

Martin HALLMANNSECKER, Roman Ionia. Constructions of Cultural Identity in Western Asia Minor. Greek Culture in the Roman World. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2022, XVI + 308 S., 5 col. ill., 11 b/w. ill., EUR 93,95. ISBN: 978-1-009-15018-7

Martin Hallmannsecker's *Roman Ionia* is published in the series 'Greek Culture in the Roman World' of Cambridge University Press, a series that has brought forth several influential monographs and volumes over the last fifteen years. H.'s book, which is based on his 2020 doctoral thesis written at the University of Oxford, can be seen to have been influenced by Peter Thonemann (his main supervisor) and Angelos Chaniotis, among others. Not without surprise, it is easy to find influences from Thonemann's regional studies of the Maeander Valley, rural Lydia and (rural) Anatolia, as well as his many articles published over the last fifteen years, in H.'s book.

A similar 'regionality in a wider context' approach to identity is central to this study on "Ionianness". Hallmannsecker himself names as the central topic of his book "the contexts in which individuals and cities made reference to a distinct Ionian group awareness, however explicit a form this might have taken [and] the ways in which such claims were formulated as well as the strategies underlying such constructions of collective and individual identities, and the functions fulfilled by them" (p. 3). The study aims to fill up a significant lacuna in the scholarship on ancient Ionia, as the region has mainly been studied for the Archaic period in Anglophone academia (pp. 3-5). H.'s aim is to study the epigraphic and numismatic sources not only within the corpus of the studied cities and time periods themselves, but also beyond the temporal and geographical contexts in which these inscriptions and coins were issued. This way, he wants to contextualise them within the temporal developments of the mediums and expressions of identity, and within the regional context, in other words, to provide a thick description of the region's identity in the Roman period (p. 5).

H. positions the development of an increase in identity-construction and expression of such phenomena, which he also sees for Ionia and Ionianness, against the backdrop of the expansion of the Roman Empire and the increased connectivity between the different populations of the conquered provinces which resulted from this process (p. 7). In this, he takes a somewhat wider time frame than the usually taken time frame 50 - 250 CE, a period in which references to civic and regional (historical) identities increased significantly especially in the provinces of the eastern half of the empire.

At the same time, however, Hallmannsecker argues that the framework of ‘globalisation’, which he calls “itself being entirely inappropriate” and “not readily transferable to antiquity” (p. 6), would be unsuitable for his study. In the two-or-so pages H. dedicates to a discussion of globalisation theory in relation to identity, he seems to rely mainly on Fredrick G. Naerebout’s arguments against ‘globalisation’ for the Roman world made in 2008, mentioning some studies in favour of globalisation theory published after that, but not arguing per se how their innovations dealt with Naerebout’s critique.¹ H. argues by means of a mere statement that xenophobia resulting from globalising tendencies – which for him separates the process of increased connectivity from modern globalisation – is “not attested in the ancient sources, which again underlines the inadequacy of applying ‘globalisation’ to antiquity” (p. 8). Further on in the Introduction, however, H. devotes three pages to ‘Stereotyping the Ionians’, which leaves the obvious question for the reader to what extent globalisation and negative responses to out-groups might be connected after all in Antiquity (pp. 14-17). The choice to not apply ‘globalisation’ as a framework for his study is in itself a valid choice, but H.’s argumentation is rather thin.

The book consists of six chapters, in five of which H. discusses an aspect of the cultural identity of Ionia and the Ionians in the Roman imperial period. In the Introduction, H. states that he defines “‘cultural identity’ in a broad sense as encompassing a variety of markers of identity such as language, religion, myths, onomastics, dating systems, and a common association (*koinon*), thus eschewing the more ambiguous connotations of ‘ethnicity’” (p. 10). This broad definition of cultural identity is well-chosen, but what relative impact each of these aspects has or had on cultural identity as a whole and how one influence the other remains mostly undiscussed, except for a few remarks in various chapters when it comes to Ionianness of names of private individuals.

In Chapter 1, called “Mental Geographies”, Ionia as a cultural region is discussed and defined, also taking into account the history of the region prior to the Attalid testament of 133 BCE. Connecting this to the establishment of the province of Asia, which comprised of more regions than just Ionia, H. argues that the provincial structure created a new context for expressions of (regional) identities. Looking at the titles used by cities to adorn their names in inscriptions and numismatic legends, among others, this chapter argues for the increased value of Ionian identity as “cultural capital”, especially during the second and third centuries CE. The clear discussion of the role of a regional identity as Ionianness in this forms the basis on which the succeeding chapters build.

¹ Naerebout 2008; Cf. e.g. Pitts and Versluys 2014 (referred to by H.); Hoo 2021, 13-15.

In the second chapter, the ancient institution of the Ionian Koinon in the Roman period is discussed, as a “powerful testimony of the vitality of Ionianness in the Roman period” (p. 12). At the end of the second chapter, H. asks why none of the Ionian cities participated in Hadrian’s Panhellenion, apart from Miletus. Without any ancient sources telling us explicitly, H. is quick to suggest that this might have been because the Panhellenion and the Ionian Koinon “fulfilled similar functions” and that they did not need another, bigger and more diffuse *koinon* on top of their “exclusive” Ionian Koinon (p. 81). Yet, at the same time, as one of the main subdivisions of Greek ethnicity alongside the Dorians and the Aiolians, Ionianness was a valuable ethnic category in the Roman Imperial period, as the book as a whole argues. This then leaves the question open as to why cities such as Smyrna and Ephesus did not join the Panhellenion on top of the Ionian Koinon, precisely to show their superiority within the Greek *ethnos*. The case of Lydian and originally ethnically non-Greek Sardis being a member of the *koina* of Asia, the Koinon of the Thirteen Cities in Lydia, and the Panhellenion shows that membership of more than two *koina*, even when their foundation and compatibility was not immediately obvious, was not at all ideologically problematic for a city.²

Chapter 3 turns to “the notion of Ionianness as a regional form of localism applied by the member cities of the *koinon* in the sphere of religion” (p. 85). H. first looks at cults that were or could be classified as ‘Ionian’, and then turns to myths, especially including founder heroes, and the respective cults and references to them in Roman-period Ionia. The second part of the analysis – especially the sections in which he discusses Roman period references to founder heroes – requires elaboration of two elements. First, the discussion of the numismatic evidence lacks the contextualisation in the wider development of the second and third century CE in the province of Asia beyond Ionia. This is potentially important for a proper understanding of the designs on civic coinage, as iconographic designs of different cities sometimes communicated with each other and cities began sharing dies under the Antonine and Severan dynasties, showing economic networks and regions within Asia not necessarily corresponding to cultural regions such as Ionia.³ Second, it only seems logical that with a distinct Ionian identity an in-group and an out-group was created, but who this out-group was supposed to be remains unclear.

H. treats references to founder heroes of Ionian origin, when they were connected to the traditions surrounding the Ionian Migration, as signs of Ionian identity, but does not leave the possibility for what is in my opinion the more

² Cf. Hallmannsecker 2020.

³ Watson 2021.

logical and heavily weighing option, namely civic identity. The founder heroes were after all founders of a *city* and not of the *region* as a whole. Their Ionian (ethnic) identity could also have been more of a bonus rather than the main motive.⁴ One such example is the funerary inscription of Claudia Menestho from Miletus (p. 128-129), who traced her ancestry back to the *city's* mythical (Ionian) founder Neileus, but also to various other significant individuals in the *city's* history. The allusion of a connection to the Ionians as a collective that Claudia Menestho tried to create is present without a doubt, but one should reflect on what formed the main message of this constructed genealogy.

In Chapter 4 H. discusses “potential expressions of Ionianness on the level of time reckoning and onomastics”. This categorization is somewhat confusing, despite the reasonable arguments for putting them together – for example that the names of calendrical elements are strictly speaking onomastic as well, but their temporal nature and capacity to structure daily life do not apply to personal names. The collection of phenomena discussed in this chapter thus comes across somewhat as a miscellaneous category stemming from H.’s definition of cultural identity. Yet, by using both qualitative and quantitative analyses (the latter for personal names, using the LPGN database), H. convincingly shows that in all categories of naming mentioned above a “reluctance to introduce new eponyms or even era dating” and a “conscious awareness of a distinct sense of cultural belonging at least among the civic elites” can be distinguished (p. 179).

The shortest chapter of the book, Chapter 5, studies to what extent a distinct Ionian Greek dialect continued to exist and be used in the Roman period. H. compares the use of the Ionian dialect in the Roman period to the use of Lakonian Doric and Lesbian Aiolic. He concludes that, contrary to what might be expected when seeing the use of Lakonian and Lesbian in the Roman period, the Ionian dialect was not used to a similar extent to express regional identity, an intriguing observation. At the end of the chapter some possible explanations for this phenomenon are suggested.

In the final chapter, the book leaves Ionia and looks at claims to Ionianness outside the region proper, mostly in the archaic-period colony foundations of the Ionian cities in the Black Sea region (e.g. the cities of the Cimmerian Bosphorus and northern Anatolia). H. argues that Ionianness became an important marker of identity in the Roman Imperial period even in areas in which none such markers appeared prominently before this period. Similar processes could be

⁴ H.'s analysis could have benefitted from a reference to or interaction with Rojas' work on the longevity of local and regional myths and tropes in markers of identity in Roman Anatolia: Rojas 2019.

seen in Ionian colonies in Thrace and Lycia and Pamphilia, in which competition between cities could be seen especially in the third century CE (considerably later than in Asia). “[T]he framework of the Roman provinces could thus provide Greek cities with new incentives to flag markers of distinction”, so H. (p. 205).

Overall, H.’s book on Ionian identity in the Roman Imperial period addresses the significant lacuna in the scholarship of cultural identities in the eastern Roman provinces that it aimed to fill up. The main argument of the book, namely that a distinct regional Ionian identity gained expressiveness, meaning and significance as a result of a growing numbers of cities and regions to which the cities in Ionia had to relate, is important and provides fertile soil for further studies into regional identities in the Roman period that do not necessarily coincide with the administrative boundaries. H.’s knowledge of both primary sources and secondary literature is impressive, and the footnotes are thus also an integral part of the book’s value.

Although the thick description in a regional context as announced in the introduction is executed well, the book does not explore the interactions of these regional processes with larger developments in the empire (i.e. outside the region) too much. A temporal differentiation inside the Roman (imperial) period is not always made explicit, not distinguishing too much between different centuries, ‘stages’ of imperial rule, and their potential impact on regional identities in Ionia – except for a relatively short historical development of expressions of Ionianness in the Concluding Remarks (p. 232-233). A contextualisation of (some of the) described phenomena within a wider geographical and historical context could have featured somewhat more prominently. The explicit assessment of Ionianness against other identities that the discussed communities might have had thus remains somewhat underexposed.

That being said, H.’s main argument – that Ionianness remained an important marker of identity in the Roman Imperial period and, in many instances, became even more pronounced as a response to contemporary structures, events and development – stands. H. has convincingly shown that references to Ionianness in the Roman period are not mere archaisms, but had tangible and active meaning to the people of the Ionian cities, and that identities in this region and period went beyond the extent of ‘Greekness’. As it argues beyond the existing categories in current scholarly literature, the book is to be considered a valuable addition to the debate on identities and regionalism in the Roman Imperial period.

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