

Neokoros cities in the province of Thrace (Abstract)

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The present article discusses the institution of the neokoria and its occurrence in the province of Thrace. The analysis and the conclusions are based on data from numismatic and epigraphic evidence, as well as on written sources. The study reveals the existence of two neokoros cities in the province – Perinthos and Philippopolis. Arguments are offered to refute the hypothesis of some authors about Augusta Traiana as a third neokoros city in the province.

The analysis indicates that both in Perinthos and in Philippopolis the obtaining of the title neokoros was related to a festival of the Emperor's cult, organized on the occasion. The traced link of temple of the Imperial cult – neokoria – festival corresponds with evidence from other neokoros cities in the Empire's eastern provinces, where this regular feature is one of the specifics of the neokoria.

Perinthos and Philippopolis became neokoroi after visits of emperors. The article discusses the numismatic evidence from Perinthos that proves the obtaining of

a first and a second neokoria from the Emperor Septimius Severus. The hypothesis that existed about a second neokoria, granted by the Emperor Elagabalus, based on the change in the way the city's title was written during his reign, is rejected as poorly grounded. The analysis attempts to prove that Perinthos became neokoros for the second time because of the second Imperial temple, constructed in the city already in the time of Septimius Severus and dedicated to his sons Caracalla and Geta. This is marked with the second celebration of the festival of Actia, Pythia, and Philadelphia, dated by numismatic evidence to the period between October/November, 210, and February, 211.

Combined evidence from the written sources testifies that Philippopolis obtained his only neokoros title from Elagabalus in 219. Both the granted title and the festival of Kendriseia Pythia that was celebrated on the occasion are dated in 219, and not 218, as stated in the earlier publications. The date of the two closely related events is narrowed to the period between the spring and July/ August 219.