CHAPTER ONE

RESETTLING THE PROVINCE OF ASIA

In the winter of 85/84 BC Sulla made important decisions about the organisation of the province, which he announced to the representatives of the cities whom he had summoned to Ephesus. It is often assumed that Ephesus was the capital of the province from 129 BC. Generally speaking, there would be no contradiction between such a status and the award of freedom to the city included in Attalus’ testament. Several milestones, found in different areas of the province, mention M’. Aquillius and show that Ephesus was their caput uiae. Hence they have been interpreted as evidence that Ephesus was the administrative centre of the province at that time. The mileage of other milestones, however, has shown that Pergamum was in fact the starting point of the road to Side, and that the road system of the province had two capita uiarum. At a close scrutiny, the evidence available for this period gives no reason to believe that Ephesus was the capital of the province in its early history. Until the Mithridatic War there are no grounds to say that the centre of the Roman administration was moved from Pergamum, the former capital of the Attalids. It is quite likely that it was Sulla himself who decided the move of the capital to Ephesus.

The Ephesians, however, had followed Mithridates quite promptly, as it is apparent from their prominent role in the massacre of the Italians, and the King put a satrap called episkopos Ephesion in charge of the city.

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1 On Ephesus’ freedom in the earliest phase of the province, see Rigsby 1979; Ferrary 1988, 184, n. 207, 216.
2 See French 1980, 707, 714. The case for Ephesus enjoying the status of capital from the creation of the province is made by Rigsby 1988, 137–141, oddly overlooking the evidence of the milestones.
3 The milestones of Aquillius are listed and discussed in Mitchell 1999, 19–20; see also Thonemann 2004, 81, fn. 11. About the road from Pergamum to Side, see French 1988, nos. 266, 279, 294 and 295. A portion of the road built by Aquillius to link Pamphylia with Pisidia has been located and surveyed in the Doğeme Boğazi: Mitchell 1998/1999, 173. Thonemann 2004, 81–82 argues that the construction of a road system was the first initiative taken by Aquillius in Asia Minor.
4 As shown in C.P. Jones 2000, 12–14.
Eventually, they made a desperate attempt to regain the favour of the Romans when the defeat appeared inevitable, as is shown by a famous civic decree calling the Ephesians to war against the King (IvEph 8). Their effort was unsuccessful, and Ephesus was severely punished at the end of the conflict with the loss of freedom and the imposition of a fine, like most Asiatic cities. However, it was with Sulla that Ephesus gained a central role in the administration of the province, when the victorious general summoned the representatives of the Asiatic cities there.

The meeting was the crucial moment of the Sullan resettlement of the Greek East, whose importance goes beyond the boundaries of the provincia Asia. Immediately after defeating Fimbria, Sulla united his troops with those who had revolted against his defeated enemy, restored Nicomedes on the throne of Bithynia and Ariobarzanes in Cappadocia, and sent an embassy to the Senate. He then started to deal with the organisation of Asia. After listing the communities to whom freedom was awarded or confirmed (Rhodes, Chius, the Ilidician, Lycian and Carian cities, Magnesia on the Sipylus, and some other unspecified, presumably minor centres) as a reward to their loyalty to Rome and to Sulla himself, Appian explicitly stresses the dominant feature of the Sullan reorganisation: “to the other cities he sent the army, without exceptions” (ἐς δὲ λοιπὰ πάντα στρατιὰν περιέπεμπε). The presence of Roman troops was perhaps the clearest sign of the loss of freedom and of the inclusion of a community under the direct rule of Rome.

Sulla’s provisions, of course, were a contribution to an administrative system that had been in place for the last five decades. A senatorial commission of five members, led by P. Scipio Nasica, was sent to Pergamum probably as early as in late 133, soon after the murder of Tiberius Gracchus, in order to ensure the creation of the province. A

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6 See App. Mithr. 61.252. It seems hard to maintain that Ephesus was a ciuitas libera after the Sullan reorganisation, or that its freedom was more than formal: see Guerber 1995, esp. 390–391, 407–409.

7 App. Mithr. 61.250. He also appears to have put on trial and executed some of the keenest supporters of Mithridates. See Licin. 35.82: Ephesi causis cognitis principes belli secure necat; ciuitates pecunia multat, oppida inpacata redigit in suam potestatem (“after presiding over the cases in Ephesus, he sentences to death the leaders of the war; he imposes a pecuniary fine on the cities, and reduces into his power the cities that are not pacified”), with Hinard 1985a, 44.

8 Contra, cf. Coarelli 2005a, 215, dating the arrival of the Roman envoys to Pergamum to mid-132. The commission appears to have had both civilian and military functions: C.P. Jones 2004, 481–485. The debate on the exact date of the creation of the province is summarised in Dmitriev 2005a, 7.