

## Reevaluating the Date of Markianos of Heraclea's *Periplus*

Though he wrote two other works, Markianos of Heraclea is predominantly known for his work *The Periplus of the External Sea*. All of his works survive in poor condition and though the *Periplus* is the longest of these fragmented texts, it still reaches us in a mutilated form. Some intermediary excised a great deal of information from the *Periplus*, only leaving the barebones structure for most of the work. The *Periplus* covers the entirety of the External Sea, what we now know as the Atlantic, Indian, and Pacific Oceans as well as a number of smaller bodies of waters. The first book covered the Southern and Eastern sea as far as China and the second covered the western and Northern sea up to the Baltic Sea.

The work's modern reception, what little there is, has been plagued by claims of unoriginality, plagiarism, and general ineptitude. Scholars have claimed that Markianos simply copied material from Protagoras, a successor of Ptolemy, who converted Ptolemy's coordinate based *Geographia* into a distance based one (which does not survive). Despite the condition of the text, there are numerous instances of deviations in information between the text of Ptolemy which contradict the claim of unoriginality.

Another issue that has hampered Markianos' reception is his relatively late date, generally accepted to be sometime after 390 AD. This means that because Markianos would have been writing in the reign of Theodosius the 2nd, he would be blindly copying geographical information concerning countries and peoples that had been out of date for over a hundred years. Markianos makes no claim of copying Ptolemy word for word, though he does cite him, and thus I find no reason that Markianos would willingly copy information about his home region, Pontus, that had been obsolete. These geographical errors would not exist had Markianos had a considerably earlier date, possibly as soon as a few decades after Ptolemy. In my paper, I will

refute the traditional dating of Markianos and propose a new *termini ante* and *post quem* for the writings of Markianos founded on the evidence provided in the text of the *Periplus* itself.

The current dating of Markianos relies on the research of Salmasius, a 17th century scholar, who claimed that the Markianos mentioned in a letter of Synesius of Cyrene was in fact Markianos of Heraclea. The text of Synesius' letter, however, only mentions a governor of Paphlagonia, a region adjacent to Pontus, named Markianos. Synesius compliments this Markianos on his supreme elegance, calling him the Hermes for his elegance, but never further mentions or describes this Markianos' writing or interests. Though Markianos of Heraclea is by no means unskilled in Greek prose, from the fragments that remain there is no evidence of a highly wrought style. As Markianos was a common name, it is far more likely that we do not need to assume it is the same Markianos, especially as Markianos never mentions political involvement or having extensive experience in Paphlagonia (though he does mark his birthplace Heraclea in Pontus). Similar issues are present for the Markianos mentioned in the text of Socrates.

Scholars, with one exception<sup>1</sup>, have ignored these issues in order to relegate Markianos to an inferior tier of geographers. Though dating the work is difficult as Markianos does not provide us with any decisive chronological markers, the absence of any Christian sites and the presence of Pagan ones should give us a clear distinction: it is at the very least before 392 when some of these Pagan temples would have been ordered to be destroyed. Markianos' division of provinces also should move the *terminus ante quem* to 311 as Diocletian had doubled the number of provinces in Spain among other places yet Markianos describes them as they were before. Unfortunately, there is not any information that would allow for a *terminus post quem* outside

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<sup>1</sup> Schoff in his commentary to the only English translation of the *Periplus* comments that the date is unfounded but does not offer any alternatives.

the writing of Ptolemy and the intermediary Protagoras. Thus in my paper I will propose new termini for Markianos' date, from sometime after 170 to before 311 AD. This new date will advance Markianos' date 80 years placing his novel information in a better context for interpretation.

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