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Reconsidering Opportunities for Female Benefactors in the Roman Empire: Julia Antonia Eurydice and the Gerontikon at Nysa

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Abstract

A small, yet significant body of archaeological and epigraphical evidence demonstrates that women in the Roman Empire undertook a variety of public roles. Recent research has centered on wealthy, elite females, who made benefactions in Rome and around the empire in the form of building projects, alimenta, and entertainment. These endeavors required a great deal of money and placed the benefactress in the eye of the public. One of the better known examples of such a woman is Plancia Magna from Perge, who in the early second century held the positions of demiourgos, gymnasiarch, and priestess of Artemis and renovated her city's gateway and built a triple archway to include statues of the imperial family, city founders, and her own family.² Although our only information about Plancia Magna comes from epigraphic evidence, it seems as though she was able to control her own wealth and had attained a position of prominence within her city. Some scholars, including Riet van Bremen,³ have claimed that women made such donations according to a family precedent for giving. That is, elite women sponsored building projects or donated funds for the public good because their own families were known for such philanthropic work and they were simply continuing this tradition. The women were acting, not as individuals, but as members of their families.

Disciplines

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Reconsidering Opportunities for Female Benefactors in the Roman Empire: Julia Antonia Eurydice and the *Gerontikon* at Nysa¹

1. Introduction

A small, yet significant body of archaeological and epigraphical evidence demonstrates that women in the Roman Empire undertook a variety of public roles. Recent research has centered on wealthy, elite females, who made benefactions in Rome and around the empire in the form of building projects, *alimenta*, and entertainment. These endeavors required a great deal of money and placed the benefactress in the eye of the public. One of the better known examples of such a woman is Plancia Magna from Perge, who in the early second century held the positions of *demiourgos*, *gymnasiarch*, and priestess of Artemis and renovated her city's gateway and built a triple archway to include statues of the imperial family, city founders, and her own family.² Although our only information about Plancia Magna comes from epigraphic evidence, it seems as though she was able to control her own wealth and had attained a position of prominence within her city. Some scholars, including Riet van Bremen,³ have claimed that women made such donations according to a family precedent for giving. That is, elite women sponsored building projects or donated funds for the public good because their own families were known for such philanthropic work and they were simply continuing this tradition. The women were acting, not as individuals, but as members of their families.

While I agree in the main with van Bremen's claim, some evidence suggests that exceptional women may have acted more independently. This article presents the case of Julia Antonia Eurydice, whose philanthropy has not been fully understood by

¹ Some of the initial ideas and research for this article were carried out in 2008 at the American Academy in Rome while participating in the NEH Summer Seminar "Identity and Self-Representation in the Subcultures of Ancient Rome." I would like to thank the anonymous readers of *L'Antiquité Classique* for their helpful suggestions.

² M. BOATWRIGHT, "Plancia Magna of Perge: Women's Roles and Status in Roman Asia Minor," in S.B. POMEROY (ed.), *Women's History and Ancient History*, Chapel Hill, 1991, p. 249-272 and eadem, "The City Gate of Plancia Magna in Perge," in E. D'AMBRA (ed.), *Roman Art in Context: An Anthology*, Englewood Cliffs, 1993, p. 189-207.

³ R. VAN BREMEN, *Limits of Participation: Women and Civic Life in the Greek East in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods*, Amsterdam, 1996, p. 96. S. DMITRIEV, *City Government in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor*, Oxford, 2005, p. 182-184 follows the same principle though his argument is not well-supported.

other scholars because the legal context has not been explored.⁴ In the mid-second century, Eurydice bequeathed money for the complete refurbishment of the *gerontikon* (council house) in Nysa, a small town located on the Maeander River in Asia Minor. The structure included finely crafted architectural moldings and marble revetment, and it also featured a statuary display of members of the Antonine imperial family as well as two of Eurydice's children. This article brings together the archaeological record, epigraphical evidence, and legal statutes in a way that creates a new interpretation for the dedication of the *gerontikon* at Nysa. Furthermore, I argue that the new *gerontikon*, financed through funds allocated in Eurydice's will, reinforced her family's connection with the city and people of Nysa while also juxtaposing her family and the imperial family.

It may seem problematic to assert that Eurydice was not merely following family precedent as a benefactor, for she certainly came from a rich and distinguished line. Although we know nothing, not even the names, of her parents or grandparents, we possess epigraphic and literary evidence for several of her ancestors as well as her immediate family.⁵ Eurydice descended from the royal family of Pontus, back several generations to Pythodorus, a very wealthy citizen of Nysa.⁶ He married an Antonia, and their daughter Pythodoris was married to Polemon, king of Pontus. Pythodoris ruled jointly with her husband and, when he died, she ruled Pontus alone during the early first century.⁷ Their daughter, Antonia Tryphaena, was a great benefactor of Cyzicus during the final years of Tiberius' reign and into Caligula's.⁸ She is also

⁴ For Eurydice, see *PIR*² I 644; M.-Th. RAEPSAET-CHARLIER, *Prosopographie des femmes de l'ordre sénatorial (I^{er}-II^e siècles)*, Louvain, 1987, p. 368 no. 428.

⁵ It is possible that nothing is known about her father because he was less illustrious than their other ancestors. E. HEMELRIJK, "City Patronesses in the Roman Empire," *Historia* 53 (2004), p. 219 provides the example of Aelia Celsinilla, who was honored by the *ordo decurionum* of Thuburbo Minus as *patrona perpetua* in the second or third century. The inscription mentions her son, who was consul and served as curator at Bulla Regia and Thuburbo Minus, though it omits her husband. His *cursus honorum* might have been detailed in an adjacent inscription.

⁶ A. STEIN, *RE*, XXIV (1963) col. 593-594, s.v. "Pythodorus (13b)." STRABO (*Geography* 14.1.42) records that Pythodorus moved from Nysa to Tralleis "because of its celebrity," was a friend of Pompey, and acquired more than 2,000 talents, which he passed down to his children.

⁷ R. SULLIVAN, "Dynasts in Pontus," *ANRW* II 7.2 (1980), p. 920. Th. MOMMSEN ("Observationes Epigraphicae XIII: de titulo reginae Pythodoridis Smyrnaeo," *Gesammelte Schriften* VIII, Berlin, 1913, p. 264-271) proposed that this Antonia, the wife of Pythodorus, was a daughter of Marcus Antonius the triumvir, but this suggestion has generated some objections by H. DESSAU ("Miscellanea Epigraphica I: de regina Pythodoride et de Pythodoride Iunior," *Eph. Epig.* 9 (1913), p. 691-696). The debate generated by these two scholars continues today along the same lines. See, e.g., P. THONEMANN, "Polemo, son of Polemo (Dio, 59.12.2)," *Ep. Anat.* 37 (2004), p. 148. On Pythodoris, see STRABO, *Geography* 12.3.29.

⁸ *PIR*² I 397; R.A. KEARSLEY, "Women and Public Life in Imperial Asia Minor: Hellenistic Tradition and Augustan Ideology," *Ancient West and East* 4 (2005), p. 117; J. THORNTON, "Una città e due regine. Eleutheria e lotta politica a Cizico fra gli Attalidi e i Giulio Claudi," *Mediterraneo Antico* 2 (1999), p. 529-538. Although Antonia Tryphaena is not named directly in literary accounts, Strabo refers to her and several inscriptions attest to her

named as queen on Thracian coinage for a period of eighteen years, during some of which time she is associated with her son, Polemon II.⁹ Julia Antonia Eurydice was the great-granddaughter of Antonia Tryphaena. Eurydice's husband, Sextus Iulius Maior, was suffect consul in A.D. 126, *legatus Augusti pro praetore* in Numidia, Lower Moesia, and Syria in the 120s and 130s, and proconsul in 141/2.¹⁰ Her three children will be discussed below. Thus, while some of Eurydice's ancestors were wealthy and even provided public benefactions, the nature of the dedication of the *gerontikon* distinguishes Eurydice from other female benefactors, as the evidence will demonstrate.

2. The Archaeological and Epigraphical Evidence

The direct evidence for the life of Julia Antonia Eurydice consists of only epigraphic material. She is mentioned on seven inscribed statue bases from the *gerontikon* at Nysa,¹¹ which was constructed by funds left according to her will. Two series of excavations in the early twentieth century provide some details for the *gerontikon* and its archaeological context, though the study of this site is still incomplete.¹² The *gerontikon* is located on the east side of the town of Nysa, immediately west of the agora. A deep ravine and stream divided this part of the town from the gymnasium and library on the west side. Strabo, who studied at Nysa, describes the town as consisting of 'two heights near the theater, beneath one of which the gymnasium of

activities (STRABO, *Geography* 12.3.29; *IGR* IV, 144-8; 1407). She was married to Cotys, king of Thrace, and bore three sons. After the murder of Cotys at the hands of his uncle Rhascuporis in 19, the lands he ruled passed to his sons and Tryphaena moved to Cyzicus where she was a priestess of Livia and was credited with various civic improvements (*IGR* IV, 144-8; D. MAGIE, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor*, Princeton, 1950, p. 513). A thank-offering set up in 37 or 38 to Poseidon after Tryphaena paid for the dredging of a lagoon between Cyzicus and the mainland, calls Tryphaena "daughter and mother of kings, queen herself" (*IGR* IV, 147; F.W. HASLUCK, "An Inscribed base from Cyzicus," *JHS* 22 [1902], p. 128).

⁹ R. SULLIVAN, *l.c.* (n. 7), p. 923; W. WADDINGTON, E. BABELON, and Th. REINACH, *Recueil général des monnaies grecques*, Paris, 1925², p. 22-24.

¹⁰ *PIR*² I 397.

¹¹ *SEG* IV, 402-408.

¹² W. VON DIEST, *Nysa ad Maeandrum. Nach Forschungen und Aufnahmen in den Jahren 1907 und 1909*, Berlin, 1913. von Diest excavated the area in 1907-1909 and made a basic plan of the building. Kourouniotis excavated in 1921-1922, during which time the statue bases and various blocks of the architrave were discovered. See K. KOUROUNIOTIS, "Ἀνασκαφαὶ ἐν Νύσῃ τῆ ἐπὶ Μαίανδρῳ," *Arch. Delt.* 7 (1921-1922), p. 1-88 and 227-246. Since 1990 a new team of scholars sponsored by the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Ankara University has renewed study in Nysa. See M. KADIOĞLU, "Die *scaenae frons* des Theaters von Nysa am Mäander," PhD Diss. Universität Freiburg, 2002; idem and Y. KAGAN KADIOĞLU, "Native of the Marble in Ancient City, Nysa on the Meander of the Hellenistic and Roman Period, Aydin-Western Anatolia-Turkey," *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science* 2 (2008), p. 1-7. W. McDONALD, *The Political Meeting Places of the Greeks*, Baltimore, 1943, p. 224 reports that a late antique fire devastated the structure, but the building was also later renovated and re-used in the Byzantine era.

the youths lies, and on the other the agora and *gerontikon*.¹³ The structure he identifies as τὸ γερωντικόν was a predecessor to the one under discussion here, though traces of it can be seen in the foundations of the second century building.¹⁴

Just like many structures in Asia Minor identified as *bouleuteria*, or council houses, the form of this building is similar to Roman theaters of the imperial period.¹⁵ Twelve rows of seating, divided into four *cunei*, survive in more or less good condition. The semi-circular orchestra was paved with marble slabs and *opus sectile* decoration.¹⁶ The floor of the stage, raised 0.85 m. above the orchestra, would have functioned as the speaker's platform too. The back wall of the stage, or *scaenae frons*, was originally revetted with marble slabs and punctuated by five doorways.¹⁷ Each of the four large podia, set in place across the stage platform to flank each entrance, carried two columns, forming niches (*naiskoi* or *aediculae*) for portrait statues.¹⁸ The best preserved of the four podia is ca. 2.00 m. long, 0.85 m. wide, and 1.05 m. high.¹⁹ The *parados* walls, which support the wings of the auditorium, terminate adjacent to the orchestra in pilasters. Carbonized wood and iron girders indicate the original existence of a roof.

In addition to the architectural structure, the remains include sculptural and epigraphic material. Parts of seven inscribed statue bases, two male statue bodies, and the feet of a female statue still attached to the base have been recovered from the *gerontikon*. The inscriptions inform us that portrait statues of members of the Antonine family were installed here. They include Marcus Aurelius, Lucius Verus, Faustina the Younger, Domitia Faustina, and Antoninus Pius. In addition, the base of Sextus Julius Maior Antoninus Pythodorus, who dedicated all the statues on behalf of his mother, and that of his sister Julia survive.²⁰ No dedicatory plaque for the building itself has been found.

¹³ *Geography* 14.1.43: τῷ δὲ θεάτρῳ δύο ἄκραι, ὧν τῇ μὲν ὑπόκειται τὸ γυμνάσιον τῶν νέων, τῇ δ' ἄγορὰ καὶ τὸ γερωντικόν (Translation in-text by author).

¹⁴ R. MEINEL, *Das Odeion*, Frankfurt am Main, 1982, p. 131.

¹⁵ von DIEST, *o.c.* (n. 12), p. 36. J. Ch. BALTŸ, *Curia Ordinis: Recherches d'architecture et d'urbanisme antiques sur les curies provinciales du monde romain*, Bruxelles, 1991, p. 448-453 identifies the structure at Nysa as a *bouleuterion*, since he says that sufficient evidence is lacking for the specific identification of the structure as a *gerontikon*.

¹⁶ M. KADIOĖLU, "Der Opus Sectile-Boden aus dem Gerontikon-Buleuterion von Nysa ad Maeandrum," *Studien zum antiken Kleinasien*, IV, Bonn, 1999, p. 175-188.

¹⁷ For a thought-provoking article on aedicular façades, see B. BURRELL, "False Fronts: Separating the Aedicular Façade from the Imperial Cult in Roman Asia Minor," *AJA* 110 (2006), p. 437-469. Two essential works that discuss the development of *scaenae frons* architecture are H. LAUTER, *Die Architektur des Hellenismus*, Darmstadt, 1986; and H. von HESBERG, "Elemente der frühkaiserzeitlichen Aedicula-Architektur," *ÖJh* 53 (1981-1982), p. 43-86.

¹⁸ BALTŸ, *o.c.* (n. 15), p. 449.

¹⁹ McDONALD, *o.c.* (n. 12), p. 220.

²⁰ *SEG* IV, 402-408. See A. STEIN, *RE*, XXIV (1963), col. 593-594, s.v. "Pythodorus (14)" for a discussion of this Pythodorus and remarks concerning the date of the dedication of the *gerontikon*.

The elliptical base with feet belonging to a female statue was recovered in backfill in the orchestra and could have represented any of the three women.²¹ The two male statue bodies are a nearly complete togate statue and a cuirassed torso. The togate statue is lacking the feet, the lower part of the right leg, both hands, and part of the upper right arm. The portrait head, which was made for insertion into the statue body, is missing. The remains of the togate statue were discovered in front of the third niche from the east, where the inscribed base of Marcus Aurelius was still in situ, making it quite likely that the togate statue portrayed the young heir.²²

The cuirassed torso is damaged on its left side, apparently having been sheared off at an angle in a fall. Although no portrait head was recovered, this statue probably represented the emperor Antoninus Pius.²³ The fragmentary inscription for the emperor was recovered nearby. The statue of Lucius Verus is not extant; the pedestal inscribed with his name was found near the second niche from the east.²⁴

The dedicatory inscription to Faustina II was recovered in pieces scattered over the floor of the corridor adjacent to the *aediculae*, and the inscription to her daughter Domitia Faustina was found near the western pilaster of the *parados* wall.²⁵ The inscription of Sextus Pythodorus was discovered on the orchestra side of the western pilaster, while that of his sister was near the eastern pilaster.²⁶ According to the find spots, the archaeological remains, and comparisons with similar displays, a possible reconstruction of the statuary group in the *gerontikon* places the portrait statues of Domitia Faustina, Lucius Verus, Marcus Aurelius, and Faustina II in the four niches across the stage. The statue of Antoninus Pius, the most important of the whole group as the reigning emperor, might have been placed in a niche above the middle doorway, as seen in other *scaenae frons* statuary displays.²⁷ The statues of Pythodorus and his sister were situated on top of the pilasters on either side of the orchestra.

²¹ KOUROUNIOTIS, *l.c.* (n. 12), p. 76.

²² KOUROUNIOTIS, *l.c.* (n. 12), p. 70.

²³ Although H. NIEMEYER, *Studien zur statuarischen Darstellung der römischen Kaiser*, Berlin, 1968, p. 85 suggested that the cuirassed torso had been intended to portray Lucius Verus, M. WEGNER, *Die Herrscherbildnisse in antoninischer Zeit*, Berlin, 1939, p. 150 asserts, instead, that it should be identified as the statue body of Antoninus Pius. Wegner reasons that it is unlikely that the younger Lucius Verus – only a teen-ager at the time – would have been represented in military clothing while the older (and favorite of the emperor himself) Marcus Aurelius was portrayed togate. K. FITTSCHEN, reviewing Niemeyer's work at *BJb* 170 (1970), p. 546, agrees that the cuirassed statue represented Antoninus.

²⁴ KOUROUNIOTIS, *l.c.* (n. 12), p. 70.

²⁵ KOUROUNIOTIS, *l.c.* (n. 12), p. 71-72.

²⁶ KOUROUNIOTIS, *l.c.* (n. 12), p. 72 and 246.

²⁷ K. FITTSCHEN, *Prinzenbildnisse antoninischer Zeit*, Mainz, 1999, p. 134. He points to the theaters at Orange, of Herodes Atticus in Athens, and at Ephesus for comparison. These stage buildings incorporated a niche for a statue above the middle doorway, although they all have two tiers of columnar decoration, while the *gerontikon* at Nysa apparently had only a single level. The remains of the *scaenae frons* of the *gerontikon* are incomplete, thus making Fittschen's reconstruction possible but not conclusive.

Figure 1 shows a hypothetical reconstruction of the *scaenae frons* based upon the archaeological remains and other similar aediculated statuary displays.

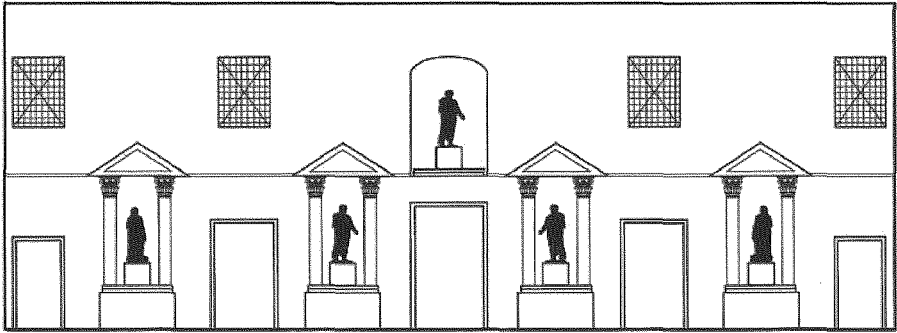


Figure 1: Nysa, hypothetical reconstruction of the *scaenae frons* of the *gerontikon*. From left to right, statues of Domitia Faustina, Lucius Verus, Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, and Faustina the Younger (drawing by Paul Bruski, with permission).

The inscribed bases narrow down an approximate time period when the statues were erected. The text on each of the statue bases of the imperial family follows the same pattern: the name of the individual; that individual's relationship to the family ("son of..." or "daughter of..."); the name of the dedicator, Julius Antoninus Pythodorus; and the phrase ἐκ διαθήκης Ἰουλίας Ἀντωνίας Εὐρυδικῆς τῆς αὐτοῦ μητρὸς.²⁸ The meaning of this last phrase will be addressed below.

On all the bases of the imperial family, Antoninus Pius is referred to as *Sebastos*, the Greek equivalent of *Augustus*, and in the inscription naming Faustina the Younger, her mother is already *Thea*; thus the installation of the statues must date between 141 and 161.²⁹ Since the statue of Domitia Faustina, born in November 147,

²⁸ For example, the base (*SEG* IV, 404) which once held the statue of Faustina the Younger is inscribed Φαυστειναν, Αὐτοκράτο/ρος Καίσαρος Τίτου Αἰλίου/ Ἀδριανοῦ Ἀντωνίνου Σεβαστοῦ Εὐσεβοῦς καὶ θεᾶς || Φαυστεινῆς θυγατέρα, / Ἰούλιος Ἀντωνίνος / Πυθόδωρος ἐκ διαθήκης Ἰουλί/ας Ἀντωνίας Εὐρυδικῆς / τῆς αὐτοῦ μητρὸς ("Julius Antoninus Pythodorus (dedicates this to) Faustina, daughter of Emperor Caesar Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Pius Augustus and Diva Faustina, from the will of his mother Julia Antonia Eurydice").

²⁹ It is somewhat unusual that Faustina the Elder was not represented in this Antonine statue gallery, since even after her death she was portrayed broadly on coins as well as in sculpture. For example, the Nymphæum at Olympia, dedicated in 153, included a portrait statue of Faustina the Elder in addition to several other members of the Antonine family and the family of the dedicators, Herodes Atticus and his wife Regilla. See R. BOL, *Das Statuenprogramm des Herodes-Atticus-Nymphäums* (Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, *Olympische Forschungen*, 15), Berlin, 1984, p. 100 and R. MEYERS, "Visual Representations of the Antonine Empresses," PhD Diss., Duke University (2006), p. 272-273.

was included, a more exact date for the statuary group must be after 147.³⁰ In fact, if no other member of the imperial family was originally included in the installation, then a more exact date of 148-50 can be assigned since these are the only times when Domitia Faustina was the only living child of Faustina and Marcus Aurelius.³¹ The surviving epigraphic evidence thus points to a date for the erection of the statues.

3. The Nature of the Dedication

In his description of the topography of Nysa, Strabo uses the term τὸ γεροντικόν, a word which has been variously interpreted.³² It was not a gymnasium for elderly men, in contrast to a gymnasium for youth, but rather a place for the council of elders to meet.³³ Associations of elders existed in nearly every city in the Roman imperial period, especially in Asia Minor.³⁴ The *gerousia* may have started with a religious function in certain cities, as it did in Ephesus, but by the early imperial period, they operated as social entities.³⁵ These associations of elders acquired prominence in their towns and even influenced public affairs, perhaps on account of the distinguished age of the members. Inscriptions often join the *gerousia* with the βουλή, δῆμος, and νέοι in bestowing honors or thanks to individuals. Several honorary inscriptions attest to the *gerousia* at Nysa in this manner.³⁶

It is noteworthy that a woman used her money to refurbish a structure that was, in its early history, associated with an organization of the town's elders – senior *men*, that is. Perhaps her husband or a male relative was a member of the *gerousia* or she

³⁰ Faustina the Younger, on her inscribed base, lacks the epithet *Sebaste* (*Augusta* in Latin), which she received on the day after her daughter's birth. BALTY, *o.c.* (n. 15), p. 450 n. 10 references the discussion of this omission.

³¹ KOUROUNIOTIS, *l.c.* (n. 12), p. 77 supposes that the *gerontikon* was built between the marriage of Marcus Aurelius and Faustina the Younger in 145 and 147, and that the statue of their first child was added at some time subsequent to her birth. However, the chronology of the children of Marcus and Faustina was not established until FITTSCHEN 1999, *o.c.* (n. 27).

³² BALTY, *o.c.* (n. 15), p. 452; R. MEINEL, *o.c.* (n. 14), p. 319-320.

³³ In their edition, H. Leonard JONES and J.R. Sitlington STERRETT (*The Geography of Strabo*, London, 1917 [Loeb Classical Library]) render *gerontikon* as the former, making it parallel the gymnasium of the youths mentioned in the first part of Strabo's comment. Most recently, S. RADT translated τὸ γεροντικόν as "das Senatsgebäude" in his commentary on the *Geography* (*Strabons Geographika. Mit Übersetzung und Kommentar*, Bd. 4, Göttingen, 2005), supporting the idea that the council of elders convened in this structure.

³⁴ MAGIE, *o.c.* (n. 8), p. 63. For more on *gerousiai*, see J.A. VAN ROSSUM, *De Gerousia in de Griekse steden van het Romeinse Rijk*, Leiden, 1988; SEG 38.1975; J.H. OLIVER, *The Sacred Gerousia*, Princeton, 1941 (*Hesperia Supplement*, 6); and J. ROBERT and L. ROBERT, *BE* (1959), p. 65.

³⁵ MAGIE, *o.c.* (n. 8), p. 63 and 855 n. 38: Beginning in the fourth century B.C.E., the *gerousia* at Ephesus participated in the administration of the Temple of Artemis. Cf. OLIVER, *o.c.* (n. 34).

³⁶ For example: RAMSAY, *BCH* 7 (1883), p. 272-274, no. 15; DIETL, *Nysa* 8, no. C = McCABE, *Nysa* 38.

was attempting to pave the way for her son to gain admittance in the future.³⁷ Although quite rare, women were admitted as members of a *gerousia*, and even a couple are known to have become club presidents (a *gerousiarchissa*), as these organizations became more like “social clubs” in the second century.³⁸ In the end, Eurydice’s exact motivation for reconstructing the *gerontikon* cannot be known. Regardless of this, her donation would have made an impression on her fellow townspeople since it was located next to the agora and was used as a meeting hall for a distinguished group of citizens.

4. The Legal Rights of Women Pertaining to Inheritance and Bequests

The ways by which women in the Roman Empire acquired increasing legal freedom have been detailed by other scholars.³⁹ Therefore only the aspects of the law that are most relevant will be treated here. First, a woman could inherit property from her father and husband, as well as other relatives.⁴⁰ If a woman did not enter into a marriage *cum manu* with her husband, a type of matrimony which had fallen out of usual practice by the early Empire in any case, she kept control of her own property, except her dowry, which was in her husband’s control.⁴¹ Furthermore, a woman *sui iuris* and married *sine manu* controls any property she acquires after marriage.⁴²

In early Roman times, *tutela mulierum* limited the right of women to dispose of their property after death, but gradually women acquired more control over these matters as well. A woman had to seek her *tutor*’s approval for drafting a will, though not for its contents, but women who had acquired the *ius (trium) liberorum* (“the right of three children”) were not required to obtain authorization.⁴³ The *ius liberorum*, established under Augustus as part of his social legislation, exempted a mother of

³⁷ Some individuals have left record of financing building projects in order to secure city offices: *I.Laodikeia am Lykos* I 65.1-3, 70.2-4; *TAM* V 693.5-8; and *I.Sestos* 55.3-5.

³⁸ A long inscription from Sebaste in Phrygia, dated to A.D. 99 (*BCH* 7 [1883], p. 452-455, no. III, col. I, 1.47; col. 2, l. 21 and 23; and *IGR* 4.690) lists the names of seventy-one individuals admitted into the *gerousia*, among whom are three women. An inscription (*IG* X, 2¹ 177) honoring Flavia Claudia Silvana set up by the βουλὴ and δήμος of Thessalonike in the mid-third century includes the title γεροισιάρχισσα. The number of female members in *gerousiai* in the whole Greek East attested is only five: four from Asia Minor and one from Thessalonike (cf. P. TREBILCO, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, Cambridge, 1987, p. 123). These women were clearly exceptional.

³⁹ J. GARDNER, *Women in Roman Law and Society*, Bloomington, 1986; R. VAN BREMEN, “Women and Wealth,” in A. CAMERON and A. KUHRT (eds), *Images of Women in Antiquity*, Detroit, 1983, p. 223-242 and eadem, *o.c.* (n. 3); S. TREGGIARI, *Roman Marriage*, Oxford, 1991; and J. EVANS GRUBBS, *Women and the Law in the Roman Empire*, London, 2002, among others.

⁴⁰ VAN BREMEN, *o.c.* (n. 39), p. 232 cites an example from Xanthos of a woman who gave a benefaction from the inheritance left to her by her husband (*TAM* II.1 no. 394; imperial age).

⁴¹ GRUBBS, *o.c.* (n. 39), p. 98-101; cf. TREGGIARI, *o.c.* (n. 39), p. 16-34 on the decline of *manus* marriages.

⁴² TREGGIARI, *o.c.* (n. 39), p. 32.

⁴³ GARDNER, *o.c.* (n. 39), p. 168.

three children from needing a *tutor* in business transactions. While she was alive, she could dispose of her property however she saw fit, and she could draw up a will without a guardian's consent.⁴⁴ Inscriptions from the Greek East refer to *teknon dikaion* ("the right of children"), which demonstrates that this Roman law applied to Roman citizens there as well. An early third century sarcophagus from Ephesus, for example, records a letter from Claudia Antonia Tatiane to her brother Aemilius Aristides, which grants him and his wife the right to burial in Tatiane's *heroon*.⁴⁵ She states that she has "the right of children" (*teknon dikaion*), thus making the legal transaction valid. By the time of Eurydice's death in the mid-second century, most freeborn women were able to bequeath their property with virtually no restrictions.⁴⁶

Sometimes inscriptions record actions carried out according to the stipulations of an individual's will. The inscriptions on all the statue bases indicate that Pythodorus set them up *ἐκ διαθήκης* Ἰουλίας Ἀντωνίας Εὐρυδικῆς τῆς αὐτοῦ μητρὸς. The phrase *ἐκ διαθήκης* ("from the will") is not uncommon in inscriptions in the Greek-speaking world.⁴⁷ A few examples should suffice to understand the epigraphical application of the term. An honorary inscription on a statue base from Mylasa states that in 114 a Flavia Polla set up a statue to Trajan *ἐκ διαθήκης* [το]ῦ πατρὸς αὐτῆς [Τί]του Φλαουίου [-]ορέου ("from the will of her father Titus Flavius").⁴⁸ Artemis, daughter of Poplios, in Aphrodisias set up an honorary inscription for her brother Bakchios *κατὰ τὴν διαθήκην* ("according to his will").⁴⁹ In Miletus a Philodemos Hegemonos honored his mother on account of her *ἀρετή* and *εὐνοία* and *κατὰ τὴν διαθήκην*.⁵⁰ So in these three instances we see individuals honoring their family members with statues or dedicatory plaques according to the provisions of the decedent's will. Our inscriptions from Nysa, therefore, do fit a pattern of commemoration that was common in Asia Minor.

Although we do not possess the will of Eurydice, certain deductions about her legal situation and the will's contents can be made.⁵¹ First, it is likely that Eurydice's

⁴⁴ *Inst.* I.194. GRUBBS, *o.c.* (n. 39), p. 23-42 includes legal and non-legal documents concerning *tutela mulierum* and the *ius liberorum*. A freedwoman qualified for the exemption if she was the mother of four children.

⁴⁵ *SEG* IV.544 = *IEph.* 2121.

⁴⁶ GARDNER, *o.c.* (n. 39), p. 167-168 also points out that a testator, female or male, had to be *sui iuris*. If a woman was *in potestate* of a father or husband, she could not make a will. The *Lex Falcidia*, passed in 40 B.C.E., stipulated that the testator must leave at least one-fourth of his estate to his heir(s), while the remaining three-fourths could be distributed as legacies (*Digest* 35.2).

⁴⁷ According to my research, assisted by the database of Searchable Greek Inscriptions maintained by the Packard Humanities Institute (see <http://epigraphy.packhum.org/inscriptions/>), at least 219 inscriptions from Asia Minor contain the phrase or a variant.

⁴⁸ *IMyl* 35.

⁴⁹ *CIG* 2806.

⁵⁰ *IMilet* I 3, 168.

⁵¹ A number of wills are attested either wholly or in part. See M. AMELLOTTI, *Il testamento romano attraverso la prassi documentale*, Firenze, 1966 and E. CHAMPLIN, *Final Judgments:*

husband, Sextus Iulius Maior, predeceased her. Epigraphic evidence records a twenty-year career trajectory for him, and the last dated office he held, proconsul, was in 141/2.⁵² If he were still alive at the time of the dedication of the *gerontikon*, he probably would have been named in the inscriptions as Eurydice's husband.

Next, Eurydice was mother to three children. The name of her daughter Julia survives from a fragment of a statue base from the *gerontikon*, as mentioned above. In addition to his name on all the statue bases, Pythodorus is recorded on inscriptions from Epidaurus and Pergamum and is mentioned by Pausanias.⁵³ Little is known about her other son, M. Iulius Maior Maximianus, except that an honorary inscription in Pergamum names him *quaestor pro praetore* and *aedile*.⁵⁴ Being the mother of three children Eurydice was qualified to claim the *ius liberorum*; whatever wealth she acquired before and during her marriage was hers to bequeath as she wished. She may have divided it between her three children or have given it solely to Pythodorus.⁵⁵

How are we to interpret more precisely the phrase ἐκ διαθήκης on the statue base inscriptions? I argue that the probable mechanism in place was a *fideicommissum* stipulated in Eurydice's will. With this device, a testator establishes a trust, leaving property to an intermediary, who, by his faith, dispenses it to the intended beneficiary.⁵⁶ Augustus made *fideicommissa* enforceable by law, instead of relying on the heir's *fides*.⁵⁷

Some scholars⁵⁸ have assumed that Pythodorus was the actual benefactor of Nysa, since his name is in the nominative in the inscriptions, which generally identifies the dedicator, but I do not believe this assumption reflects the situation. The inscriptions state that the dedications were made "from the will of Eurydice", which, as has been shown, was a common inclusion on dedicatory inscriptions. I argue that Pythodorus inherited a great deal of money from his mother, which enabled him to renovate the *gerontikon* at Nysa and to undertake further building projects and dedications elsewhere in Asia Minor and Greece. He was honored at Pergamum in the mid-

Duty and Emotion in Roman Wills 200 B.C.-A.D. 250, Berkeley, 1991, p. 187-200 for lists of wills documented in literature, papyri, and inscriptions.

⁵² *IG* IV² 1, 454. Eurydice would have been considered a *clarissima femina* because of her husband's senatorial status. Cf. Ulpian, *Digest* 1.9.8 and RAEPSAET-CHARLIER, *o.c.* (n. 4), p. 7-8.

⁵³ *IG* IV² 1, 88 and 514; *IPergamon* III no. 23; Paus. 2.27.6.

⁵⁴ *PIR*² IV 399; *IGR* IV, 407.

⁵⁵ On bequests made directly to towns, see D. JOHNSTON, "Munificence and *Municipia*: Bequests to Towns in Classical Roman Law," *JRS* 75 (1985), p. 105-125.

⁵⁶ D. JOHNSTON, *Roman Law in Context*, Cambridge, 1999, p. 48; idem, *The Roman Law of Trusts*, Oxford, 1988.

⁵⁷ *Inst.* 2.23.1. A special *fideicommissary praetor* was eventually set up to oversee the dispensation of *fideicommissa*.

⁵⁸ E. THOMAS, *Monumentality and the Roman Empire. Architecture in the Antonine Age*, Oxford, 2007, p. 134. BALTY, *o.c.* (n. 15), p. 449 calls Pythodorus the donor. Although FITTSCHEN, *o.c.* (n. 27), p. 134-135 mentions that a testamentary order from his mother was the impetus for the dedication, he generally refers to Pythodorus as the individual responsible for the statuary arrangement.

second century.⁵⁹ He built temples to Salus, Asclepius, and Apollo at Epidaurus and was honored there as *euergetes* in the 160s.⁶⁰ In fact, von Gaertringen years ago asserted that Pythodorus acquired the means to be philanthropic from the inheritance of his mother.⁶¹ No dedication or benefaction by Pythodorus can be securely dated before the *gerontikon*. Thus, it seems most likely that only after the death of his mother and his subsequent inheritance was Pythodorus able to become a great benefactor in his own right. The name of Pythodorus appears on the statue bases as dedicator for he was responsible for carrying out his mother's wishes according to her will, just like the other inscriptions referenced above. Pythodorus arranged the refurbishment of the *gerontikon* and the statues of the imperial family, himself, and his sister. Eurydice may have promised the new meeting house for the *gerousia* before she died but was not able to see the work through to fruition so she stipulated in her will that her son carry out her plan.⁶² Marcellus, for example, reports a man whose will stipulated that his heir should build a public portico in his hometown and fill it with statues.⁶³

5. Women as Benefactors

I argue, therefore, that Eurydice was legally and financially capable of sponsoring this public dedication. It is a thorny issue to sort out, however, just how independently she might have acted. Many inscriptions provide obvious examples of women who were regarded as esteemed members of wealthy families. Some texts thank women for their benefactions or simply offer praise because of their honorable virtues, but a number of them are actually dominated by references to other family members who held office, made donations, or were otherwise admirable citizens.⁶⁴ For example, a woman named Claudia from Patara was honored for her benefactions, which were given in the same kind nature as her husband's philanthropy.⁶⁵ The *demoi* of Termessos praised the widow Atalante for providing grain during a shortage and

⁵⁹ *IPergamon* III, no. 23.

⁶⁰ PAUS. 2.27.6; *IG IV*² 1, 88; *IG IV* 1², 684.

⁶¹ F. HILLER VON GAERTRINGEN, "Antoninus?" *Hermes* 64 (1928), p. 63-68. C. HABICHT, "Iulius Maior aus Nysa, Eponym in Kyzikos," *Hyperboreus* 11 (2005), p. 115 states that the statues were set up by Pythodorus but financed by the proceeds from his mother.

⁶² Various examples could be referenced as comparanda. In the second century at Argos, Claudia Olympia carried out the construction of a bath complex, which had been promised by her father (*IG IV*, 593). The will of Caelia Macrina from Terracina declares that she had arranged for the construction of a building and left funds for its upkeep (cf. AMELOTTI, *o.c.* [n. 51], p. 23). See also P. GARNSEY, "Aspects of the Decline of the Urban Aristocracy in the Empire," *ANRW* II.1 (1974), p. 239-240 for the obligation of heirs to carry out the testator's wishes and obligations.

⁶³ *Digest* 34.2.6.2.

⁶⁴ For example, *I.Didyma* 381.0-5, 7-14; *MAMA* VIII 654.4-6; *SEG* 48, 1700; and VAN BREMEN, *o.c.* (n. 3), p. 42.

⁶⁵ *SEG* 46, 1715.13-16.

honored her with a bronze statue in the agora for her kindness.⁶⁶ The language of the inscription specifies that she acted like her beneficent ancestors. A number of other inscriptions place a woman's public acts in the context of her family's achievements. However, in the inscriptions from the *gerontikon* in Nysa, mention of Eurydice's beneficent relatives is noticeably lacking. While various illustrious relatives could have been included in the dedicatory inscriptions in the *gerontikon*, they were not. This omission may demonstrate that women did not have to be viewed in public simply as members of their families, but they could, with liberties guaranteed by legal statute, act independently in the public sphere to donate their own funds for building projects, statues, feasts, and the like. Julia Antonia Eurydice was able to accumulate and dispense her wealth according to her own wishes, and, she may have been an exceptional woman who acted in parallel to a family tradition of public generosity.

We may question Eurydice's motives for financing a public building. In order to do this, Eurydice's benefactions must be placed within the context of the activities of other female benefactors. We continue to learn more about the involvement of Roman women in public society. Elite females, just like males, actively contributed to what is now termed *euergetism*, performing good works for cities and associations of people within cities.⁶⁷ Some individuals financed building projects, public works, or entertainment as part of their (unwritten) duties in a municipal office. Others made voluntary benefactions to their community.⁶⁸ The example of Plancia Magna was already cited, but there are many others. A woman named Menodora achieved high-level offices, such as *demiourgos* and *dekaprotos*, in the Pamphylian city of Sillyon in the second century.⁶⁹ She controlled a great amount of wealth, not only her own but also her children's, and used her resources to fund building projects, donations, and *alimenta*. Claudia Metrodora was gymnasiarch four times in Chios, provided oil two times for the Herakleian Games, and financed baths and provided public meals.⁷⁰ Ummidia Quadratilla, a benefactress of Casinum in Italy, financed the amphitheater and a temple. Upon her death at 79 years old, she left two-thirds of her estate to her

⁶⁶ TAM III, no. 4. Cf. VAN BREMEN, *o.c.* (n. 3), p. 189 and 260. TAM III, no. 62 records the statuary dedication by the *technitai* of the city. She was apparently also her father's heir, for another inscription (SEG 41, 1258) records that she performed some unknown action according to his will. This inscription also names her grandfather, which she suggests we are dealing with three generations of a distinguished family.

⁶⁷ P. VEYNE, *Le pain et le cirque*, Paris, 1976 has had the most impact on the study of this phenomenon. See also Ph. GAUTHIER, *Les cités grecques et leurs bienfaiteurs*, Athens, 1985; P. GARNSEY, "The Generosity of Veyne," *JRS* 81 (1991), p. 164-168; and A. ZUIDERHOEK, *The Politics of Munificence in the Roman Empire: Citizens, Elites, and Benefactors in Asia Minor*, Cambridge, 2009.

⁶⁸ VEYNE, *o.c.* (n. 67), p. 10-11 distinguishes between *euergetism ob honorem* and voluntary benefactions.

⁶⁹ VAN BREMEN, *o.c.* (n. 3), p. 77. The *dekaprotia* was a financial liturgy, in which the official made a guarantee, with his own property, of transmitting the correct amount of tribute to the Roman authorities. For further discussion of Menodora's benefactions, see also VAN BREMEN, "A Family from Sillyon," *ZPE* 104 (1994), p. 43-56.

⁷⁰ VAN BREMEN, *o.c.* (n. 3), p. 72 and Appendix 2, Chios. She may have performed these last two benefactions as part of her official obligations.

grandson and the remaining third to her granddaughter.⁷¹ Numerous other inscriptions reveal that women in the early empire took on prominent offices and liturgies, dedicated statues, and sponsored elaborate building projects in a number of cities. Women's participation in municipal magistracies and benefactions was not a phenomenon new to the second century. Rather, female elites had been playing prominent public roles in Greek cities since the second century B.C.⁷² Women were holding some of the same offices and making the same kind of benefactions as male citizens, and, additionally, the women were being honored by their cities in similar fashion to the men.⁷³ Many men and women in the eastern parts of the Roman Empire were honored in inscriptions as εὐεργέτης for having performed some good deed for their cities.

We do not know whether Eurydice held any official positions or sponsored any civic buildings or dedications during her lifetime, but funds disbursed according to her will financed an ambitious building project in Nysa. What might have prompted her to this action? Why would Eurydice have chosen to spend her money on the construction of a *gerontikon* in particular?

While certainly Eurydice's family was far from unknown in Nysa, I suggest that Eurydice was carving out a niche for herself in her hometown so that she could be remembered after her death. Benefactors undertake public works for a number of reasons. Monuments in particular stand out because their "primary function... was as devices with which to assert the place of individuals within society."⁷⁴ An individual who built a large monument in the center of the city was making sure that other people saw the monument and her name inscribed in stone, thereby establishing a relationship between the donor and her fellow residents. The location of the *gerontikon* next to the agora in Nysa guaranteed that the new council house was noticed by a large number of people, and certainly residents would have talked about a new building too. Furthermore, the donor ensured that her name and her kindness would be remembered even after her death, especially pertinent to the dedication of Eurydice since it came from her will.

Eurydice's donation strengthened her ties with Nysa, by demonstrating her philanthropy in rebuilding an older structure, which served as the meeting area for an important organization. The *gerousia* was a prominent association and certainly having one's name on its meeting chamber was an honor for the benefactor, while also making her the object of admiration. In addition to making a name as a local benefactor, Eurydice also strengthened the connection between her family and the

⁷¹ R. SYME, "The Ummidii," *Historia* 17 (1968), p. 76. For the inscription on the amphitheater, see *ILS* 5628. J.W. TELLEGEN, *The Roman Law of Succession in the Letters of Pliny the Younger*, Zutphen, 1982, p. 136; PLINY, *Ep.* 7.24.

⁷² VAN BREMEN, *o.c.* (n. 39), p. 224.

⁷³ VAN BREMEN, *o.c.* (n. 39), p. 223-225 for women, such as Euxenia and Menodora, who were honored with statues and inscriptions in Megalopolis and Silyon, respectively; Cf. PLEKET, *Epigraphica*, vol. II. *Texts on the Social History of the Greek World*, Leiden, 1969.

⁷⁴ G. WOOLF, "Monumental Writing and the Expansion of Roman Society," *JRS* 86 (1996), p. 29.

imperial family. The juxtaposition of statues of the imperial family and the donor's family causes viewers to see a relationship between the two. Just as the emperor was entrusted with the care of the empire, so the family of Eurydice attended to the needs of their town. The statue gallery reinforces the social hierarchy consisting of the citizens of Nysa, Eurydice and her family, and the imperial family.⁷⁵ Furthermore the monument promotes the continuity of the imperial family by displaying statues of the current emperor's two heirs, Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, and also a statue of Marcus' first child. Hope for the future of the imperial family is expressed in the same context as the memory of the benefactor Eurydice.⁷⁶

Therefore the new *gerontikon*, financed from Eurydice's estate, established Eurydice's public generosity for the city and people of Nysa while also forging a relationship between her family and the imperial family in the eyes of the citizens of Nysa. The dedication at Nysa is in line with a number of other monuments that juxtapose statues of the imperial family with statues of the donor's own family. The dedication by Plancia Magna at Perge may again be referenced, for the triple archway and gate she erected included statues of Trajan's and Hadrian's families as well as Plancia's relatives, city founders, and gods.⁷⁷ The Nymphaeum at Olympia, set up by Herodes Atticus and Regilla in 153, displayed statues of eleven members of the Antonine family and probably eleven statues of the donor's family in niches set it a two-tiered semi-circular fountain building.⁷⁸

6. Conclusion

In this article I have brought together the archaeological and epigraphical evidence regarding the donation of Julia Antonia Eurydice in Nysa. After reviewing the legal options that allowed women in the mid-second century to inherit and distribute their money essentially without restrictions, it is possible to suggest that Eurydice may have independently set up a trust for the financing of the *gerontikon* and its impressive decoration. A strong family tradition for euergetism certainly existed in Roman Asia Minor, as several scholars have already demonstrated. Many inscriptions seem to indicate that women participated in public generosity solely because they were members of beneficent families. Some evidence, however, does not fit into this narrow interpretation. When this evidence is considered along with the legal statutes in mind, we may find exceptional women like Julia Antonia Eurydice. Not only did Eurydice provide a necessary structure in a well-traveled part of town, but also the *gerontikon* itself and the statuary display inside established and reinforced the social

⁷⁵ A. KALINOWSKI, "The Vedii Antonini: Aspects of Patronage and Benefaction in Second-Century Ephesos," *Phoenix* 56 (2002), p. 143 makes a similar argument for the Vedii in Ephesus through their patronage of several buildings.

⁷⁶ One further elaboration of this idea, in reference to the continuity of the imperial family, can be found in S. FISCHLER, "Imperial Cult: Engendering the Cosmos," in L. FOXHALL, J. SALMON (eds), *When Men were Men. Masculinity, Power and Identity in Classical Antiquity*, London, 1998, p. 165-183.

⁷⁷ BOATWRIGHT, *o.c.* (n. 2).

⁷⁸ BOL, *o.c.* (n. 29).

hierarchy that existed between the inhabitants of Nysa, the wealthy family of Eurydice, and the imperial family. With her public generosity she ensured that her name would endure for generations in her hometown. By examining other remarkable women, we will be able to learn more about female-sponsored euergetism in the Roman Empire.

