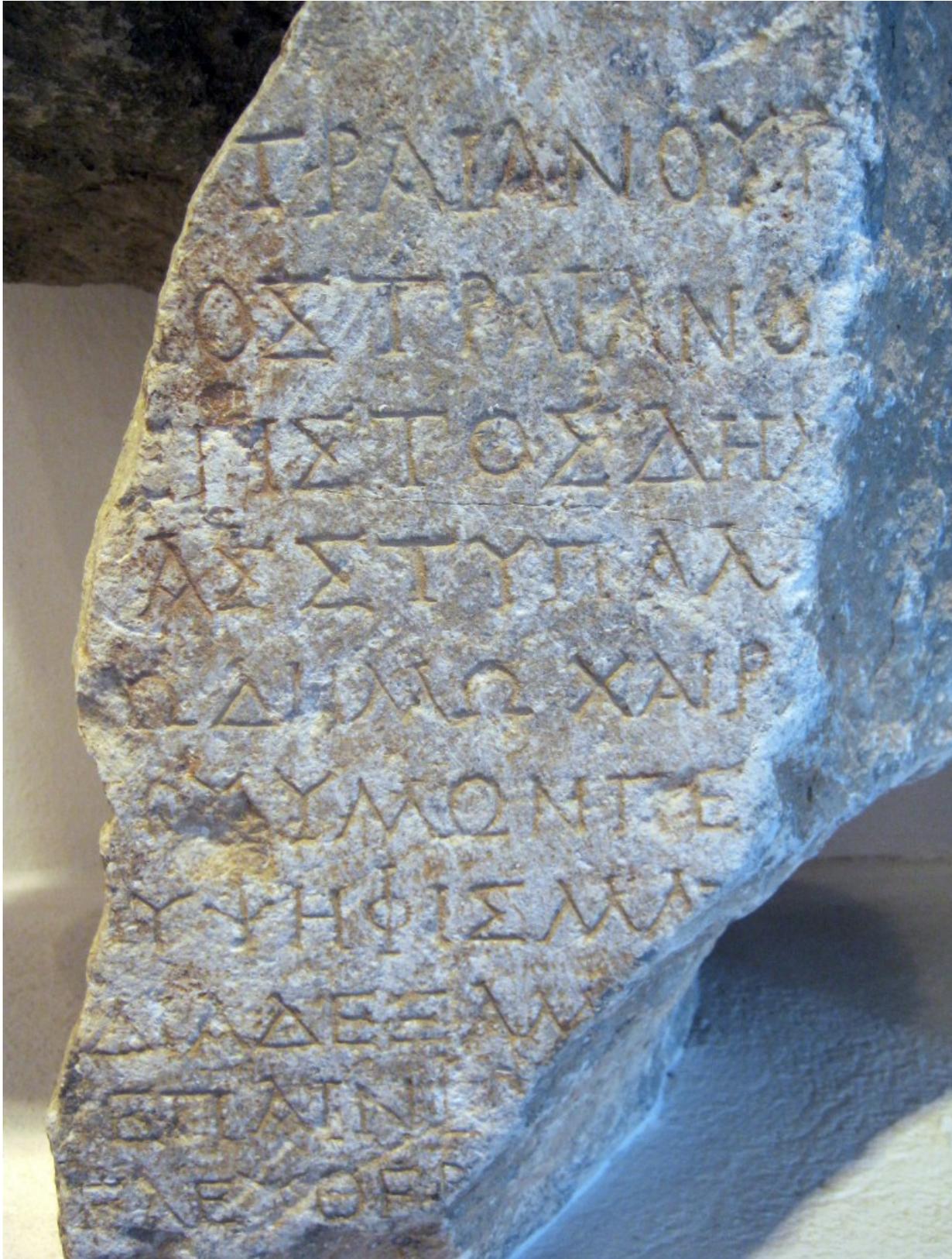


Soon after the accession of Hadrian, a number of important cities sent congratulatory embassies to the new *princeps* by which they expressed their warm wishes and asked confirmation of the privileges bestowed to them by Trajan. One such embassy, sent from Hierapolis towards the end of AD 117, returned with a letter from the emperor. In his reply, Hadrian confirmed the city's privileges of asylum and renounced its offer of the *aurum coronarium* (see post [here](#)).

Of the crown-money for his triumph he remitted Italy's contribution, and lessened that of the provinces, all the while setting forth grandiloquently and in great detail the straits of the public treasury. *HA Had. 6.5*

Two similar letters were addressed to the cities of Astypalaea and Delphi. Both letters were inscribed on stone and have been preserved. They are dated to Hadrian's second consulship (AD 118).



*Fragment (1 of 3) of an inscribed stone stele with a letter from Hadrian to the magistrates and Boule (Council) of the Knidians (IG XII,3 175). Archaeological Museum of Astypalaia. Courtesy of the Directorate of the Management of the National Archive of Monuments.*

The letter sent to the city of Astypalaea, an ancient town (present-day Chora) on the island of the same name situated between Anaphe and Kos, has been preserved in stone fragments. One of these fragments can be seen today in the [Archaeological Museum of Astypalaia](#). Hadrian addressed himself to the magistrates, council and people of Astypalaea. He acknowledges the city's joyous acclamation of his accession and guarantees grants by previous emperors, including freedom and autonomy.

Transcript (*IG XII,3 175*): Αὐτοκράτωρ Καῖσαρ θεοῦ Τραϊανοῦ [Παρθικοῦ] | υἱός, θεοῦ Νέρουα υἰωνός, Τραιανός [Ἀδριανός] | Σεβαστός, ἀρχιερεὺς μέγιστος, δημ[αρχικῆς] | [ἐξ]ουσίας, ὑπατος τὸ β' Ἀστυπαλ[αιέων τοῖς] | [ἄρχο]υσι καὶ τῇ βουλῇ καὶ τῷ δήμῳ χαίρ[ειν]. | [καὶ πα]ρὰ τοῦ πρεσβευτοῦ ὑμῶν Πε[τρωνίου τοῦ] | [Ἡρακῶ]ντος καὶ ἐκ τοῦ ψηφίσματ[ος ὑμῶν] | [ἔμαθον] ὅπως ἦσθητε διαδεξαμέν[ου ἐμοῦ] | [τὴν πατ]ρώαν ἀρχήν, ἐπαινέσας δ[ὲ ὑμᾶς] | [καὶ πεπο]ιθῶς(?) {γεγηθῶς?} τὴν ἐλευθερίαν ὑ[μῶν -] | - - - -

Imperator Caesar Hadrian Augustus, son of the god Trajan Parthicus, grand-son of the god Nerva, pontifex maximus, holding tribunician power, consul for the second time, to the magistrates and council and people of Astypalaea, greetings: I learned both from your ambassador, Petronius Heraco, and from your decree how delighted you were with my succession to the ancestral office. I praised you and I indeed guarantee your freedom...

Later that year, Hadrian addressed the same group in another letter in which he speaks of an examination and reduction of a financial burden. One of the customary honours bestowed upon new Emperors was the presentation of the *aurum coronarium* (a large sum of money donated). As recorded by the *Historia Augusta*, Hadrian refused the gift from Italy and accepted only a part of it from the provinces (*HA Hadr.* 6.5). Astypalaea, however, appears to have been unable to make this contribution and sent another embassy to Hadrian asking to be excused from any payments at all. Only the top of Hadrian’s reply is preserved and it is usually believed that the emperor consented to the reduction or exemption of the usual accession tax.

Transcript (*IG XII,3 176*): Αὐτοκράτωρ Καῖσαρ θεοῦ Τραϊανοῦ Παρθικ[οῦ] | υἱός, θεοῦ Νέρουα  
υἱωνός, Τραϊανὸς Ἀδριανὸς | Σεβαστός, ἀρχιερεὺς μέγιστος, δημαρχικῆς | ἐ[ξ]ουσίας, ὑπατος τὸ β',  
Ἀστυपालαιέων | ἄρχουσι καὶ τῇ βουλῇ καὶ τῷ δήμῳ χαίρειν. | ἐντυχὼν ὑμῶν τῷ ψηφίσματι ὅτι μὲν  
ἀπο-|ρεῖν φατε καὶ οὐ δύνασθαι τελεῖν τὸ ἐπαγγελ-|τικὸν ἀργύριον ἐμάυθανον· οὐ μὴν ὀπό-|σον τε  
τοῦτο οὐδὲ ε[ἴ] ποτε φέρειν αὐτὸ ἤρ[ξ]ασ-|[θε - - - - -] | - - - - -  
- - - - -



*The religious and political centre of Astypalaea was the hill crowned today by the Venetian castle. The modern town of Chora occupies the same site, and worked stones from ancient monuments are reused in older houses.*

By Asiomou (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0>), from Wikimedia Commons

Astypalaea belonged to the Dodecanese, an island group of twelve major islands in the southeastern Aegean Sea. The city concluded an alliance with Rome in 105 BC which has survived in an inscription found on the island (*IG XII,3 173*). The treaty states that the Astypalaeans would not aid the enemies of the Romans or allow such enemies passage through their territory, and likewise, the Romans would not aid the enemies of the Astypalaeans or allow such enemies passage through their territory. Under the Roman emperors, Astypalaea became a “*civitas libera*” (free city), a mark of honour renewed by Hadrian. Today, Astypalaea is best known for its ancient cemeteries of mass graves containing the remains of newborn infants.

In AD 118, Hadrian also sent a response to a congratulatory embassy from Delphi in which the emperor refers to the city's displays of loyalty. Hadrian agrees to ratify the freedom and autonomy that had been granted to the Delphians by the previous emperors on account of the antiquity and the nobility of their city.

Transcript (*I FD III 4:301*): [A]ὐτοκράτ[ωρ Καῖσαρ], θεοῦ Τραιανοῦ Παρθικοῦ υἱός, θεοῦ Νέρβα υἱωνός, Τραία]- νός Ἀδ[ριανός Σε]βαστός, ἀρχιερεὺς μέγισ[τος, δημαρχικῆς ἐξουσίας τὸ β', ὑπα]- τος τὸ [β', Δελφῶν] τῆ πόλει ννν χαίρειν. ννννν ὑ[μεῖς μὲν ἐπηγγείλατέ μοι τὰ τῆς πό]- λεως π[ρεσβεῖα το]ῖς παρ' ὑμῶν ἐπεσταλμέν[οις γράμμασιν· ἐγὼ δὲ ὑμᾶς ἐπαινῶ] [ὅτι μὲν ὑφ' ὑμῶν ὦ]δε ἡ ἀρχαιότης καὶ ἡ εὐγέν[εια τῆς πόλεως τῆς ὑμετέρας] [ἀνεμνήσθη μοι], οὐχ ἤκι[στ]α δὲ ὅτι φανεράν [ἀπεδείξασθε τὴν πρὸς ἐμὲ προθυ]- [μίαν ὑμῶν συνηδόμ]ξνοι μὲν ἐπὶ τῷ διαδέξ[ασθαί με τὴν πατρῶαν ἀρχήν, τὸν] δὲ θεὸν δ[οῦναί μοι πάντα] ἀγαθ[ὰ] παρακαλοῦντε[ς. δι' ὃ τῆς ὑμετέρας πόλεως τήν] τε ἐλευθε[ρίαν καὶ τὴν αὐ]τονομίαν καὶ τὰ[ς ὑμῖν πάλαι συγκεχωρημένας] δωρεὰς β[εβαιῶ] καὶ τὰ δοθέν]τα καὶ ὑπὸ τοῦ [θεοῦ Τραιανοῦ πρεσβεῖα]. πρεσβευ[τῆς ἦν Γ. Ἰούλιος Ἀ]ν[τιγέ]νης. εὐτ[υχεῖτε].

... and not least because you openly showed your zeal by rejoicing at my accession to the rule and by invoking the Pythian God Apollo to bless me. ... I confirm your liberty and your autonomy and all the gifts granted to you of old, particularly those granted by the divine Trajan... [because] the antiquity and nobility of the city are well known to me from far back, and not least because [you made your zeal for me] clear...

This correspondence between Hadrian and Delphi, as well as later ones, were inscribed publicly on the outer wall of the temple of Apollo. According to J.H. Oliver's posthumous work, four fragments of

Hadrian's letter are now in the storeroom of the Museum at Delphi (Nos. 2207, 2265, and 1565 + 4428).

In response to the renewal of the privileges granted by Hadrian, the city of Delphi set up a statue to the new emperor (*Syll*<sup>3</sup> 829 B). Another statue was erected by the Amphictyonic council (in charge of the protection of the Temple of Apollo) under Plutarch's direction (*Syll*<sup>3</sup> 829 A).



*The Temple of Apollo in Delphi.*

By Helen Simonsson [CC BY-SA 3.0], [from Wikimedia Commons](#)

#### Sources & references:

- Oliver (1989), *Greek Constitutions of Early Roman Emperors from Inscriptions and Papyri*, Philadelphia, n. 64
- Smallwood (1966), *Documents Illustrating the Principates of Nerva, Trajan and Hadrian*, Cambridge, n. 449 a & n. 449 b
- Boatwright (2000), *Hadrian and the Cities of the Roman Empire*, Princeton University Press
- Alexander, P. (1938). *Letters and Speeches of the Emperor Hadrian*. *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 49, 141-177. doi:10.2307/310702
- Ando, C. (2000). *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire*. University of California Press
- Scott, M. (2014). *Delphi: A History of the Center of the Ancient World*. Princeton University Press
- Gordillo Hervás, R. (2017). *Talking with the Emperor: Diplomacy and language between Greece and Rome*, 64(2), 168-181.
- The Princeton Encyclopedia of Classical Sites, ASTYPALAIA ([link](#))

#### Share this:

- [Click to share on Facebook \(Opens in new window\)](#)
- [Click to share on Twitter \(Opens in new window\)](#)
- [Click to share on Pinterest \(Opens in new window\)](#)
- [Click to share on Tumblr \(Opens in new window\)](#)

- [Click to share on Reddit \(Opens in new window\)](#)
- [Click to share on LinkedIn \(Opens in new window\)](#)
- [Click to share on WhatsApp \(Opens in new window\)](#)
- [More](#)