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Patronage in Roman Religious Associations in Italy under the Principate

*Patronat w rzymskich stowarzyszeniach religijnych w Italii
okresu pryncypatu*

ABSTRACT

The relationships between the *cultores deorum* and their patrons seem to meet all the criteria of the classic definition of Roman patronage put forward by A. Wallace-Hadrill. Firstly, there is no doubt that there was a 'reciprocal exchange of goods and services' between the patron and the college. The exchange took place on many levels, and the economic aspect was not necessarily the most important one. Secondly, the exchange was asymmetrical and permanent. In exchange for material and non-material support, colleges bestowed honours on their patrons, which strengthened the social prestige of the latter, at the same time creating a positive image of the colleges themselves. Both sides tried to give their relationship a permanent, formalised, and public character. Traces of these attempts are left not only in the well-documented custom of displaying *tabulae patronatus* in the collegial seat and the patron's house. The patron frequently included information about the corporate patronage in his *cursus honorum*, whereas colleges could honour their patron's birthday with one of the official corporate celebrations. In this way, the relationships between the patron and the college took on features which clearly differentiated them from acts of euergetism, not to mention regular economic transactions. A wealthy, generous, and most importantly influential patron was not only a desirable symbol of prestige for every corporation, but also a guarantee of the efficient functioning of the organisation that could rely on his or her support not only in its daily activity but also in crisis situations. Religious associations had to reconcile themselves to the *homines novi* of the local elites. The patron of the *cultores Herculis* in Interamna Nahars, T. Flavius T.f. Isidorus, who evidently proudly emphasises his promotion to the *ordo equester*, which was the pinnacle of his municipal career, is an excellent example of this phenomenon. Interestingly, the *cultores deorum* looking for patrons for their associations clearly tried to find *ingenui*. Although patrons of religious colleges include some *liberti*, these are rare cases. Wealthy freedmen are usually benefactors of colleges, but the latter did not attach themselves in a permanent way by means of the institution of patronage. This is understandable considering the fact that one of the main tasks of a patron was to represent the college in its contacts with the local

authorities. The servile background of the patron lowered not only the college's prestige but also its chances of successfully defending its interests. The *cultores deorum* were certainly aware of the mechanisms operating in the public life of the community in which they lived. An analysis of how the institution of patronage functioned in religious associations reveals evidence that their members not only knew the traditional system of values, but also completely identified themselves with this system.

Key words: history of the Roman Empire, religious associations, patronage, Latin epigraphy

An inscription found in Regium Lepidum tells us that the governing authorities of the local *collegium fabrum et centonariorum* gathered in the collegial temple decided to coopt (*cooptatio*) a Tullius Iulianus as one of the corporation's patrons. Although he did not hold any public offices, he was reportedly not only a good orator but also a man of many virtues, and his generosity was particularly emphasised. The closing words include a request directed to the patron-elect to accept the function and to forgive the *collegium* for the delay in its decision. It also adds the information that the decree concerning Iulius' patronage was to be published in the form of a bronze patronage tablet put up in the new patron's house (CIL 11, 970)¹.

Although the cited document was not created among the *cultores deorum*, it does provide an insight into the complex mechanism of relationships between a patron and their *collegium*, which in this case assumes the role of a collective client. Reading this inscription gives rise to questions concerning not only many specific issues, such as the criteria and procedure of electing a new patron or the motivations of potential patrons, but also concerning the very essence of corporate patronage. While personal patronage has long been one of the central problems in the studies on the social history of Rome², the phenomenon of patronage over such collectivities as associations or cities remains a phenomenon which has not been properly examined yet³.

¹ This article is an expanded version of Chapter 6 of my book: «*Cultores deorum*». *Stowarzyszenia religijne w Italii w okresie wczesnego cesarstwa (I–III w. n.e.)*, Toruń 2015.

² See mainly R.P. Saller, *Personal Patronage under the Early Empire*, Cambridge 1982; A. Wallace-Hadrill (ed.), *Patronage in Ancient Society*, London 1989.

³ The basic analysis of corporate patronage is still G. Clemente's extensive article, where he mainly discussed in detail the social profile of the personages chosen by *collegia* as patrons (G. Clemente, *Il patronato nei collegia dell'impero romano*, "Studi classici e orientali" 1972, 21, pp. 142–229). See also N. Tran, *Les membres des associations romaines: le rang social des collegiati en Italie et en Gaules, sous le haut-empire*, Rome 2006, pp. 450–459; J. Liu, «*Collegia centonariorum*»: *The Guilds of Textile Dealers in the Roman West*, Leiden–Boston 2009, pp. 213–245; E.A. Hemelrijk, *Patronesses and "mothers" of Roman collegia*, "Classical

The virtually classic definition of patronage in the Roman world proposed by Saller points out three basic characteristic features of this phenomenon⁴. Firstly, patronage implicates a reciprocal exchange of goods and services. Secondly, the relationship between a patron and a client must be personal and long-term, which differentiates patronage from a regular commercial transaction. Thirdly, the relationship is to be asymmetrical – due to the unequal social status of the patron and the client, their responsibilities are different. The definition is a result of studies on personal patronage but, it seems, it can also be the starting point of reflections on corporate patronage as well.

For a collegial patron, the ‘reciprocal exchange of goods and services’ meant, among others, the requirement to support the corporation financially. As we remember, the *fabri* of Regium Lepidum named the candidate’s generosity as one of the features which influenced their decision. The *liberalitas* of their patron is also praised by the *Martenses* of Beneventum (CIL 9, 1685). This generosity could take various forms; from one-time cash or food donations, donations in the form of statues, buildings or land (e.g. burial plots), to commemorative foundations⁵. It should be emphasised that patrons’ obligations in this regard were customary; they stemmed from the prevalent expectation of their generosity, rather than any regulations or official agreements between the patron and the college. Moreover, it seems that monetary support was not the main expectation of *corporati*. Various donations, foundations and endowments for colleges were considerably more often donated by persons who were not collegial patrons⁶. What colleges expected from their patrons was something more than money. *Benevolentia* and *tutela* which an influential patron

Antiquity” 2008, 27, pp. 115–162; eadem, *Hidden Lives, Public Personae: Women and Civic Life in the Roman West*, Oxford 2015, pp. 227–270 (with regard to women as municipal and collegial patronesses). For the eastern part of the Empire, see O.M. van Nijf, *The Civic World of Professional Associations in the Roman East*, Amsterdam 1997, pp. 77–80; idem, *Les élites comme patrons des associations professionnelles dans l’orient romain*, in: M. Cébeillac-Gervasoni, L. Lamoine (eds), *Les élites et leurs facettes. Les élites locales dans le monde hellénistique et romain*, Rome/Clermont-Ferrand 2003, pp. 307–321.

⁴ R.P. Saller, *op. cit.*, p. 1; O.M. van Nijf, *The Civic World*, p. 76; F. Diosono, *Collegia. Le associazioni professionali nel mondo romano*, Roma 2007, p. 71; J. Liu, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

⁵ Apart from the cited inscription from Beneventum (CIL 9, 1685), see CIL 6, 647; 11, 6310. Donations to associations of the *centonarii* are analysed by J. Liu. The 18 donations she mentions include both the ones given to colleges by patrons and the ones where the donors are not defined as patrons (J. Liu, *op. cit.*, pp. 223–224). For various forms of monetary support given to colleges by patrons see G. Clemente, *op. cit.*, pp. 215–219; O.M. van Nijf, *The Civic World*, pp. 108–111.

⁶ Examples of founders of corporate banquets, handouts and commemorative celebrations in P. Wojciechowski, «*Cultores deorum*», pp. 163–166.

could provide to a corporation were more valuable⁷. Colleges which functioned in a municipal space were exposed to numerous conflicts both with the local authorities and other corporations, social groups or private persons. Although in the case of religious corporations the number of possible areas of conflict was smaller than in the case of professional colleges⁸, situations when the association or its members were a party of a dispute were certainly not uncommon. Traces of patrons' intercessions are difficult to see in the source material, for obvious reasons. Usually, only the interested parties knew what meaning was hidden in the laconic formulas such as *ob merita eius* or *patrono benemerenti*, which corporations placed on the monuments honouring their patrons (CIL 9, 2354; 10, 3764; 14, 2633).

The patron's *tutela* on which colleges counted could work efficiently only when the patron had suitable influence and social position, which enabled them to act as a middleman between the college and representatives of the local, and sometimes even imperial, authorities. The number of such influential figures in a given city was naturally limited. Only the largest, most prestigious corporations could count on the patronage of representatives of the local elite. This is well illustrated by an analysis of the social status of the patrons of the *centonarii*. Out of the 75 known patrons of this powerful corporation as many as 70 per cent were representatives of the municipal elite. Patrons of the *collegia centonariorum* include not only numerous members of the *ordo decurionum* and even more numerable *equites*, but also several senators⁹. The status of the patrons of religious colleges was far more modest. The patrons of the *cultores deorum* associations known from inscriptions do not include senators, and the mentioned *equites* probably did not belong to the elite of their order. They all started their career on the municipal level, and the scope of their activity rarely went beyond the local context. One of the most spectacular careers was that of the patron of the *cultores Iovis Arkani* of Praeneste, P. Acilius Paulus, who could boast holding a number of public functions, from the *sevir* to the highest municipal offices (*duumvir*) and curatorships (*annonae*,

⁷ See E.A. Hemelrijk, *Patronesses and "mothers"*, pp. 135–136; J. Liu, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

⁸ One of the best-known examples of such a conflict was the dispute between the Roman *fullones* and *fontani*; we know its details thanks to a long inscription put up by P. Fortunatus, who was the *quinquennalis perpetuus* in the *collegium fontanorum* (CIL 6, 266; see P. Wojciechowski, *Czyciele Herkulesa w Rzymie. Studium epigraficzno-antroponomastyczne (I–IV w. n.e.)*, Toruń 2005, pp. 266–267, no 29).

⁹ J. Liu, who conducted this analysis, writes about 65 per cent, but the percentage of representatives of the elite will markedly rise if we also treat the *Augustales* as part of the elite, especially those who received *ornamenta decurionalia*, and members of families of *decuriones* (J. Liu, *op. cit.*, p. 220).

muneris publicis, kalendarii)¹⁰. In turn, the patron of the *collegium cultores Herculis* of Interamna Nahars, T. Flavius T.f. Isidorus, clearly proudly emphasises his advancement to the *ordo equester*, which was the pinnacle of his long municipal career (CIL 11, 4209)¹¹. The highest municipal offices were also achieved by L. Pompeius Felicissimus, member of the *cultores Iovi Optimi Maximi Suessulani* (CIL 10, 3764)¹², and a patron of the *collegium Veneris* whose name is unknown (CIL 10, 228). Collegial patrons also include those who aspired to the municipal elite or occupied its lowest tiers. In this category, I would include first of all the two *seviri Augustales* of Aesernia who patronised the local *collegia* of the worshippers of Hercules and the Genius of the city (CIL 9, 2678 and 2679). In turn, M. Fremedius Severus and Blassia Vera of Pisaurum tried to find their place among the upper classes of Pisaurum (CIL 11, 6310). A modest meal for the *cultores Iovis Latii* and a gift of two denarii for each member of this college was probably the price they had to pay for the honour of patronising this religious corporation¹³.

The last examples show that not all colleges managed to secure patrons who belonged to the very elite of the *municipium*¹⁴. Colleges had to compete for the attention of the most influential figures in the city, such as Paullus, Isidorus or Pompeius Felicissimus, not only against other corporations but also against other collectivities functioning in the city, including the *civitas* itself. A result of this unfair competition could have been a compromise consisting in the patron providing support to a larger number of colleges and other collective clients (usually *civitates*). Limiting ourselves to just the circle of cult associations, we can name several

¹⁰ CIL 14, 2972. Sex. Minus Sex.f. Ter(etina) Silvanus, patron of an association which described itself as *contubernium Veneris*, could also boast holding two curatorships – CIL 9, 2354.

¹¹ Although this inscription was put up by the *cultores*, it seems unlikely that they did not take into consideration the expectations of the honoured man with regard to the content of the inscription.

¹² Felicissimus appears as the patron of a group describing itself as the *Hortenses*, but it seems that the *cultores Iovis Optimi Maximi Suessulani* could also count on his protection or support, since he was a member of their *collegium*. Felicissimus was a very active representative of the municipal elite (*omnibus rebus ac muneribus perfunctus*). Apart from holding the function of *decurio* and municipal offices (*quaestor alimentorum, II vir*), he was also involved in the activities of at least two corporations: he was an *immunis* in the *collegium dendrophorum* and, as already mentioned, he was one of the *cultores* of the local Jupiter.

¹³ We do not know what the donation of L. Domitius Secundio was, which he made to the *sodalitium cultorum Herculis* of Veleia in return for the honour of patronising this organisation (CIL 11,1159).

¹⁴ See K. Verboven, *The Associative Order: Status and Ethos among Roman Businessmen in Late Republic and Early Empire*, "Athenaeum" 2007, 95, pp. 861–893.

cases like this. Municipal and corporate patronage was combined by e.g. Sex. Minius Silvanus – a *duumvir* from Allifae, L. Caesennius Rufinus from Lanuvium and two equites, T. Flavius Isidorus and Vesedius Rufinus¹⁵. Analysing the careers and onomastics of these representatives of the municipal elite, we might form the impression that they were dominated by persons whose inclusion in the city's highest class was quite recent. Certainly, the need to manifest their social position was stronger among them than among members of the families which had long belonged to the local aristocracy. The latter chose municipal patronage more readily, and if they decided to provide corporate patronage, their clients were one of the prestigious associations belonging to the so-called *tria collegia principalia*¹⁶.

Interestingly, there is nothing to indicate that corporations tried to avoid situations in which their patron would simultaneously patronise other associations. On the contrary, it seems that the fact of 'sharing' a patron with another (usually influential) corporation was a source of pride¹⁷. This makes us take a somewhat different look at the essence of Roman corporatism, traditionally perceived in the category of struggle for group privileges or simply competing for profits. A patron of several colleges functioning in one city was not in a situation of a permanent conflict of interests, because looking after either corporate or his own interests in the literal meaning of the word was not his job. The institution of patronage was certainly not a smoke screen to hide the economic involvement of patrons who wanted to use this way to increase their influence in the sector

¹⁵ Sex. Minius Silvanus: *contubernium Veneris* and *colonia Allifanorum* (CIL 9, 2354); Vesedius Rufinus: *Martenses* and *civitas Beneventanorum et Puteolanorum* (CIL 9, 1682); L. Caesennius Rufus: *cultores Dianae et Antinoii* and *municipium* (CIL 14, 2112); T. Flavius Isidorus: *cultores Herculis* and *municipium Interamnatium Nartium Casuentinorum Vindennatum* (CIL 11, 4209). See also: CIL 11, 6070: *patronus municipi, patronus collegiorum plurimum*; CIL 9, 1684: *collegi et civitatis patrono*; CIL 9, 1685: *patrono coloniae Beneventanorum ... patrono praestantissimo collegium Martensium posuit*.

¹⁶ E.A. Hemelrijk reached similar conclusions when she examined the social structure of patronesses of private colleges (E.A. Hemelrijk, *Patronesses and "mothers"*, pp. 120–121 and 144–145: tab. 1). J. Liu (*op. cit.*, p. 233) made interesting observations on the participation of the local elite in corporate patronage using the case of the Roman city of Brixia. Only three out of over two hundred known members of the broadly defined elite of this city provide information about having patronage over one of the local colleges.

¹⁷ Information about their own patron providing protection to other colleges can be found, among others, on honorific monuments erected by specific corporations. The latter were not obliged to provide information about the number of patronages held by their protector, which leads us to believe that such a multiple patronage was perceived as positive. See for example CIL 11, 6070: *[patron(o)] municipi(i) item / [collegiorum] plurimum*.

of manufacture or trade which was of interest to them¹⁸. The benefits that a patron of a *collegium/collegia* could count on were symbolic ones, which did not make them less desirable. The social prestige stemming from the opportunity to perform the role of benefactor in a public context and the corporation's support for those patrons who participated in the municipal political life were of much higher importance to many ambitious members of local elites than possible economic profits¹⁹. The statue erected for T. Flavius Isidorus by the *cultores Herculis* of Interamna Nahars was not only a symbol of his great career but also an invaluable instrument of self-presentation. The statue, put up in a public place, with an inscription praising Isidorus' merits and contributions, was the best manifestation of the social position achieved by himself and his family (the inscription mentions two sons belonging to the *ordo equester*). Its propaganda value was even greater due to the fact that the founder of the statue was not the man himself but one of the most important religious colleges in the city²⁰. Honorific inscriptions, statues, tablets and portraits placed in the municipal public space were an integral part of the symbolic language used to express, on the one hand, the special, privileged position of the group which formed the local elite, and on the other hand, the acceptance of this state of affairs by those who put up those statues and inscriptions²¹. The addressees of honorific acts became part of a group whose members were perceived as the natural leaders of the local community. Especially for new members of the elite, each public manifestation of acceptance for their social aspirations was a valuable one. Without such acceptance their place in the privileged group was doubtful and their influence – illusory. M. Beard correctly reminds us that the prestige and influence of a patron were ultimately decided by their clients, who turned up, in bigger or smaller numbers, during the daily *salutatio*²². Similarly, the number, and especially the rank, of the colleges

¹⁸ An attempt to prove that the phenomenon of patronage hid economic interests did not bring convincing results (O.M. van Nijf, *The Civic World*, pp. 100–107; J. Liu, *op. cit.*, p. 215).

¹⁹ For the role of colleges during election campaigns see F.M. Ausbüttel, *Untersuchungen zu den Vereinen im Westen des Römischen Reiches*, Kallmünz Opf. 1982, p. 94; F. Diosono, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

²⁰ Associations of the *cultores Herculis* owed their special position in the cities of central Italy to the exceptional popularity of Hercules in this part of the Apennine Peninsula (see P. Wojciechowski, *Czciiele Herkulesa*, p. 181).

²¹ O.M. van Nijf (*The Civic World*, pp. 118–119) refers to the theory formulated in the early 1990s by A. Wallace-Hadrill, *Roman Arches and Greek Honours*, "Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society" 1990, 36, p. 147.

²² M. Beard, *Delicate relationships*, "The Times Literary Supplement" 1990, 4, 529, Jan. 19–25, p. 71.

supported by a given representative of the local elites to a large extent reflected the position he or she occupied in the hierarchy of the municipal higher classes. The range in this regard was as wide as the local elite was diverse. Apart from the patrons of large professional corporations, who came from the *ordo senatorius*, we encounter people such as Iulius Severinus of Tusculum, in whose case the function of the patron of the college of worshippers of Diana was the only honour his relatives could put on his tomb (CIL 14, 2633). Corporate patronage was undoubtedly an attractive instrument of self-presentation for those who could not count on holding municipal offices, mainly due to their background. For wealthy freedmen, accepting patronage over one of the associations functioning in the city was – along with membership in the college of the *seviri Augustales* – one of the few available means of making their presence known in the public space. One example of a freedman with such ambitions is C. Ennius C. I. Faustillus – *sevir Augustalis* from Aesernia. On the tomb which Faustillus built for himself during his lifetime we can read that the deceased was a patron of the college of the worshippers of Hercules Gagilianus (CIL 9, 2679). It should be noted that such examples are surprisingly rare. Rich freedmen, usually over-represented in epigraphic sources, appear relatively seldom among corporate patrons²³. This, in turns, leads us to the conclusion that colleges attempted to look for patrons among families with stronger roots in the local elite. Rich and ambitious freedmen were usually left with the role of benefactors with whom corporations did not enter a patron–client relationship. Interestingly, similar observations also apply to rich women who wanted to mark their social position by taking the role of college patronesses²⁴. However, they appear as donors, gifting money and goods to associations, more often than as patronesses (CIL 6, 10234; 10, 6483; AE 1979, 16). Their special ties with colleges were expressed in the title *mater collegii*, which some of them received.

The significance and character of the function of *mater collegii*, similarly to *pater collegii*, are not altogether clear. While some historians see them as equivalent to patronage, others believe them to be solely honorary titles. In recent years, this problem was most thoroughly examined

²³ Apart from the already quoted examples, we could include in this context an inscription whose founder, C. Iulius Helpidephorus Cyrinus, *patronus sodalicii dii Silvani Polentis*, was also most likely a freedman, as indicated by his onomastics: an imperial *gentilium* in combination with a Greek *cognomen* (CIL 6, 647).

²⁴ Women usually appear by their husbands' sides; we cannot always say with certainty whether we are dealing with a patroness of a religious corporation or a patroness of the inscription founder; see e.g. CIL 10, 5904: *...et locum perm[issu Valer]iae C.f. Curtilia[nae] patronae s[anctissimae]*. For women in the role of corporate patronesses see E.A. Hemelrijk, *Patronesses and "mothers"*, pp. 128–136.

by E.A. Hemelrijk, who sees a clear difference between patronesses and 'mothers' of colleges²⁵. In the first place, she emphasises the high social status of the former, whereas the titles of *pater* and *mater collegii* were supposedly given to those 'benefactors' who did not belong to the municipal elite. The thing which also differentiates the two categories is the fact that *matres collegiorum* usually belonged to the college, or in any case actively participated in the life of the corporation, while we very rarely encounter patrons among members of colleges or even participants in the feasts and handouts they organised. An analysis of the social status of the *matres* and *patres* of religious associations to a large extent confirms Hemelrijk's observations. Salvia Marcellina, the *mater* of the Roman college of the worshippers of Asclepius and Hygeia, is the best example (CIL 6, 10234). A very generous donation for the mentioned association attests to the considerable financial capacity which Marcellina probably owed to her marriage with the imperial freedman P. Aelius Capito. On the other hand, the same fact – marriage to a freedman (even an imperial one) – was the reason for Marcellina's social 'degradation'. Her position was high enough for her to act as a 'benefactor' of the college, but too low for her to become the college's patroness. This is also the case of Aelius Zenon, who held the function of *pater collegii* in the same association. Zenon, like his brother and Marcellina's husband, belonged to the imperial *liberti*, which, it seems, disqualified him as the potential patron of the corporation but was not an obstacle to holding the function of *pater collegii*. Zenon joined the group of 'benefactors' of the college of the worshippers of Asclepius and Hygeia by donating the sum of 10,000 sesterces for the organisation of commemorative celebrations. These two examples lead us to the same reflection that L. Cracco Ruggini had almost half a century ago. She wrote about the function of 'mother' or 'father' of a college: *si ricava l'impressione che il titolo di pater o mater fosse concesso a benefattori del collegio al di fuori del vincolo giuridico – più prestigioso e impegnativo – del patronato vero e proprio*²⁶. While agreeing in principle with this conclusion, I would like to point out the fact that the division into patrons and 'parents' of a college was not always clear²⁷. Regardless of whether we regard the *patres* and *matres* of

²⁵ E.A. Hemelrijk, *Patronesses and "mothers"* and eadem, *Hidden Lives*, pp. 267–269.

²⁶ L. Cracco Ruggini, *Stato e associazioni professionali nell'età imperiale romana*, in: *Akten des VI Internationalen Kongresses für Griechische und Lateinische Epigraphik, München 1972*, München 1973, p. 298.

²⁷ Liu cites two examples of both functions being held by the same person (*op. cit.*, 221). However, at least one of her examples is doubtful. According to Liu, in the Roman association of the worshippers of Jupiter Dolichenus the same person functioned as the patron and father of the college. This claim is based on a dubious identification of L. Tettius Hermes (CIL 6, 406) and Olympos (CIL 6, 408).

colleges as the 'real' patrons or just a substitute of this institution, they undoubtedly played an important role in the corporate life. Without their foundations this life would have been most likely possible, but certainly less rich.

At first glance, 'benefactions' received by colleges and provided by the college patrons or *parentes collegii* do not differ from acts of euergetism addressed to the entire *civitas*. The patron-*collegium* relationship also differs little from the relationship between 'benefactors' and beneficiaries on the municipal level. Some historians are even inclined to treat these two phenomena jointly²⁸. It seems, however, that municipal euergetes and collegial patrons differ in more than just the scale of their 'benefaction'. First of all, the relationships between the patron and the college were decidedly more formalised than the ones between municipal euergetes and the beneficiaries of their generosity, or even those which we know from testimonies documenting personal patronage²⁹. A patron had to be formally elected by college members (*cooptatio*), he also had to agree to accept the patronage. It is worth noting that both sides, i.e. the patron and the *corporati* tried to give their relationship a public character. The information about the act of *cooptatio* was placed on a tablet both in the collegial seat and the patron's house (*tabulae patronatus*)³⁰. Corporate patronage (similarly to municipal one) had to be perceived as a public function since it is often mentioned in the *cursus honorum* along with municipal offices and religious functions (CIL 9, 1682; 10, 5657; 11, 6070). The relationships between the patron and the college were not limited to one-time acts of 'benefaction'. His or her presence in the corporate life was constant, although it usually concerned the symbolic sphere. The most frequent manifestation of this presence were celebrations organised by colleges to celebrate the birthday of the patron or member of his family (CIL 14, 2112). Statues and inscriptions put up by corporations for their patrons can be considered in the same context. Some of them were certainly housed in the collegial seat, constituting a permanent element of the college reality, and by that I do not mean merely an element of the setting in which meetings of corporate members were organised. Similarly to the statues of emperors during celebrations connected to the ruler cult³¹, the patrons' images could have been the

²⁸ O.M. van Nijf, *The Civic World*, pp. 82–128, particularly pp. 107–111.

²⁹ C.F. Eilers, *Roman Patrons of Greek Cities*, Oxford 2002, p. 184; J. Liu, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

³⁰ One example of such an inscription is the information about the cooptation of Rutilius Viator as one of the patrons of the college of the worshippers of Hercules in Beneventum (CIL 9, 1681).

³¹ For the subject of the imperial cult in religious associations see P. Wojciechowski, *The Imperial Cult in Roman Religious Associations*, "Electrum" 2014, 21, pp. 153–163.

central element of celebrations organised for the patron's birthday or in connection with the cult of his Genius. Even activities connected with putting up the patron's statue could have been an important factor integrating college members. The need to make the suitable decisions, to collect funds, to agree on the form of the statue and the text of the inscription, as well as its location, were only some of the tasks which had to be completed in order to honour the collegial patron. The fact that corporations so frequently devoted such a considerable effort in order to emphasise their relationship with the patron shows how important his or her place was in their everyday life. The relationships between the *cultores deorum* and their patrons seem to meet all the criteria of the classic definition of Roman patronage put forward by Wallace-Hadrill. Firstly, there is no doubt that there was a 'reciprocal exchange of goods and services' between the patron and the college. The exchange took place on many levels, and the economic aspect was not necessarily the most important one. Secondly, the exchange was asymmetrical and permanent. In exchange for material and non-material support, colleges bestowed honours on their patrons, which strengthened the social prestige of the latter, at the same time creating a positive image of the colleges themselves. An honorific statue was at the same time a means and a representation of this exchange of symbols³². For the patron, it was the most tangible proof of his social position, while for the college erecting such a statue was an opportunity to become visible in the public space. Corporations could use this opportunity to send a clear message about their excellent financial condition and connections in the local elite, which effectively increased their attractiveness in the eyes of potential members. Unsurprisingly, both sides tried to give their relationship a permanent, formalised, and public character. Traces of these attempts are left not only in the well-documented custom of displaying *tabulae patronatus* in the collegial seat and the patron's house. The patron frequently included information about the corporate patronage in his *cursus honorum*, whereas colleges could honour their patron's birthday with one of the official corporate celebrations. In this way, the relationships between the patron and the college took on features which clearly differentiated them from acts of euergetism, not to mention regular economic transactions. A wealthy, generous, and most importantly influential patron was not only a desirable symbol of prestige for every corporation, but also a guarantee of the efficient functioning of the organisation that could

³² O.M. van Nijf uses the phrase 'symbolic exchange' (van Nijf, *The Civic World*, p. 116). D. Rohde would probably see it as a case of 'integration' (D. Rohde, *Zwischen Individuum und Stadtgemeinde. Die Integration von collegia in Haffnenstädten*, Mainz 2012).

rely on his or her support not only in its daily activity but also in crisis situations. Since the number of outstanding representatives of the local elite interested in taking on the role of the collegial patron was limited, only a handful of corporations could rely on their support. Usually they were the biggest professional colleges (the *fabri* and the *centonarii*). Their patrons included not only numerous representatives of the *ordo equester*, but also senators, who rarely accepted functions of collective patrons, and if they did, they usually opted for the most prestigious municipal patronage. Religious associations had to reconcile themselves to the *homines novi* of the local elites. The patron of the *cultores Herculis* in Interamna Nahars, T. Flavius T.f. Isidorus, who evidently proudly emphasises his promotion to the *ordo equester*, which was the pinnacle of his municipal career, is an excellent example of this phenomenon. Interestingly, the *cultores deorum* looking for patrons for their associations clearly tried to find *ingenui*. Although patrons of religious colleges include some *liberti*, these are rare cases. Wealthy freedmen are usually benefactors of colleges, but the latter did not attach themselves in a permanent way by means of the institution of patronage. This is understandable considering the fact that one of the main tasks of a patron was to represent the college in its contacts with the local authorities. The servile background of the patron lowered not only the college's prestige but also its chances of successfully defending its interests. The *cultores deorum* were certainly aware of the mechanisms operating in the public life of the community in which they lived. An analysis of how the institution of patronage functioned in religious associations reveals evidence that their members not only knew the traditional system of values, but also completely identified themselves with this system.

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STRESZCZENIE

Związki między *cultores deorum* a ich patronami wydają się spełniać wszystkie kryteria klasycznej definicji rzymskiego patronatu przedstawionej przez A. Wallace-Hadrilla. Po pierwsze, nie ma wątpliwości, że istniała „wzajemna wymiana towarów i usług” między patronem a stowarzyszeniem. Wymiana ta miała miejsce na wielu poziomach, zaś aspekt ekonomiczny niekoniecznie był najważniejszy. Po drugie, wymiana była niesymetryczna i ciągła. W zamian za materialne i niematerialne wsparcie stowarzyszenia obdarowywały patronów zaszczytami, co umacniało ich społeczny prestiż, równocześnie kreując pozytywny wizerunek samych stowarzyszeń. Obie strony starały się nadać swym relacjom stały, sformalizowany i publiczny charakter. Ślady tych prób są widoczne nie tylko w dobrze udokumentowanym zwyczaju ujawniania *tabulae patronatus* w siedzibie stowarzyszenia oraz w domu patrona. Patron często zamieszczał informację na temat korporacyjnego patronatu w *cursus honorum*, zaś stowarzyszenia mogły uhonorować urodziny swego patrona jedną z oficjalnych uroczystości korporacyjnych. W ten sposób relacje między patronem a stowarzyszeniem nabierały cech, które wyraźnie odróżniały je od aktów energetyzmu, nie wspominając już o regularnych transakcjach ekonomicznych. Zamożny, szczodry i, co najważniejsze, wpływowy patron był nie tylko pożądanym symbolem prestiżu dla każdej korporacji, lecz także gwarancją efektywnego funkcjonowania organizacji, która mogła polegać na jego/jej wsparciu nie tylko w czasie codziennych działań, lecz także w sytuacjach kryzysowych. Stowarzyszenia religijne musiały zaakceptować *homines novi* lokalnych elit jako swych patronów. Patron *cultores Herculis* w Interamna Nahars, T. Flavius T.f. Isidorus, który wyraźnie dumnie podkreślał awans do *ordo equester*, będący szczytem jego miejskiej kariery, jest wspaniałym

przykładem tego zjawiska. Co ciekawe, *cultores deorum*, szukając patronów dla swych stowarzyszeń, wyraźnie usiłowali znaleźć *ingenui*. Chociaż wśród patronów stowarzyszeń religijnych było trochę *liberti*, są to rzadkie przypadki. Bogaci wyzwolenicy bywali dobroczyńcami stowarzyszeń, ale patronat ten nie był stały. Jest to zrozumiałe, zważywszy na fakt, iż jednym z głównych zadań patrona było reprezentowanie stowarzyszenia w kontaktach z lokalnymi władzami.

Słowa kluczowe: historia Cesarstwa Rzymskiego, stowarzyszenia religijne, patronat, łacińska epigrafia

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