

*Pausanias Politicus:*

Cleisthenes, Isagoras, and the Origins of Athenian Democracy in the *Periegesis*

One path of research that remains neglected in the recent flowering of Pausanian studies is the relationship of the *Periegete* to contemporary 2<sup>nd</sup> c. A.D. Greek political thought. In the realm of politics scholars have generally focused on his attitude towards the Romans, which is usually perceived as hostile (Swain 1998; Whitmarsh 2004). Pausanias focuses on material culture and has strong interests in cult and mythical history, and he does not give extended digressions on the well-trodden areas of the Classical past, just as he expressly avoids making excursus on Philip II and Alexander the Great (1.9.4). For these reasons modern scholars have overlooked his sparse but meaningful remarks on politics and political actors of the Classical period. For just as Pausanias reveals his attitudes towards e.g. the Romans and art by alternately including and omitting buildings and objects – for he tells the reader that he selects “what was most noteworthy in traditions and sights” (1.39.6: γνωριμώτατα ἧν ἔν τε λόγοις καὶ θεωρήμασιν) - in his selection and treatment of figures and events of Greek history we can discern contemporary political and social views, albeit on a small scale. Like e.g. Plutarch, Dio Chrysostom, and Aelius Aristides, Pausanias was a Greek aristocrat living under Roman domination, and this of necessity colors his retelling of historical events and people from earlier eras (Gleason 2006).

The Classical Age was the object of intense study and emulation in the Second Sophistic (1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> c. A.D.), and so Pausanias’ comments on that era are of special interest. In my paper I analyze Pausanias’ remarks on Cleisthenes and Isagoras and his rewriting of the Herodotean account of their rivalry in way that I believe shows contemporary biases and concerns very clearly. First, he minimizes the presence of Cleisthenes in the *Periegesis*, presenting him only as

the creator of new tribes (at 1.5.1 where he is unnamed, but Pausanias refers the reader to Herodotus; and at 1.29.6 where his tomb is noted). I argue that the reason for this is Herodotus' emphasis on Cleisthenes' collusion with the Athenian *demos* as a counterweight to Isagoras' power (*Historiae* 5.69.1-2). Like his contemporaries, e.g. Plutarch in his *Praecepta* (818a-819e), Pausanias views the *demos* as a fickle and dangerous entity, especially when it intervenes in aristocratic disputes, e.g. the contest of Theseus and Menestheus over the kingship of Attica (1.17.5-6), but also in its poor treatment of good statesmen, e.g. Demosthenes (1.8.2-3). Pausanias' language shows that he disapproves of the active involvement of the *demos* in Greek political life, and this is in keeping with the political conditions of his age, for by the late 1<sup>st</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. A.D. the Greek *polis* had come to be dominated by an institutionalized Greek aristocratic class that in many ways mirrored the Roman senatorial class (Pleket 1998, Zuiderhoek 2008), and consequently the *demos* had become a marginalized but still powerful and feared force (Desideri 1986).

Secondly, Pausanias reframes the Athenian rebellion against the coup of Isagoras and his Spartan ally Cleomenes as a fight for freedom against a would-be tyrant and foreign invaders rather than a seminal moment in the establishment of Athenian democracy (3.4.2; 6.8.6). In Greek politics *stasis* had always been a bugbear and *homonoia* an ideal, and this remained the case during the imperial age (Sheppard 1984-6), but these two concepts had become more centered on the local aristocracy and how they did or did not cooperate in their rule (Aalders 1982). Fostering collegiality and harmony among aristocrats is indeed the main pillar of Plutarch's *Praecepta* (esp. 804d-813e), and Pausanias reflects these ideals by omitting how the crisis came into being and instead focusing on the Athenians united against a foreign foe.

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