placing the imperial cult of the East in the perspective of Romanisation is no easy task. Provided that Romanisation was not a unilateral civilising process from the centre to the periphery, we must accordingly take into account many factors which affected the establishment and performance of the imperial cult in the provinces, e.g. authorities who introduced the cult (the emperor, Roman magistrates or provincials?); local religious settings against which the emperor was accommodated as god; and historical and contextual changes that the imperial cult experienced. Angelos Chaniotis’ theoretical approach to the dissemination of cults in the Roman Empire, in which the mobility of people, cultures and cults reached their peak in the ancient periods, is particularly worthy of attention here. According to him, the introduction of new cults (including the imperial cult) had two dimensions, i.e. cult transfer and ritual transfer. The former denotes the transfer of the cult of a god to a region where the deity was not known before, while the latter concerns the transfer of cult practices to a new region. The transfer of rituals occurred in two ways: a specific ritual could be disseminated from one region to another (transfer in a geographical sense), and from one context to another (transfer in a metaphorical sense).¹¹ The imperial cult of the provinces, at first sight, seems to have been the first category of transfer, i.e. cult transfer, since the provincials worshipped the emperor who lived and died (and was subsequently deified) in the capital of the Empire. This assumption only partially holds true. For the worship of the living emperor as god (the main target of veneration in the East) occurred primarily in provinces,¹² which suggests that the imperial cult did not transfer straightforwardly from the centre to the periphery. Rather, the concept of ritual transfer, its subdivision ‘transfer in a metaphorical sense’ in particular, is useful in assessing the imperial cult of provinces. As we shall see in this study, the ritual practices of the imperial cult – setting up statues, dedicating sacrifices, singing hymns, and so on – were never novel phenomena in the East, but already known as rituals for traditional deities and, in part, for the Hellenistic ruler. It was

2002, 20). For the Romanisation of the East, see also Alcock 1993; Alcock 1997; Woolf 1997; Ostfeld 2002; Pilhofer 2006; Chaniotis 2008b.

10 Mitchell 2012.

11 Chaniotis 2009a, 19–24.

12 However, see also Gradel 2002.

their contexts that changed in the Roman period. In terms of ritual transfer in a metaphorical sense, we must undertake a careful investigation into local religious milieus surrounding the provincials who took part in the imperial cult (as priests, *evergetai*, or mere participants) and their social settings, which contributed to bringing about ritual transfer according to their own traditions, interests and expectations. In other words, we are dealing with imperial *cults* originating from a metaphorical ritual transfer which was itself nuanced by the religious and social conditions of the region or people concerned.¹³

Influenced, to a greater or lesser extent, by the revised approaches to the imperial cult and the model of Romanisation, some works have appeared about the imperial cult of a province or a region and the communication between provincials and the emperor that the imperial cult fostered. These works tend to focus on distinctive local diversities in the imperial cult's historical development, the roles of civic elites, and the relationship between the imperial cult and local religious systems.¹⁴ This present study can be placed along the same lines as these works, in that it attempts to accommodate the Cypriot imperial cult in the local religious and social settings of the island and to clarify how and to what extent the imperial cult served as a forum for communication between the Cypriots and the emperor. But why Cyprus? I must confess that this province was selected on technical grounds, in part at least: there has been no comprehensive work on this theme (see below); and the manageable number of inscriptions – though they offer an amazing variety – best fit a dissertation of this scale (see below and the appendix). Of course, filling in missing bits with a tiny book is not my primary purpose. More important reasons for this choice will be fully explained in the next section.

2. ROMAN CYPRUS AND ITS IMPERIAL CULT

In the first half of the first century BCE, during which the Romans increasingly extended their power and influence in the eastern part of the Mediterranean, Cyprus, at that time under Ptolemaic rule, does not seem to have attracted the particular political and economic interest of the Romans.¹⁵ It was not until the annexation of Cyprus in the Roman dominion in 58 BCE that the island entered a constant relationship with Rome. Presumably, the annexation of Cyprus was not a consequence of a grand strategy by Rome, but can be attributed to the personal ambition of P. Clodius Pulcher, who, as *tribunus*, introduced a measure to provincialise the island and confiscate the treasures of Ptolemy, the king of Cyprus.

13 Beard, North and Price 1998, 348, underline this point: '[practices which related the emperor to the gods] are very diverse, because they were located in very different contexts. That is, there is no such thing as "the imperial cult".'

14 See, e.g. Spawforth 1997 (Athens); Gradel 2002 (Italy); Lozano 2002 (Athens); Chaniotis 2003a (the East); Bernett 2007 (Judaea); Kantiréa 2007 (Greece); Pfeiffer 2010 (Egypt).

15 For the outline of the history of Roman Cyprus that follows below, see Hill 1949, 226–56; Mitford 1980a; Watkin 1988; Potter 2000. For Ptolemaic Cyprus, see Hill 1949, 173–211; Roesch 1980; Mehl 1995a; 1995b; 1996a; 1996b; 1998; 2000; Cayla and Hermay 2003.

Thereafter, the government of Cyprus changed frequently in accordance with the course of the Civil War – the island was governed as an annex to the province Kilikia until 48/7 BCE, the year in which Caesar returned the ownership of the island to Ptolemaic Egypt, and Mark Antony confirmed the Ptolemaic domination of Cyprus after having (probably) assigned the island to the Roman province Kilikia. Octavian's victory in Actium in 31 BCE put an end to the unsettled situation – Cyprus, with its old master Egypt, came under Roman domination. It seems that the *legati* of Augustus were in charge of the administration of Cyprus until 23/22 BCE. In that year Cyprus was returned to the senate as a public province, whose administration became the responsibility of *proconsules* of praetorian rank, in co-operation with *quaestores*, *legati pro praetore*, and *procuratores* of the emperor, and other minor magistrates. No legion was permanently stationed on the island throughout the Roman period, which constitutes a clear contrast to the Ptolemaic period. The traditional civic institutions of Cyprus, on the other hand, continued to exist: twelve or thirteen *poleis* on the island, as had been the case since the Classical period (though to a lesser extent under Ptolemaic rule in the Hellenistic period), administrated themselves with political organs (*boule* and *demos*) and magistracies such as *archon*, *gymnasiarchos*, *agonothetes*, *agoranomos*, *hierous* and so on. These offices were mainly held by civic elites with or without Roman citizenship: some may have maintained their socio-political importance since the Classical period, while some may have come to their eminence in the Roman period.¹⁶ There was no Roman colony on Cyprus, as far as the current evidence is concerned. The league of Cypriot cities, the *koinon*, which came into existence in the Hellenistic period,¹⁷ performed an important role in communication between the Cypriots and the Empire, particularly in the performance of the imperial cult, which will be discussed in this study.

Scholars have characterised Roman Cyprus as a time of 'quiescence', in which the island no longer functioned as a place of great strategic importance for the Empire, and the influence of the island on the Mediterranean world was also very limited, a clear contrast to Cyprus before Ptolemaic rule.¹⁸ In the Roman period, the island enjoyed relative economic prosperity in peace, without any political and strategic interference from the central government.¹⁹ *Proconsules* who governed the island, generally unpromising senators, rarely proceeded to higher status after their service in Cyprus,²⁰ while very few Cypriots could find a way

16 Kantiréa 2011, 252.

17 Cf. Cayla and Hermary 2003, 241.

18 Mitford 1980a, 1383; Potter 2000, 763.

19 For the economic importance of Roman Cyprus, see Michaelides 1996.

20 Those who advanced to the consulship after their service in Cyprus include: L. Tarius Rufus; Paullus Fabius Maximus?; A. Plautius?; C. Ummidius Durmius Quadratus; T. Clodius Eprius Marcellus; L. Annius Bassus; C. Calpurnius Flaccus; [Tib.] Claudius Subatia[nus Proculus?]. For more details on these *proconsules*, see Mitford 1980a, 1299–305; Eck 1972–73, 250–53; Potter 2000, 787–96.

into the Empire-wide aristocracy outside the island.²¹ Accordingly, Cyprus has been seen as a modest and ‘uninteresting’ province without any historical importance.

The imperial cult in Roman Cyprus has, correspondingly, drawn relatively little attention of scholars. Although Terence Mitford and David Potter have touched on the topic in their general descriptions of Roman Cyprus, their approaches only (and rather superficially) concern the social and historical aspects of worship of the emperor.²² The sole substantial work on the theme is Maria Kantiréa’s paper that appeared in 2008.²³ On the basis of the revised approach to the imperial cult that has been common from Price’s breakthrough onwards, she underlines the combination of religion and politics as the *raison d’être* of the imperial cult: ‘[...] elle [i.e., the imperial cult] visait, surtout, à véhiculer des idées, des valeurs et des principes sur lesquels l’empereur fonda et justifia son pouvoir, et, par conséquent, à dissimuler, sous une forme religieuse, la nécessité historique de la domination romaine’.²⁴ According to this perspective, Kantiréa focuses on the civic elites of Cyprus – in particular those of the two most important cities of the island, Paphos and Salamis – as ‘«intermédiaires culturels» entre les dieux, les empereurs et leurs compatriotes’ who, as *euergetai* of their cities, held the offices of priests, performed appropriate rituals, and set up monuments concerning the imperial cult.²⁵

Her argument, however, seems to be inadequate on two points. The first point concerns the religious status of the emperor. She proposes two methods the Cypriots adopted to accommodate the emperor in the Cypriot religious framework, i.e. ‘l’assimilation et la cohabitation’ with local deities. However, her interpretation of evidence often relies on conventional patterns of assimilation between the emperor and deities: e.g. the emperor was venerated in the temple of Zeus in Salamis because Zeus ‘était l’équivalent de Jupiter, à qui le prince, en sa qualité de *pater patriae*, était souvent assimilé’.²⁶ Did the Cypriots have a thorough knowledge of the concept of *pater patriae* and its relationship with Zeus? To what extent was the emperor assimilated with the deity? Was there total equality or an uneven status between the two gods? Take another example: according to Kantiréa, the temple of Aphrodite in Paphos continued to retain imperial favour from the Julio-Claudians onwards, which resulted in the co-habitation of Aphrodite and the emperors in the Flavian period as well. However, a piece of evidence that she offers for this argument relates to the co-habitation of Aphrodite and the emperor

21 Only one or two Cypriots of senatorial status are known: Lucius Sergius Arrianos who is represented *synkletikos tribounos* in an inscription from Paphos Vetus (*IGR* 3, no. 960); and Sergia Aurelia Regina, a woman of senatorial rank (*IGR* 3, no. 958; no. 959; *I.Kourion* no. 98). For the latter, see Raepsaet-Charlier 1987, 560–61, no. 700. Cf. Ma 2007b, 91–93. For a possible Cypriot of equestrian order, see Eck 1977, 227–31.

22 Mitford 1980a, 1347–55; 1990, 2194–202; Potter 2000, 817–28.

23 Kantiréa 2008. For her treatment of the imperial cult in Roman Greece, see Kantiréa 2007.

24 Kantiréa 2008, 91.

25 Kantiréa 2008, 92. See also Kantiréa 2011.

26 Kantiréa 2008, 97–98.

Titus in Amathous, not in Paphos.²⁷ Should we not presume a different background for the cults of Aphrodite in Paphos and in Amathous, respectively? Would it not be more fruitful to consider the difference between the two co-habitations in terms of their contexts? We are not dealing with the imposition of a stable imperial ideology on the Cypriot temples, but with the different representations of imperial power in two different sacred contexts within the island. The present study takes a more careful approach, while it fully enquires into the religious status of the emperor, underlining its background settings, case by case.

My second criticism concerns Kantiréa's concluding remarks that focus on the historical development of the Cypriot imperial cult, which is described completely from the imperial perspective: e.g. the cult of Tiberius and his successors 'symbolise l'attachement du prince et de sa *gens* à l'idéologie et aux préceptes moraux du fondateur du Principat', and the alleged renaissance of the imperial cult in the Severan period reflects 'la place importante que la politique impériale accorda de nouveau à Chypre grâce à la prédilection de la dynastie pour l'Orient de l'État romain'.²⁸ These remarks presume that the Cypriots only performed the imperial cult under the influence of the Empire-wide ideology and strategy which was established in the capital far from the island. This approach seems to be invalid in two dimensions. First, we must pay more attention to Cypriot contexts as formative factors of the local imperial cult (see above). Second, we must seek a more effective explanation for the communication between the emperor and the Cypriots through the imperial cult, rather than insisting on the straightforward relationship between the imperial ideology and the Cypriot imperial cult, since we can reasonably assume that Cyprus, as a tiny island attracting fewer interests from the imperial side, may have conducted the imperial cult in a different way from Greece and Asia Minor, the regions with great cities, Hellenic traditions, and, accordingly, intense imperial interests. Thus, the present case study on Cyprus is intended not only to understand the imperial cult on the island in its social and religious contexts, but also to illuminate the diversity of communication through the imperial cult between the centre and the periphery of the Empire, the diversity which derived from differentiated conditions (both socio-religious and political) surrounding ritual transfer in each region.

This last point invites us to touch on the Ptolemaic ruler cult in Hellenistic Cyprus beyond the chronological frame of this study, in order to distinguish old and new elements in the ritual transfer of the imperial cult. The Cypriots, along with Ptolemaic officials and soldiers on the island, offered the Ptolemaic kings and their family divine honours. Most of the rites of this worship were the same as those of the imperial cult, e.g. the setting up of cultic statues, syncretism with indigenous deities, and the foundation of cult places.²⁹ This continuity was a result

27 Kantiréa 2008, 97.

28 Kantiréa 2008, 112.

29 For the Ptolemaic ruler cult in Cyprus, see Hill 1949, 181–86; Bagnall 1976, 38–79; Watkin 1988, 195–418; Anastassiades 1998; Mehl 2000, 742–43; Anastassiades 2001; Hölbl 2001,

of ritual transfer in a metaphorical sense from the Hellenistic ruler cult to the Roman imperial cult; these rituals changed not their contents, but their contexts from the veneration of Ptolemaic kings to that of Roman emperors (see part 1 of the present study). However, in the Ptolemaic cult, there are also elements which differ from the cult of the emperor, especially in terms of the variety of those who participated in the cult: the *strategos*, the Ptolemaic governor on the island, played a central role in the cult as *archiereus* of Cyprus since the reign of Ptolemy V Epiphanes;³⁰ Ptolemaic garrisons on Cyprus, consisting of officers and mercenaries recruited from all over the eastern Mediterranean, set up statues and dedications for the ruler;³¹ and Dionysiac *technitai* were vigorous worshippers of the king, probably in close collaboration with the *technitai* of Egypt.³² The wide variety of cultic agents in Hellenistic Cyprus and their close connection with the royal power and its authorities³³ make a clear contrast to the imperial cult in Roman Cyprus, in which the Cypriots practised the cult in most cases without direct relationships with the emperor and his benefactory acts, and the performance of imperial rituals more and more depended on the shoulders of the higher-ranking Cypriots, though not excluding the involvement of Roman magistrates. It seems reasonable to assume that the difference in ritual agents and their motivations between the Ptolemaic cult and the imperial cult neatly reflects the geo-political status of Cyprus in each period. In the Hellenistic period, Cyprus, which was situated at the crossroads of the eastern Mediterranean and abounded in natural resources (mineral, agricultural, and wood), was the most important foreign possession of the Ptolemaic dynasty. Thus, the island was a scene of political struggles among the *diadochoi*, and also among Ptolemaic kings and queens, and, accordingly, the Ptol-

96, 171–72, 288. For the ruler cult performed in the Greek cities of the Ptolemaic Kingdom, see Habicht 1970, 109–23; Pfeiffer 2008, 31–76.

- 30 For the list of *strategoï* in Hellenistic Cyprus, see Bagnall 1976, 252–62. But, there were also the priests of the ruler cult on the civic level. For a list of them, see Michaelidou-Nicolaou 1976, 164. Cf. Bagnall 1976, 68–73. See chapter 6 of the present study for more detail.
- 31 E.g. *I.Kition* no. 2015 (246–21 BCE, Kition; probably a statue of Berenike, wife of Ptolemy III); *I.Kition* no. 2003 (the end of the second century BCE, Kition; a dedication for Ptolemy IX and his children); *Salamine de Chypre* no. 71 (third or second century BCE, Salamis; a dedication for a Ptolemy and his family); *I.Kition* no. 2024 (145–16 BCE, Kition; Melankomas, an Aitolian soldier, served as priest of the *Theoi Euergetai*; cf. Bagnall 1976, 69–70); *Salamine de Chypre* no. 72 (second century BCE, Salamis; a statue of a Ptolemy); Mitford 1961b, 39, no. 105 (the first century BCE?, Paphos; a fragmentary inscription referring to *basilistai*, probably consisting of soldiers; cf. Buraselis and Aneziri 2004, 175). For the promulgation of the ruler cult by garrisons, see Chaniotis 2002, 106–108; Buraselis and Aneziri 2004, 174–75; Pfeiffer 2008, 51.
- 32 Aneziri 1994, see especially 197–98, no. 7 (105/04 BCE, Paphos; Kallippos as a member of the *technitai* for Dionysos and the *Theoi Euergetai*); no. 8 (105–88 BCE, Paphos; Potamon as a member of the *technitai* for Dionysos and the *Theoi Euergetai*); no. 9 (around the turn of the second century BCE, Paphos; an anonymous as a member of the *technitai* for [Dionysos] and the *Theoi Euergetai*).
- 33 Bagnall 1976, 73: ‘In this domain [i.e. in religious matters] as in others, the cities functioned and acted as Greek *poleis*, but always with a royal official placed in a position of supervision and overall control.’

emies had the powerful *strategoï* of the highest political rank govern Cyprus and allowed garrisons to be stationed under them, both of whom acted as vigorous agents in worshipping the Ptolemaic king. On the other hand, Roman Cyprus remained a modest province in terms of the politics and strategy of the Empire, and thus did not situate in the mainstream of imperial interests and interference, as summarised above. The present study examines this ‘sense of distance’ of Cyprus as a new element in the Roman period which characterised communication through the imperial cult between the centre and the periphery (see part 2 of the present study).

3. THE STRUCTURE OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The present study consists of three parts. The first part will discuss the broad spectrum of religious status of the emperor in Cyprus, paying special attention to relationships between traditional deities and the emperor, and to ritual transfer from the cults of the former to those of the latter. The Cypriots and Roman magistrates (*proconsules* and other magistrates) regarded and portrayed the emperor sometimes as god, sometimes as mortal, and other times as a being between god and mortal, depending on the contexts in which the emperor was placed. The Cypriots and Roman authorities seem to have made visible the different types of imperial religious status, through the deliberate use of imperial epithets and titles (chapter 1), manoeuvres concerning the setting up of imperial statues (chapter 2), and the careful arrangement of imperial monuments at several locations in the civic landscape (chapter 3). The so-called Cypriot oath of allegiance to Tiberius was intended to connect the divinity of Augustus to the local religious tradition of Cyprus (chapter 4). The second part deals with communication between the emperor and the Cypriots through the imperial cult (chapter 5) and the integration of the imperial cult into the socio-political framework in Cyprus (chapter 6). The third and last part enquires into the repetitive and ubiquitous, but at the same time manipulated character of imperial representation in the life of the Cypriots, placing a special emphasis on festivals (chapter 7) and the concept of time (chapter 8). The ‘Cypriots’ in the present study mean in most cases those who lived in Roman Cyprus, with or without Roman citizenship and Roman names, and were affluent enough to perform imperial rituals, set up imperial statues and dedications, and hold the offices of the imperial cult, though I will not exclude the possibility that a wider population of Cyprus may have witnessed or taken part in rituals, enjoyed imperial festivals, and lived in a world imbued with the imperial concept of time. In any case, the majority of the inscriptions considered here concern the activities of higher-ranking Cypriots (and imperial magistrates in several cases), except for some small-scale dedications.

Epigraphic evidence constitutes almost all material available for this study. Several types of Greek inscription (and a dozen Latin inscriptions) from the island – statue bases, dedications, public buildings, milestones, and so on – provide us with a remarkable insight into the various aspects of imperial representation,

which meagre literary texts cannot afford. No corpus of Greek inscriptions from Cyprus has so far been published, except for the collections of inscriptions from Kourion (*I.Kourion*), Salamis (*I.Salamis* and *Salamine de Chypre*), Paphos (*I.Paphos*; unpublished dissertation) and Kition (*I.Kition*). Otherwise, inscriptions have been published separately via the articles of Mitford and other scholars. The most important inscriptions for our purpose are listed, with translations and other information, in the appendix at the end of the present study. In interpreting the texts, I have generally taken a more moderate approach than that of Mitford, who supplemented blanks with sometimes unwarranted – and, in a few cases, purely invented – words.³⁴ As far as possible, I have attempted to avoid arguing ‘a history from square brackets’.

34 Cf. Bagnall and Drew-Bear 1973a and 1973b.

PART 1

THE EMPEROR IN THE WIDE SPECTRUM OF
REPRESENTATION

CHAPTER 1. EMPERORS REPRESENTED IN THE GREEK LANGUAGE

Paul Veyne, in a recent essay on Greco-Roman religion, has formulated its conceptual ‘continuity’ between gods and mortals as follows: ‘Pour monter des hommes aux dieux, on suit un *plus*, on ne file pas vers l’infini. C’est pourquoi les rois hellénistiques et les empereurs romains ont pu être fictivement divinisés [...] on ne transgressait pas de frontière catégorielle quand on passait des hommes aux dieux’.¹ The dichotomy ‘Man and God’, which is characteristic of monotheistic religions, formed no rigid category in the Greek religious system, which provided an important precondition for the imperial cult in the Roman East. Rather than trying to fix an emperor to the absolute and immutable status of a god or mortal, we should address the extent to which he was thought to be a god or mortal, and consider how his status changed from case to case and from inscription to inscription. The aim of this chapter is to investigate the epithets and titles used to describe the emperors in Greek (and several Latin) inscriptions from Roman Cyprus, in order to illuminate the religious position of the emperors and its fluid character in Cypriot religion and society, as mirrored in the language of the inscriptions. The various ways in which emperors and imperial power were represented cannot, in my view, be the product of an arbitrary choice of words in the Greek language. Rather, it reflects the careful attention of Cypriot communities and individuals (the main donors of inscriptions) and Roman magistrates (who seem in some cases to have intervened in the imperial cult and other types of imperial representation on the island), as they tried to accommodate the emperors into proper positions in society and religion through the implications produced by the language of the inscriptions. The present chapter is divided into three sections: first, I consider the epithet *theos* conferred on the emperor; then, the ambiguity concerning the word *Sebastoi*; and, lastly, other imperial epithets.

1.1. THE EMPEROR AS *THEOS*

The Greek word *theos*, whose primary meaning is ‘god’, never permits straightforward semantic interpretation when applied to a Roman emperor. Scholars, e.g. Simon Price and Fernando Lozano, have demonstrated that there was no one-to-one equivalence between *theos* and Latin *divus*, the latter signifying the divine status of an officially consecrated emperor (emperors and their family members could be deified and given the title *divus/diva* after their death, through an official

1 Veyne 2005, 422.

procedure held in the senate and pending the approval of their successors),² and that the epithet *theos* and its implications should be placed in the Greek religious context, given the absence of a central legal procedure in creating a *theos*, in sharp contrast to the official deification of a *divus*.³ The evidence from Roman Cyprus seems in some cases to be compatible with what these scholars have argued concerning *theos*, while in the other cases the use of *theos* appears to follow that of *divus* in describing the emperors who were consecrated posthumously.

We shall begin with Roman milestones found on Cyprus. Tønnes Bekker-Nielsen, in his comprehensive work on the roads of ancient Cyprus, has registered twenty-nine milestones with approximately forty-five Greek and Latin inscriptions spanning four hundred years from Augustus to Jovian.⁴ Two sets of bilingual inscriptions, both of which are concerned with the milestones set up in 198 CE during the reign of Septimius Severus, make clear semantic similarities between Latin and Greek imperial titles.⁵ These four inscriptions (two Greek and two Latin) refer to Severus and Caracalla as the reigning *Sebastoi* and *Augusti*, i.e. without *theos* and *divus*, and to their predecessors as the deified emperors with these titles, including Commodus, Marcus Aurelius, Antoninus Pius, Hadrian, Trajan and Nerva, though the four inscriptions have a few minor discrepancies in their selection of the deified emperors. What can be deduced from a comparison between the Greek and Latin milestone inscriptions is that *theos* is the precise Greek translation of *divus* and that both of these terms had a common legal connotation in that only deceased and subsequently consecrated emperors could hold the titles *theos* and *divus*. The ‘official’ character of the milestones would account for this phenomenon; the city of Paphos supervised the setting up of the milestones and Audius Bassus, as *proconsul* of Cyprus, participated in this procedure.⁶ *Theos*, the Greek synonym of *divus*, could reflect the consecration of the emperor, a political decision made in the capital of the Empire, especially in official and highly formulaic texts like the milestone inscriptions.⁷

2 For the procedures of imperial deification and consecration in the city of Rome, see Price 1987; Claus 1999, 356–68. For the cult of the *divi* in general, see Gradel 2002, 261–371.

3 Price 1984b; Lozano 2007. Cf. Veyne 1962, 57. Chaniotis 2003b is also worth mentioning in terms of the unofficial character of imperial titles in the Roman East. In his article, Angelos Chaniotis has pointed out that the Greeks freely conferred unofficial honorific titles (e.g. *Sebaste* and *Aniketos*) on the emperors and imperial family members and that these unofficial imperial titles, which appear in a cultic context, were not understood as parts of the official name of the emperor, but comparable with epithets of gods for the Greeks.

4 Bekker-Nielsen 2004. For a catalogue of the milestone inscriptions, see 232–76.

5 Bekker-Nielsen 2004, 266–68, no. 24 (fifteen miles from Paphos Nova); 270–72, no. 26 (thirteen miles from Paphos Nova).

6 For the roles of Roman officials in the Cypriot imperial cult, see chapter 5 of the present study.

7 The following milestone inscriptions attest *theoi* and *divi* of the period which we are considering: Bekker-Nielsen 2004, 236–37, no. 3 (Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius); 247–49, no. 13, i (Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, Commodus); 252–53, no. 15, i (Vespasian).