

Introduction: Memory, Family, and Community in Roman Ephesos

Around 50 BCE a certain P. Vedius disembarked ship in Ephesos. He was Italian and a Roman citizen likely of freed status, and like many others, he came to Asia to make his fortune. He found success and stayed, setting down firm roots in its fertile soil. He married and had children and grandchildren, and he prospered. By the late first century CE,¹ his descendants were among the wealthiest and most prominent citizens in Ephesos. Members of the family achieved the highest magistracies in the city, serving as *grammateis* and *prytaneis*, as priests and priestesses, and festival presidents. By the mid-second century, the Vedii became senators of Rome. However, this success did not cause them to cut ties with their adopted *patris*, Ephesos, where they had landed wealth, houses, business interests, and an affection for their new homeland. They continued to contribute their fortunes to Ephesos as *euergetai* (benefactors) in a series of building projects and in more ephemeral activities, such as sponsoring festivals. By the late second century this prolific family, having intermarried with another distinguished family of Ephesos, the Flavii, had Roman consuls in its ranks, and at least one house in one of Rome's wealthiest districts. At the end of the Severan age they disappear from the historical record, like so many other individuals and families.² Natural disasters and the political instability of the third century affected Ephesos deeply. An earthquake shook the city in 262. The following year, a band of Goths raided the city and burned the temple of Artemis to the ground. But even before this cataclysm, the epigraphic habit dropped off, a sign of political and economic malaise, and of social change. Civic authorities and individuals were no longer interested in raising honorific monuments to honor and commemorate benefactors, possibly because benefactors were no longer interested in demonstrating their *philotimia* (generosity, munificence) through office-holding, the sponsorship of festivals, and the financing of buildings. Thus just after the mid-third century, we lose sight of the Vedii, although we know that some of their buildings and statues stood until the fifth century.

¹ All subsequent dates are CE unless otherwise noted. ² Kirbihler (2012) 284.

This book traces the fortunes of the Vedii in Ephesos from the mid-first to the mid-third century. It is not a chronological survey of the magistracies and offices that they held, although their political lives are important, nor is it a catalogue of the honors they received, nor of the public building projects to which they contributed. Rather, it seeks to interpret the evidence of their lives and actions in the linked contexts of family, community, and memory in Ephesos. Epigraphic evidence documents seven generations of the family. Although the inscriptions are often brief and formulaic, read carefully and in their social and spatial contexts, they highlight the social and cultural world – the community – that shaped the actions of the Vedii. Rather than seeing this elite family as autonomous actors, I argue that the values and needs of the complex community that they lived in shaped their actions. Recent research has highlighted the notion that the ideals of the Classical polis were not dead in the Roman Imperial period – that the polis community was active in many ways, including in honorific practices.³ Indeed, careful attention to the inscriptions reveals that besides members of the family, the inscriptions also name, often in briefest terms, other individuals and groups, and refer to the institutions of the city, highlighting a civic ideology. They hint at relationships not only between members of the elite, but also between the elite and other members of the community of varying status. In their formulaic language the inscriptions reflect how the community of Ephesos defined itself. It is through a close study of the inscriptions, their formulaic language, physical form, and contexts that we can develop a picture of dynamic communal interactions.

Furthermore the monuments – honorific statue monuments and civic and religious buildings – related to the Vedii provide a case study to examine how these shaped individual, family, and civic identities and evoked an intersection of family and community memory. I analyze epigraphic and archaeological evidence to demonstrate that individual and family identities were constructed through particular practices, such as euergetism, and how they shaped civic identity and community memories. By examining euergetic activity in the form of the building and raising of honorific statue monuments (portrait statues on inscribed bases) we can see how communities were constructing identities to promote social cohesion, however fragile.

While some elite families of the Roman West have been the subject of scholarly monographs, this has not been the case for the Roman East. The

³ Heller and van Nijf (2017a).

Vedii richly deserve a book-length study. The evidence of their private and public activities, which linked them to many individuals and groups in Ephesos, Asia, and beyond, provide the basis for a detailed examination of the social and cultural life of the most important city of Asia Minor. Furthermore, each chapter reflects on wider themes with which scholars of provincial life in Roman Asia Minor are engaged: elite self-fashioning; elite/non-elite relations in the post-Classical polis; the persistence of traditional religious cults, festival life, and religion in the post-Classical polis; the Imperial cult; the role of women in public life in the Roman East; and the functions of inscribed monuments in urban landscapes.

Context

This book arose from a desire to explain the function and the significance of two related epigraphic and cultural phenomena: euergetism, especially in its most material forms, manifested in the construction of public buildings with dedicatory inscriptions, and the raising of honorific statue monuments with their inscriptions. After funerary inscriptions, honorific texts make up the bulk of inscriptions in most Roman Imperial cities. Roman cities are singular among historical urban sites in their abundance of public writing. Colonnaded streets and porticoes, the aediculated facades of monumental fountains, theaters, and baths were populated with honorific statues on their inscribed bases. Public buildings prominently displayed on architraves and wall revetments inscriptions naming their builders or renovators. There existed an enormous amount of public writing in the cities of the Roman Empire during the Imperial period, despite the fact that the majority of inhabitants in these urban societies were illiterate or semi-literate.⁴ These particular monumental manifestations of the “epigraphic habit” have been variously explained. MacMullen’s notion that inscriptions have “a sense of audience” – evidently more visual than aural – underlines the three temporal aspects that they embody: a present one, which asserted the ‘here and now’ activity and identity of an individual; a commemorative one, focused on the future and on which both ancient sources and modern scholars have commented extensively;⁵ and finally, a sense of the past,

⁴ Since Harris (1989) much has been written on ancient literacy, including Humphrey (1991); Bowman and Woolf (1994); Corbier (2006); Johnson and Parker (2009).

⁵ MacMullen (1982); Woolf (1996).

which is evident in onomastic practices, recording patronymics, genealogies, and the *cursus honorum*.

The primary evidence for this study is epigraphic and archaeological, and it is abundant. The Vedii and their descendants, the Flavii Vedii, are named in over seventy epigraphic texts inscribed over a period of almost 200 years. After their initial publications, the majority of these inscriptions were reprinted, usually with little commentary, in the Ephesos volumes of the *Inschriften Griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien* series. Discoveries that are more recent have appeared in *Jahreshefte des Österreichischen Archäologischen Institutes*, *Tyche*, in other periodicals, and in site reports. While the Vedii inscriptions have been the focus of numerous articles, they have not been subject to an investigation that takes into consideration the whole group, in conjunction with the buildings of the family, and their civic contexts.⁶ My work builds on this uptick in scholarship, and is the first book-length study of an Eastern provincial family over multiple generations. Up until now, there have been monographs focused on single, stand-out *euergetês*, like Herodes Atticus, or on multiple generations of Roman senatorial families of the West, such as the Scipiones.⁷ I trace the rise of the Vedii family, Italian immigrants to Asia Minor, through their integration into the civic elite of Ephesos, their adopted city, to their return to Rome as senators. However, since most of our information about the Vedii is epigraphic and located in Ephesos, not Rome, a thorough study provides an insight into the political, social, and cultural world of an Eastern city during the early Roman Imperial period. The inscriptions represent twenty-three individual members of the family, both men and women, over seven generations. The majority of these are from honorific statue monuments, but there are also building inscriptions, decrees, Imperial letters, and lists of various types. Members of the family appear in various capacities as civic and festival magistrates, priests and priestesses in local cults and in the Imperial cult, and as builders, benefactors (*euergetai*), and founders (*ktistai*). The inscriptions also name numerous other individuals in direct or indirect relation to the Vedii: eponymous officials, individuals responsible for raising honorific monuments to them, freedmen, and other associates. Several professional and neighborhood associations appear in these inscriptions, honoring members of the family.

⁶ Wörrle (1973); Bowie (1978); Campanile (1994a); Fontani (1996); Kirbihler (1999), (2007b), (2011), (2016), (2017); Kalinowski and Taeuber (2001); Kalinowski (2002), (2006a), (2006b); Kokkinia (2003).

⁷ On Herodes Atticus: Tobin (1997); Galli (2002); the Scipiones: most recently Etcheto (2012).

The inscriptions name diverse civic bodies (boule, demos), the city as a whole, and local heroes, gods, and Roman emperors. In other words, this is a particularly rich vein of epigraphic evidence for the intertwined history of this family and the city of Ephesos.

Excavations at Ephesos undertaken in the 1860s and '70s by John Turtle Wood, and since 1895 by the Austrian Archaeological Institute, have uncovered the abundant material culture of this city. Besides the honorific statue monuments and numerous inscriptions, several buildings associated with the Vedii have been excavated: the bouleterion and the Vedius bath-gymnasium built by P. Vedius Antoninus III and Fl. Papiane; a *via tecta* (covered walkway) from the Magnesia Gate to the Artemis temple attributed to the sophist, T. Fl. Damianus. Philostratus' short biography of Damianus notes his construction of a dining hall in the Artemision and harbor installations at a private seaside estate. Josef Keil also assigned the construction of the East baths to Vedia Phaedrina and Damianus, and identified a family statue group in the building with this prolific couple. Honorific inscriptions record that Damianus also undertook renovation in the Baths of Varius. A funerary monument of Vedia Phaedrina and Damianus has also been excavated. The building inscription of the so-called Temple of Hadrian names a Vedius, not as builder but as a civic official (*grammateus*) in the year of its construction (*IvE* 429). A fragmentary inscription names P. Vedius Antoninus I three times in the context of building (*IvE* 1384). Although there have been individual studies of some of these monuments, no synthesis exists that traces diachronically the overall pattern of benefactions of the family and places them in the social and urban contexts of Ephesos.⁸

Structure of This Study

Chapter 1 discusses the frameworks that inform and shape how I approach the material under study, the various inscriptions and the buildings. Key concepts are community and memory – I argue that rather than seeing the Vedii as quasi-independent elite actors shaping the city and their image in it as they wished, they were instead shaped by the cultural and social values of Ephesos. We shall see that in their activities as magistrates, priests/esses,

⁸ For the so-called stoa of Damianus: Knibbe and Langmann (1993); Knibbe and Thür (1995); the Vedius bath-gymnasium: Keil (1929a), (1929b); Steskal and LaTorre (2008); the bouleterion: Bier (2011); the East gymnasium: Keil (1932).

and *euergetai* of the city, and as patrons of particular subgroups, they responded to the needs and desires of those communities. Memory and commemoration also are essential to this study. Material objects like statue monuments with their inscriptions and the buildings that *euergetai* constructed worked not only to preserve memory but also to evoke memory in those who saw and used the structures. Remembering is thus experiential and embodied, and bodily practices (rituals), like dedication ceremonies, underscored it. However, remembering is complex: the primary goal of an honorific statue monument is to evoke the memory of its benefactor; yet, since the boule and the demos are also mentioned, a social memory that represents several subgroups of the city is also evoked.

Chapter 2 introduces the cast of characters, tracing what we know, largely from inscriptions of the family life (marriages, adoptions, births) and the political and social activities of members of the family over several generations. Scholars have long believed that the Vedii were from Italy, possibly related to Vedius Pollio, and that they immigrated to Ephesos in the first century BCE. I argue that they are a case study in cultural adaptation in the Roman Empire. As Latin-speaking Italian émigrés taking advantage of the economic opportunities provided by the Roman domination of Asia, by the late first century the Vedii become fully integrated into the social and political life of Ephesos, with both the men and the women of the family holding top magistracies and priesthoods. They are both Roman and Ephesian, supporting the essentially Greek cultural life of their city. Even when the family becomes senatorial by the mid-second century, its devotion to the Ephesian *patris* does not wane and, if anything, appears to increase. Members of the family use their abundant wealth to benefit the city, sponsoring buildings and festivals. This is the period when the material evidence for their activities – buildings and inscriptions – is most abundant. By the early third century the male scions of the family are in Rome undertaking senatorial careers, and the women are married to senators. However, the epigraphic evidence, as we shall see, demonstrates that Ephesos, a major source of their wealth, remained an important reference point for the family's history and commemorative practice. This chapter and the rest of the study should be read in conjunction with the Appendix, which lists in chronological order and discusses briefly the inscriptions relating to the activities of each family member separately. Here the reader will also find discussion of inscriptions that are difficult to assign unequivocally to the three like-named Vedii of the second century (especially the troublesome *IvE* 728). Complete texts of all of the

inscriptions of the Vedii and Flavii Vedii are available in the Catalogue of Inscriptions www.cambridge.org/kalinowski-inscriptions.

The next two chapters focus on the involvement of the women and men of the Vedii in the religious cults and festivals of the city. Chapter 3 focuses on the family's devotion to Artemis – the premier goddess of the city. Inscriptions record that generation after generation they were priestesses, *prytaneis* (eponymous magistrates presiding over the cult of Artemis in the Upper Agora of the city), and *kourêtes*, young men who annually re-enacted the birth mysteries of the goddess. Their devotion to the goddess included material support of her cult; they were *euergetai* of the goddess and, by association, of the city. Philostratus' *Lives of the Sophists* associates the construction of a *via tecta* from the city to Artemis' *temenos* (temple precinct) and a dining hall there with the name of T. Fl. Damianus, who was the husband of a Vedia. Furthermore, a remarkable series of inscriptions records that a scion of the family made Artemis heiress to his fortune. Contrary to some recent scholarship, I emphasize that even in the late second century Ephesians and elite families like the Vedii cultivated Artemis with continued enthusiasm and fervor. I also reinterpret the evidence for the construction of the *via tecta* and so restore Vedia Phaedrina to her rightful place as a *euergetis*.

Chapter 4 highlights the involvement of the Vedii in the festival life of the city, including discussion of local Ephesian festivals, and of celebrations of the Imperial cult in the city. Festivals such as the Epheseia, the Hadrianeia, the Ephesian Olympia, and the Pasithea offered citizens of Ephesos and visitors alike the opportunity to enjoy athletic and musical competitions and to participate, if only as observers, in processions, sacrifices, and banquets. Male members of the Vedii are recorded on honorific inscriptions as agonothetes and panegyriarchs of various festivals. Using comparative evidence, we unpack what it meant to hold one of these offices. As we shall see, men who held such positions became very visible public figures in Ephesos, marked out by special clothing. Furthermore, their duties involved them in the supervision and financing of the religious and agonistic as well as the economic aspects of these celebrations. We are fortunate that the epigraphic dossier of the Vedii contains some closely dated inscriptions that can provide us with the precise historical contexts in which some members of the family exercised their festival-associated magistracies. While men acted as panegyriarchs and the agonothetes of local festivals, celebrations of the Imperial cult involved both men and women as *archierei/archiereiai* – high priests and high priestesses, and

among these are a number of the Vedii. Two controversies regarding the officials of the Imperial cult in Asia are addressed in the chapter. The first concerns the identification of the *archiereia* and the asiarchy. The second concerns whether women could hold the high priestesshood independently of their husbands or male relatives. The latter question is particularly important since women of the Vedii seem to provide two important examples of the independent exercise of the priestesshood by women. Consideration of the actual functions of the asiarchs/*archieriai* leads to a discussion of the gladiatorial and beast fights provided by these officials. As we shall see, several pieces of epigraphic and archaeological evidence link the Vedii to a gladiatorial *ludus* (training school) that operated into the third century. Overall the involvement of the Vedii throughout the second century especially in the Artemis cult, in other local festivals, and in the Imperial cult demonstrates their attention to and cultivation of the values of the Ephesian community, and of the empire.

Chapter 5 focuses on a heterogeneous group of honorific monuments, which survive as inscribed bases that *synergasiai* (workers' or professional associations) and groups defined by topographical location or neighborhood raised to individual members of the Vedii family. Epigraphic evidence demonstrates that members of local elites acted as patrons to workers' associations. My goal here is to understand in each case why an association honored a member of the Vedii family. A close reading of the inscriptions in their physical and social contexts will shed light on the economic activities of the Vedii and the nature of their support for associations. The Roman literary sources of the late Republic and early Empire lead one to believe that artisans and traders were scorned. The epigraphic evidence, however, belies this interpretation, and demonstrates that workers' associations were integrated into civic life in important ways, and that members of the civic elite evidently were not embarrassed to be associated with them. They may have even sought to cultivate relationships with them, since artisans, traders, and the buyers and sellers of goods made up a large portion of the city's population. The honorific monuments that place-based associations raised to members of the Vedii underline other issues. How was neighborhood constructed and defined? By what mechanisms was collective action, such as the raising of a monument to a benefactor, undertaken? Why did a particular place-based association honor a Vedius? Any attempt at elucidation requires broad contextualization and an examination of all relevant evidence, such as Ephesian topography, buildings, and close reading of the inscriptions themselves, their formulaic language and content. We shall see that both the economic activities of the

Vedii and their urban interventions in the form of buildings attracted to them supporters from varied workers' and neighborhood associations.

Chapter 6 turns to the buildings that the Vedii and their relations by marriage, the Flavii, constructed or renovated in Ephesos, excluding those associated with the Artemis cult, which we will have considered in Chapter 3. Their involvement in the construction or renovation of three bath buildings is attested, as is their renovation of the bouleuterion of the city. Furthermore, inscriptions hint at their involvement in the construction of other buildings. I synthesize the archaeological evidence of the structures themselves, and their decorative programs, in conjunction with the related epigraphic evidence to attempt to answer the question for each structure – what is the message here and for whom? Buildings reflected the cultural and political choices of the *euergetai* who built them. It is significant that members of the family chose to construct or renovate bath-gymnasia complexes, the popular 'leisure centers' of Antiquity, reflecting a concern to foster a set of mixed Graeco-Roman cultural values, as well as a concern to appeal to a popular audience of the laboring and petty merchant classes of the city. The decorative and epigraphic programs, as we shall see, were designed to commemorate the *euergetai*, and also underscored family and Imperial connections. The bouleuterion renovated by P. Vedius Antoninus III and Fl. Papiane is an example of a structure whose complex epigraphic and statue program placed the *euergetai* front and center in the political life of the city. In this chapter I attempt to clarify the experiences of the users of these structures, reflecting on how they experienced the structures and their decorative programs.

Remarkably, when we consider all of the honorific statue monuments of multiple generations of the Vedii and their descendants, the various other inscriptions that refer to them, and the buildings to which they contributed, we see that over a period of 150 years the family image was writ large on the fabric of the city. The urban landscape, as we all know, was where the elite could make their mark, fulfill their social duties, and be remembered through tangible, physical objects. However, they did not operate in a vacuum, only fostering their own advancement. As I will demonstrate, they responded to the values and needs of the socially varied Ephesian community whom we equally see in the epigraphic record.