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The *Customs Law of Asia* and Roman administrative policy

This paper examines the *Customs Law of Asia* for what it reveals about the agents who administered the Roman province of Asia and the means by which they did so, especially in light of changing politics at Rome. The *Customs Law* is an inscription that dates to 62 CE, but that preserves clauses dating to 75 BCE and to several years in between. It is therefore a fascinating witness to changing administrative practice over this period of time. This paper concentrates on the level of taxation of certain goods, the places where the taxes were levied, and the agents involved in the process, and tracks the changes in these considerations over the life of the document. I pay particular attention to the *publicani*, whose position within this system is shown to be central. I argue that, contrary to at least one prominent view of the power and access of the *publicani* during the later years of this period, the *Customs Law of Asia* shows that these quasi-public agents have built for themselves a rather robust network and position. I conclude with several thoughts on what the picture from this document means for our conception of Roman administrative “policy” in Asia, and how it might also impact our understanding of Roman action elsewhere.