

INTRODUCTION

In late 324 the emperor Constantine celebrated his final victory over Licinius, and his consequent rise to sole power, by founding a new city which he named after himself, Constantinople.¹ He now needed to win acceptance among the eastern population whose emperor he had just defeated. The engagement of the provincial elite with the imperial regime was a crucial component in maintaining imperial rule, and was traditionally facilitated by grants of privileges, high rank and honours.² In the case of Constantine, the question of how elites were drawn into the imperial regime is particularly interesting. It happened at the same time as an increasingly widespread conferment of senatorial rank on the political elites at court and in the administration, a process that had the potential to reconfigure the relationship between elites and emperors. Constantine's policies in the East were as a consequence part of this larger process of reconfiguration, and raise the question of how the increased integration of the eastern elites aligned with imperial relations with the senate in Rome and its senatorial elites.

Constantine's relationship with the senatorial aristocracy has received much attention in scholarship. Moving away from the conflict paradigm, which postulated a conflict over religion or culture between an increasingly Christianized court and the pagan elites in Rome, the focus of research has shifted to the question of the continuous absence of the emperor from Rome, and whether this should be seen as evidence of increasing imperial neglect of the old capital and the marginalization

¹ All dates are AD unless indicated.

² Lendon (1997).

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of its senators in the running of the empire.³ Policies such as the upgrading of several equestrian posts to senatorial rank, which made senatorial office and rank more easily available, or the reform of the *suffect* consulate, had the potential to disadvantage the traditional senatorial families in Rome to the benefit of new elites, and it could be argued that, through these imperial policies, senatorial honours became attached more closely than ever before to service to the emperor, rather than to the privileges of high birth.⁴ Constantine's reforms continued those of the Tetrarchy, but, in contrast to the Tetrarchs' expansion of the equestrian administration, under Constantine many important posts became senatorial.⁵

What impact did these policies have on imperial relations with Rome? And were Constantine's dealings with Rome affected by his eastern policies, especially the recruitment of new supporters among the eastern elite? A re-examination of Constantine's regime-building policies in the East shed new light on these questions. Based on the literary sources, scholarship has recently suggested that these policies included the

³ Weisweiler (2015a), (2012a), (2012b), (2011), and Chenault (2012), (2008). On forms and functions of imperial presence in late antique Rome, see now also McEvoy and Moser (2017) and the contributions to *AntTard* 25 it introduces.

⁴ The literature on the senatorial reforms and the senatorial order under Constantine is extensive. Here as elsewhere in my study I have chosen to refer in particular to the most recent literature, following the preference of the publishing house for lean footnotes. This does not imply any lack of appreciation for the earlier, especially French, German or Italian scholarship, with its essential contributions to our understanding of the nature of imperial rule in the fourth century. In addition to the literature already cited, recent works include Dillon (2015); Salway (2015); Lizzi Testa (2013); Skinner (2013), (2008), (2000); Machado (2012), (2010); Schmidt-Hofner (2010); Rebenich (2008), (2007); Salzman (2002); Heather (1998), (1994); Näf (1996); Schlinkert (1996); Marcone (1993); Chastagnol (1992); Kuhoff (1983), (1982); Löhken (1982); Weiss (1975); and Jones (1963). On the elites in the later Roman Empire more broadly, see the excellent introductions of Brown (2000) and Matthews (2000b).

⁵ On the equestrian reforms of Diocletian, see Davenport (2018). The emergence of the (senatorial) palatine administration is discussed in Harries (2012) 139–45; Kelly (2012) 189–90 with n. 31–9; Carrié and Rouselle (1999) 259–63; Harries (1988); Kuhoff (1983); Bonfils (1981); Clauss (1980); Boak (1924). Roux (2014); Porena (2006), (2003); Barnes (1996), (1994), (1992); Moro (1996), and Migl (1994) discuss the emergence of the praetorian prefectures. Mennen (2011); Carrié and Rouselle (1999) 655–7, and Kuhoff (1982) 273–74 offer balanced accounts of Tetrarchic 'senatorial' policies.

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widespread conferment of senatorial rank,⁶ but I wish to ask whether and to what extent an eastern senatorial constituency emerged under Constantine. By studying the composition of the senatorial officials in the East, it is possible not only to revisit this issue, but also to investigate the impact of Constantine's eastern policies on the career changes of the traditional social elites, the senators in Rome, and of their role in Constantine's eastern empire. This investigation needs to begin by reassessing the role of the traditional elites in the West, the senators of Rome, in Constantine's government, in order to gauge whether the foundation of Constantinople constituted a turning point in their relationship. This study is provided in Chapter 1 of this book, and it forms the political and social background for a re-examination of Constantine's charm offensive towards the elites in the East, presented in Chapter 2, which pays particular attention to the possibility that this entailed an important senatorial dimension, possibly including the foundation of a first senate in Constantinople.

In this reconfiguration of the relationship between eastern elites and imperial regime, the reign of Constantius II, Constantine's son and successor, is of special interest. For the first part of his reign, from 337 to 350, Constantius shared imperial rule with his brothers as emperor of the East, so it is important to gauge the extent to which the government of the empire too may have been partitioned into separate realms in this period. There is evidence that Constantius continued to draw support from Rome to maintain his rule in the East, but it is clear that at the same time he had a strong interest in harnessing support among the eastern elites, in view of his difficult relationship with his brothers in the West. No detailed study has been made of Constantius' relationship with the eastern elites, and it remains poorly understood. To date, scholarly attention has focused on the character of his reign and of his imperial bureaucracy, which is also at the centre of ancient narratives about his rule.⁷ Chantal Vogler concluded

⁶ Heather (1994) and also (1998).

⁷ Government: Potter (2004) 476–82; Bonfils (1981); Claus (1980); Vogler (1979); Edbrooke (1976), (1975).

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that Constantius was the ‘first Byzantine emperor’, a ruler centred on the imperial court and a new, Christian elite drawn from the eastern provinces, but this has yet to be substantiated in a prosopographical analysis of his senatorial supporters at the imperial court and in the wider provincial administration.⁸ Provincial governors represented Constantius in the provinces and wielded considerable power, and it was here that elites strove for social and political prestige and senatorial honours. The present work (in Chapter 3) offers a comprehensive list of Constantius’ senatorial officials in these posts, established on the basis of a large number of epigraphic sources, along with the information provided by Libanius and Ammianus, and on this basis the chapter analyses Constantius’ senatorial policies, as they can be inferred from the make-up of his senatorial support, in their social background, places of origin and career structures.⁹ This provides a reliable basis for investigating Constantius’ relationship with the eastern elites, while also considering the employment of Roman senators in the East. It also allows me to revisit common arguments about the transformation of the senatorial elites and the relationship between, on the one hand, the integration of the eastern elites in this period and, on the other, the role of Roman senators in imperial rule in the East.

This prosopographical analysis needs to be set in the context of the political nature of imperial rule in this period. A major obstacle is that we have no major historical narrative source for Constantius’ early reign.¹⁰ Nonetheless, there is ample evidence of the imperially driven promotion of Constantinople and its senate in this period, raising the question of what role the city

⁸ Vogler (1979) with Béranger (1981) and Petit (1981).

⁹ On the senators mentioned in Libanius, see e.g. Bradbury (2004) and Petit (1957).

¹⁰ Due to the loss of the earlier books, Ammianus’ *Res Gestae* only pick up in 353. Aurelius Victor’s *De Caesaribus* on the reign of Constantius has a similar focus. Eutropius’ *Breviarium*, too, mostly focuses on Constantius’ reign following the usurpation of Magnentius, with only some brief comments about Constantius’ military exploits against Shapur II in the earlier decade. Finally, Zosimus’ *New History* contains brief remarks about Constantius’ involvement in the dynastic murders in 337, yet his interest, too, is in the period following the usurpation of Magnentius in 350. On Christian authors on Constantius II, see Flower (2016), (2013); Humphries (1997); Leppin (1996) 60–71; Girardet (1977), (1975).

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and its council played in Constantius' eastern empire.¹¹ While under Constantine imperial presence and favour were centred on Constantinople, Constantius' court resided in Antioch due to the ongoing threat on the eastern front. The impact of this shift on the relationship between the imperial centre and the eastern elites is addressed in Chapter 4. Its other concern is Constantius' relationship with Constantinople. The city was a symbol of his Constantinian descent, and his attitude to his Constantinian heritage is likely to have shaped his relationship with the city. This can be studied through several panegyrics that provide crucial details about the political ideology and dynastic situation in his reign, and are highly revealing about Constantius' eastern rule in this period.¹² Besides Eusebius' *Vita Constantini*, published around 340, Libanius' *Oration* 59, written for one of Constantius' officials in 344, is of particular interest as a source of imperial ideology. Also revealing are the works of the Constantinopolitan orator Bearchius, and two works by the Athenian writer Praxagoras, viz. a *Life of Constantine* and a *Life of Alexander*. All three of these works were written in the early 340s and, even though they no longer survive, their titles reveal that the commemoration of Constantine was an important aspect of Constantius' ideology. The upgrading of Constantinople's status was highlighted by introducing the motif of the twin-city showing *Roma* and *Constantinopolis*, the Tychai of Rome and Constantinople, side by side and may also have been motivated, at least in part, by these dynastic attitudes, rather than by imperial concerns about elite engagement in the East (Chapter 4). The chapter contributes to our understanding of Constantius' public image as emperor and his dealings with his subjects.¹³

¹¹ The literary and legal sources are discussed in Skinner (2008). For the numismatic evidence see Wienand (2015); Pietri (1989); Toynbee (1947), (1945); Alföldi (1943); Seeck (1898).

¹² On imperial panegyric and Constantius II, see now e.g. Omissi (2018) and Ross (2016). On the complex nature of panegyric as product of both imperial demands and the agenda of the respective speaker in general: e.g. Rees (2012), (2002); Whitby (1998); MacCormack (1975).

¹³ On Constantius' 'popular' policies, see Henck (2007), (2002), (2001), (1998). On Constantius' imperial image, see Teitler (1992).

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If Constantius' early reign was marked by the continuous presence of Roman senators in the East, the study of the higher ranks of the eastern administration in the early 350s reveals a change in the recruitment pattern and the meteoric rise of eastern senators to high office in the East. In this period Constantius' relationship with the West was greatly affected by three usurpations, especially Magnentius' *coup d'état* in 350. It is argued in this book that this had a considerable impact on Constantius' relationship with the eastern elites, which seem to have replaced Roman senators in his administration. My proposal is that in this period Constantius was cut off from access to the senate of Rome and could no longer draw on its support to legitimize his rule, and that this greatly advanced the chances of the eastern elites to hold high administrative responsibilities in his eastern empire. An unpublished inscription suggests that Constantinople played an important role in this, serving as a hub for the emperor's new senatorial supporters in the East. A reassessment of Constantius' relationship with the eastern elites and their role in his eastern empire during the usurpation of Magnentius, presented in Chapter 5, thus sheds light on an important period in the establishment of a senatorial constituency in the East and in the promotion of Constantinople.

The integration of the eastern elites into the imperial regime in the East was completed when in the late 350s a fully fledged senate emerged in the East and large numbers of new senators were recruited for the institution. The most detailed discussion of the history of Constantinople to date is Gilbert Dagron's 1974 monograph *Naissance d'une capitale: Constantinople et ses institutions de 330 à 451*. Dagron's study is highly insightful, but has little discussion of the period between 337 and 355, and his interest is primarily in the history of Constantinople as a city, so he has less to offer on the political context in which a second senate emerged in Constantinople, or on its relationship with Rome. Recent scholarship has reinvestigated the origins of the members of Constantinople's senate, concluding that the overwhelming majority came from the wealthiest traditional

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provincial elites in the East, in a social hierarchy that imitated that of the Roman senate in the West.¹⁴ Our understanding of the profile of this membership is greatly improved by reassessing the institutional character of the senate, and the rules by which membership in it was acquired. I re-examine these issues in Chapter 6, and show that the question can be greatly advanced also by a more detailed study of the inter-relationship between the enlargement of the senatorial order, on the one hand, and the expansion of the senatorial administration that occurred in this period, on the other, and also by investigating the new senate's relationship with Rome, which was shaped not least by the transfer of senators to it from Rome.

In turn, there is also a need to re-evaluate Constantius' relationship with Rome in this later period. Consequently Chapter 7 revisits claims that Constantius' relationship with Rome was problematic due to an imperial policy against sacrifice and pagan traditions more generally. A detailed discussion of relevant inscriptions from Rome, laws and contemporary material culture, including the *Codex Calendar* of 354, a senatorial calendar of the public festivals of Rome, alongside the study of Constantius' senatorial appointment policies in the West, offers a basis from which to tackle these conventional arguments that Constantius' relationship with Rome was difficult because of his promotion of Christianity or of Constantinople. Of particular importance here is Constantius' return visit to Rome in 357, when the emperor was acclaimed 'Emperor of Rome and Father of the Senate', and Rome was celebrated as centre of the Roman world. A better understanding of the political context of Constantius' relation with Rome and in particular of this visit helps us understand the reshaping of imperial relations with the elites in the West during the promotion of a fully fledged senate in the East, and is thus an important complementary study to the analysis of the promotion of Constantinople.

¹⁴ The classic study is Heather (1994), and (1998), see also Boulay (2016); Moser (2016b); Skinner (2013), (2008), (2000); Harper (2008), Hermann-Otto (2007) 151–2. For older discussions, see Tinnefeld (1977) 61–2, 176–7 and Petit (1957).

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The careers of the senatorial elites under Constantine and Constantius between 337 and 361 have not yet been discussed in detail. New findings challenge accepted reconstructions of several senatorial careers in this period, as they have been established in *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire I*, published by A. H. M. Jones, John Martindale and John Morris in 1971. A revised study of the social background and careers of these officials creates a reliable basis for investigating Constantius' relationship with the senatorial elites of Rome and Constantinople. My aim is to investigate the political role of the eastern elites in the survival of imperial rule in the East, rather than to assess the character of the reigns of the emperors concerned. Consequently I do not assess the cultural change that this implied, or the degree of criticism it earned within the eastern elites, though my study offers a basis for further investigating these issues in the future.¹⁵ Rather, my aim is a comprehensive re-examination of how the eastern elites were engaged in imperial government, in its full political, ideological and social context. I will not be much concerned with the question of the role of Christianity in this context. Scholars have tried to investigate whether Christian emperors preferred to work with Christianized elites and, if so, how far this impacted on the career successes of the old (pagan) elites in Rome.¹⁶ However, religious affiliation is difficult to determine from career success alone,¹⁷ and in any case the success of pagan elites suggests that, while affiliation to Christianity may have helped some individuals in their quest for high office, it was not a prerequisite for appointment.¹⁸ Overall, the attempt to assess the role of Christianity has tended to obscure the political necessity of imperial collaboration with the traditional

¹⁵ This important question is addressed in Skinner (2000) and Dagron (1984), (1968).

¹⁶ The classic study is Alföldi (1948). See also Iara (2015); Barnes (2011), (1995), (1989a), and also Salzman (2002); Bonfils (1981); Novak (1979); von Haehling (1978); Edbrooke (1975); Chastagnol (1976), (1968b), (1960).

¹⁷ Cameron (2011) 178–9 and Bardill (2012) 302–3.

¹⁸ Von Haehling (1978); Salzman (2016); Marcone (1993); and more generally Watts (2015).

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elites as a means of achieving political stability in a period of continuing fragmentation of imperial rule.

The investigation of how the eastern elites engaged with the imperial regimes after Constantine's defeat of Licinius also allows us to refine the chronology of the creation of a second senate in Constantinople. There are very few sources on the nature of the institution at the time of Constantine's foundation of the city, and its function and relation to the Roman senate are still insufficiently understood. The scholarly consensus ascribes the foundation of this body to Constantine, as is neatly summarized by Lucy Grig and Gavin Kelly: 'it seems to be clear that Constantine created the senate, a *synedrion* rather than a *boule*, even if founded on a smaller scale than Rome's and with a secondary status'.¹⁹ We are likewise poorly informed about the situation of the institution in the joint reign of the brother emperors Constantine II, Constans and Constantius between 337 and 350. One open question is whether this senate was identical to the urban council of Constantinople or a separate institution.²⁰ Nor is it clear when this initial senate developed into a fully fledged equivalent of the one in Rome. The dominant view is that the senate of Constantinople functioned as a full equivalent of Rome only from the late 350s onwards, following the separation of the senatorial order on geographical lines in 357, or the introduction of an urban prefect in 359. However, it has recently been proposed that the upgrading occurred around 340, following the introduction of a proconsul to the city.²¹ My reinvestigation of the career structures of senators in the East in this period sheds new light on these questions and in particular on the period between 337 and 355, which is rarely considered in this context.

All in all, the goal of my discussion is to locate the increased engagement of the eastern elites in the imperial structure in the context of the continuing fragility of imperial power in the

¹⁹ Quotation from Grig and Kelly (2012) 12, with references to the further literature.

²⁰ Vanderspoel (2012) 235 n. 36, who closely follows the propositions made by Dagron (1974) 120–4.

²¹ Skinner (2008).

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first part of the fourth century. In order to trace this development within the broader context of the transformation of the social elites and of imperial rule in this period, I analyse each of the major periods in the imperial history of the era in turn – the late reign of Constantine from 324 to 337 in Part I, the early reign of Constantius as emperor of the East up to 350 in Part II and his sole rule up to 361 in Part III. Such a contextualized discussion of the engagement of the eastern elites in the imperial regimes of Constantine and Constantius between 324 and 361 yields new insights into the reconfiguration of the eastern elites and their inclusion in the senatorial order, and how this impacted on the political role of the senatorial elites in the empire. It highlights the important role played by the eastern elites as a source of political stability in a period of great political fragmentation and reformation in the later Roman Empire, and offers an important contribution to our understanding of the nature of imperial rule, the shape of the empire and the importance within it of the elites of Rome and Constantinople.