

Pausanias' Military Construction of Hellenism

Traditional scholarship on the Second Sophistic has often viewed Greek literature of the Second Sophistic period through the prism of “Greek culture vs. Roman power” (Bowersock 1969, Swain 1996). According to this reading, Greek intellectuals maintained a sense of cultural identity based on the Greek language and a canon of classical texts and this identity based on classical literature stood in contradistinction to the Roman political and military power structure. In recent years, however, there has been a growing awareness that *paideia* could also be claimed by Romans to mark Rome’s entrance into the civilized world and by non-Greeks (such as Lucian) to define themselves as culturally Greek (Whitmarsh 2001 and 2007). In other words, Greek literary culture and the Hellenism which it could help create were not stable categories in the first and second centuries CE. This paper further destabilizes the “Greek culture / Roman power” dichotomy by arguing that for at least one Greek author, Pausanias, Hellenism could be based not only on classical Greek literature and culture, but on classical Greek *military* victories.

Pausanias states that his goal in the *Periegesis* is to describe “all things Greek” (*panta ta hellenika*; I.26.4) and most recent scholarship has rightly read Pausanias’ text as an attempt to create a sense of Greek cultural identity based on the selective description of the classical monuments and associated memories of mainland Greece (Alcock 1996; Elsner 1992, 2001; Porter 2001; Hutton 2005). Among the memories Pausanias relates are the exploits of various Hellenistic kings such as Lysimachos and Pyrrhos and accounts of the Celtic invasion of Greece in 278 BCE. Alcock (1996) has argued that Pausanias’ conception of Greek cultural identity was centered on the tradition of Greek resistance to barbarians, but this paper argues that Pausanias’ Hellenism was centered on remembering Greek military victories of any kind. As this paper will show, Pausanias’ strategic placement of his account of the Celtic invasion in the first and last books of his work reminds his reader of the importance of classical Greek military achievements to his conception of “all things Greek.” Pausanias’ choice to relate the histories of Pyrrhos, Lysimachos, and other Hellenistic kings in Book I as part of his description of Athens is significant for a similar reason. *Pepaideumenois* of the Second Sophistic like Pausanias prided themselves on their knowledge of classical Greek texts, almost all of which were written in Athens or by Athenians. Yet when describing Athens, Pausanias focuses *not* on Athens’ cultural legacy but on the *military* exploits of Hellenistic kings only tangentially connected to the city.

Pausanias was not the only Second Sophistic author interested in preserving and praising Greek military history. Ailios Aristeides spends much of his *Panathenaic Oration* praising the Athenians’ martial prowess. Plutarch composed a treatise arguing that Athens was more famous for its generals than for its philosophers and orators and, indeed, much of his project in the biographies can be read as praising classical Greek military successes (Lamberton 2001). This notion of constructing a Hellenism based on past military glory undercuts the view of much traditional scholarship on the Second Sophistic and further strengthens the idea that Hellenism was a malleable category in this period, able to be appropriated and redefined in multiple ways. Indeed, this paper will argue that authors like Pausanias used the memory of Greece’s classical military dominance to construct their versions of Hellenism precisely because Romans could not appropriate that memory in the same way they could appropriate the language and literature of classical Greece.

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