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0521847206 - Describing Greece: Landscape and Literature in the Periegesis of Pausanias

William Hutton

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

On the Mouseion hill in Athens, south-west of the acropolis, stand the conspicuous remains of a richly sculptured marble edifice. The Philopappus Monument, as the structure is called, was erected as a tomb for Gaius Julius Antiochus Epiphanes Philopappus, suffect consul of Rome, archon of Athens, friend to philosophers, and scion of the royal house of the Euphrates-valley kingdom of Commagene.¹ How did this Eastern prince come to hold the chief magistracies of two foreign cities? Why was such a monumental tomb erected for him in Greece, so far from his homeland? These are the sorts of questions that frequently arise when one contemplates the century in which Philopappus died, the second century CE. This was a time when members of a well-educated cosmopolitan elite associated freely with one another across ethnic boundaries. It was a period in which Greece, long subject to Rome, economically impotent, strategically irrelevant, a depopulated, dilapidated shadow of its classical self, still enjoyed a potent reputation for cultural preeminence from one end of the Roman Empire to the other.

Over the course of several years in the middle of the second century, a man named Pausanias traveled among the cities and shrines of mainland Greece. He took careful note of what he saw and prevailed on the inhabitants for information about local artifacts, traditions, and cult practices. Either before or after his visits, he researched the sites, learned what previous writers had recorded about their myths and histories, and added this information to the storehouse of knowledge and associations that his classical education had already made part of his basic mental make-up. Eventually, he compiled what he had seen and learned in a ten-scroll work that has come down to us under the title *Periegesis Hellados* ("Description of Greece"), a work that perfunctorily² describes Philopappus' grand tomb as "a monument built for a Syrian man" (I.25.8), but lavishes considerably more

¹ On the monument, see Kleiner 1983.² See, however, Steinhart 2003.

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Figure 1.1. The Philopappus Monument in Athens.

respect and attention on monuments of greater antiquity. The *Periegesis* is a record of one native Greek speaker's view of his ancestral land at a period in history when what it meant to be Greek was more enigmatic than ever.

Only recently has Pausanias' significance as a witness to this era begun to be appreciated. For much of the twentieth century, the main emphasis

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in scholarship was on the utilitarian value of his text as a source of archaeological information. When one considers how valuable a source the *Periegesis* is, it is easy to understand why. As an eyewitness to the state of Greece in the second century, Pausanias gives us a priceless picture of a world forever lost to us: the Parthenon, with its walls and columns standing; races still being run at Olympia; gold and silver offerings still festooning the temple of Apollo at Delphi. Modern archaeologists use Pausanias as a guidebook for where to dig, and for identifying what they uncover. Likewise, historians, art historians, and students of Greek society mine his account for information preserved by no other ancient author. A good portion of our image of what ancient Greece was like is derived from Pausanias' descriptions. The oddly shaped building adjacent to the Parthenon in Athens, for instance, is called the "Erechtheion" because (and only because) Pausanias seems to refer to it by that name (1.26.5). The tallest standing remains in the site of ancient Corinth, the columns of an archaic temple, are commonly ascribed to a "temple of Apollo" because (and only because) Pausanias locates a temple of Apollo in that vicinity (2.3.6). Heinrich Schliemann used Pausanias' text as a treasure map for his excavation of Mycenae, and the great tholos tombs found there are still named after the mythical heroes Atreus, Aegisthus, and Clytemnestra, whom Pausanias reports as being buried outside the citadel walls (2.16.6–7). The *Periegesis* is one of the more useful texts that survive from antiquity. Open nearly any modern book on Greek history, literature, culture, or art and you will find citations of Pausanias.

As one might expect in the case of a text of such practical value, modern scholarship that deals with the *Periegesis* has tended to focus not on Pausanias himself but on the things he mentions, offering explanations of the myths he relates, verifications or debunkings of his historical accounts, and detailed correlations of his descriptions with the latest archaeological finds.³ Within the last two decades, however, the focus of scholarship on Pausanias has begun to change significantly. Inspired by a volume of lectures by Christian Habicht,⁴ by a thought-provoking monograph by Paul Veyne,⁵ and by a general upswing of interest in Greek culture and literature

³ Numerous archaeological/historical commentaries on Pausanias have been written and continue to be written, beginning with the deluxe edition of Xylander and Sylburg 1583, and continuing in the modern age with those of Hitzig and Blümner 1896–1910, Frazer 1898, Meyer 1954 (with abridged translation), Papachatzes 1974–1981; and the current ongoing efforts of teams of scholars writing in Italian (Musti et al. 1982–) and French (Casevitz et al. 1992). There have also been important commentaries on individual sections: Trendelenberg 1914 (Olympia), and Roux 1958 (Corinthia), for example.

⁴ Habicht 1998. ⁵ Veyne 1988, especially Chapter 8: "Pausanias Entrapped" (95–102).

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in the Roman era,⁶ a number of new studies have appeared that recognize Pausanias himself as a subject worthy of interest. So far, this new output includes five books, three collections of essays, and a rising tide of separate articles.⁷ Welcome as these newer studies are, however, they frequently suffer from a certain narrowness of perspective. Like previous scholars whose focus was squarely on the factual data that Pausanias preserves, Pausanias' new followers tend to concentrate on isolated passages or on individual recurring features of the *Periegesis*, such as his references to Roman emperors or his efforts at writing history.⁸ What is missing is a comprehensive view of the *Periegesis* and of the context that helps to give these separate elements their full meaning. The result is something like the proverbial blind men pawing the elephant: we have eloquent and insightful analyses of the separate parts but the animal as a whole remains something of a mystery.

Part of the explanation for this tendency can be found in the history of scholarship on Pausanias, a topic that will be addressed more fully toward the end of this chapter. In brief, an attitude has developed over the course of the past century or so that binds Pausanias' value as a source to what is perceived to be his lack of sophistication as an author. To preview a phrase that I will be using later, he is often regarded as a "dependable dullard," an author whose ability to report straightforward facts is uncontaminated by intellectual pretensions and artistic flights of fancy. Few of Pausanias' most recent students would acquiesce in the description of him as a "dependable dullard," yet the momentum of this characterization has been difficult to overcome, and has caused the potential value of a comprehensive literary analysis of the text to be overlooked. As a result of this attitude, the literary study of the *Periegesis* has languished. Aside from a brief monograph on metrical clausulae⁹ and one on some of Pausanias' stylistic idiosyncrasies,¹⁰ there has been no book-length study on the literary features of the *Periegesis*,

⁶ Confining ourselves to book-length studies in the past decade or so, and still being far from exhaustive: Cartledge and Spawforth 1989; Engels 1990; Alcock 1993; Anderson 1993 and 1994; Quass 1993; Fein 1994; Flinterman 1995; Gleason 1995; Swain 1996; Schmitz 1997; Whitmarsh 2001.

⁷ Monographs: Bultrighini 1990a; Bearzot 1992; Arafat 1996; Pritchett 1998 and 1999. Collections of essays: Bingen, ed. 1996; Alcock, Cherry, and Elsner, eds. 2001; Knoepfler and Piérart, eds. 2001; also a significant proportion of the essays in Pirenne-Delforge, ed. 1998 are on Pausanias. Substantial sections of monographs: Elsner 1995: 125–155; Swain 1996: 330–356; Hartog 2001: 140–150. Separate journal articles (post 1990, and hardly a complete list): Arafat 1992, 1995, 2000; Auberger 1992, 1994, 2000; Bearzot 1988; Birge 1994; Bommelaer 1999; Calame 1990; Eide 1992; Meadows 1995; Ekroth 1999; Elsner 1992, 1994, etc.; Tzifopoulos 1993; Jacquemin 1991a, 1991b, 1996 and 2000; Kreilinger 1997; Lacroix 1992; Lafond 1994; Schneider 1997; Steinhart 2002a and 2002b, 2003.

⁸ Emperors: Arafat 1996; Jacquemin 1996. History: Bearzot 1992; Meadows 1995; Bingen, ed. 1996.

⁹ Szelest 1953. ¹⁰ Strid 1976.

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its language and style, the literary affinities of the text, and the literary aims of the author since Carl Robert published *Pausanias als Schriftsteller* in 1909. Since Robert's time, archaeological and topographical studies have brought us much more knowledge about the sites and monuments Pausanias was describing, and have allowed us a clearer view of the ways in which Pausanias transforms his experience of landscape into prose. For this reason alone, reconsideration of the *Periegesis* from a literary perspective is long overdue.

A fundamental hypothesis of this book is that the *Periegesis* is not the naïve outpouring of a simple and ingenuous spirit or the mechanical and sequential recording of a traveler's impressions; it is instead the work of an author who was striving consciously for literary effect and was shaping his text, consciously or unconsciously, in response to a literary tradition and a contemporary intellectual milieu. Each separate section, paragraph, and sentence in Pausanias' work has the function not only of providing information for the reader, but also of contributing to the maintenance of a complex literary architecture. The text as we have it is the result of choices that the author made in order to express his understanding of the physical and cultural landscapes of Greece. In the course of this book, I will be examining those choices and the effect they had in determining the shape that the work eventually took. Reasonable scholars may differ on the issue of whether Pausanias succeeded in achieving his literary ambitions, so my intention here is not to recover Pausanias as an overlooked genius of Greek prose or to claim for him a spot alongside Plato and Demosthenes in the classical canon. Instead, the goal of my work is much more modest: to analyze Pausanias' literary aims and methods and show how they are essential to an understanding of his testimony on any subject, whether we are looking to him for topographical information or for evidence of the attitudes and mentalities of the time in which he lived.

My study of the way Pausanias constructs his account benefits from a number of recent developments in the study of travel literature and the literature of landscape. One distinctive thing about the *Periegesis* that gets little attention is that it is the longest and most detailed narrative in classical literature in which the author relates the experiences of his own travels.¹¹ The ancient Greeks have a reputation for being explorers and travelers, but the literature of travel was not a genre in which they excelled.¹² The sunburst of the *Odyssey* at the dawn of Greek literature turned out to be

¹¹ Elsner 1992 (and 1995: 125–155), 1997a, and 1997b, and Hartog 2001 make a good beginning in applying the perspectives of the study of travel literature to Pausanias.

¹² On Greek travel and travel literature, see Friedländer 1921–1923: 2.99–207; Casson 1974; Marasco 1978; Janni 1984; André and Baslez 1993; Hartog 2001: 79–160.

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nearly the end, rather than the beginning, of the fruitful exploitation of travel motifs in Greek literature. Not long after the *Odyssey*, travel seems to have joined trade, manufacturing, labor, and cookery in the realm of the banausic, the unkempt closet of mundane things one did to survive and prosper, but found too undignified to make the focus of great artistry. There were, of course, authors who traveled and who wrote about what they saw on their travels. Herodotos, who serves in many ways as a model for Pausanias,¹³ recognized at the dawn of Greek historiography the importance of seeing things for oneself, both for the purposes of ascertaining facts and for claiming the authority to write about them. Herodotos' history of the Persian wars includes ethnographic and historical information about Egypt and the Near East that he presents as the fruits of his own travels in those regions. "Seeing for oneself" (*autopsia* in Greek),¹⁴ was bequeathed by Herodotos to the historiographical tradition as a methodological ideal, and claims of *autopsia* remained an important motif in the later course of classical historiography and geographical writing, though many of the best historians chose to hide whatever first-hand experience they had behind a stance of magisterial omniscience.¹⁵

Aside from geography and history, there are also citations and fragments of ancient texts that hint at a somewhat more robust literature of travel than what remains today (some of which we will be examining in later chapters). Examples include the entertaining excerpts of the sardonic travel commentary attributed to Herakleides Kritikos, Lucian's *True Story*, a travel parody which implies the existence of a literature that is in many ways better classified as fiction, or, in what may be a fragmentary example of the sort of thing that Lucian lampoons, the credulity-stretching narrative of Iamboulos' journey to the island of fork-tongued people (partially preserved, and presented as fact, by Diodoros Siculus, 2.55.1–2.60.5). With the possible exception of Xenophon's *Anabasis*, however, no surviving text other than Pausanias' is based so fundamentally on the author's own travels.

In this respect, Pausanias is not only unusual in his time, but in Greek literature as a whole. Although he does not habitually present his descriptions of sights in the form of a first-person narrative of his travel experience, the phenomenon of travel, his own travel, is never far beneath the surface

¹³ Pausanias' relationship with Herodotos will be examined more fully in Chapter 4. In general: Pfundtner 1866; Wernicke 1884; Strid 1976; Gurlitt 1890: 50–52; Frazer 1898: 1.lxxiii.

¹⁴ *Autopsia* is not actually a word used by Herodotos, although the ability to speak either as an eyewitness or on the authority of eyewitnesses is clearly important to him. He does refer to himself as an *autoptēs* ("eyewitness") in 2.29.

¹⁵ Dewald 1987; Marincola 1997: 63–86; Clarke 1999: 85–87, 240–242.

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of his account.¹⁶ Through Pausanias' unobtrusive but recurring assertions of his eyewitness knowledge of various sites, the reader feels his presence at every stage of the journey.¹⁷ When he tells us that a certain route is "easier for a well-girt man than it is for mules or horses,"¹⁸ he doesn't say that he personally tied his garments up around his waist and trod the difficult path. He doesn't have to say that: the nature of his account prepares us to imagine that he did.

The literature of travel and, more generally, literature that describes landscapes are popular subjects in modern literary and cultural studies.¹⁹ Both bring to our critical attention the notion of space, how one perceives it and how one transforms the experience of it into writing, and for this reason they are attractive subjects in an era when the perception and communication of objective reality are frequently held up as problematic. Travel, moreover, is recognized as an activity in which the question of identity is put in play, either by coming to terms with oneself and one's mortal limitations, or by coming to terms with "the Other." Writing about travel, whether fiction or non-fiction, is in turn the expression of that process of self-definition, and is a form of discourse that can both communicate and problematize concepts of self and other, nature and culture, civilization and savagery.

The trend toward studying these sorts of issues in travel writing is one that has mostly bypassed the field of classical literature, not just because of the supposed crusty conservatism of classical scholars but, more importantly, because of the scarcity of ancient Greek or Latin representatives of the genre.²⁰ With few exceptions,²¹ Pausanias' ability to contribute to such inquiries has been overlooked. Study of the *Periegesis* as travel literature can provide for the classical world the same sorts of cultural insights that the travel literature of other societies affords. In particular, the interrogation of identity that is involved in the study of travel literature can be especially informative in the case of Pausanias, who, as we have already mentioned, inhabited an era when the notion of ethnic identity, particularly that of the Greeks, was in a state of ambiguity. Part of what constituted a sense of

¹⁶ Alcock 1996: 260–1. ¹⁷ For assertions of autopsy in Pausanias, see Heberdey, 1894.

¹⁸ 10.32.2; cf. 2.15.2, 10.5.5, 10.32.7.

¹⁹ On space, landscape, and "cognitive mapping": Cosgrove 1984; Jackson 1984; Cosgrove and Daniels (eds.) 1988; Folch-Serra 1990; Deutsche 1991; Rodaway 1994; Tilley 1994; Clark 1996; for ancient Greece in particular: Alcock 1993; Alcock and Osborne (eds.) 1994; Shipley and Salmon (eds.) 1996. On travel and travel accounts: Culler 1981; Eade and Sallnow (eds.) 1991; Eisner 1991; Cohen 1992; Morinis (ed.) 1992; Pratt 1992; Larner 1999.

²⁰ The discursive construction of geography in classical literature has been a topic of recent scholarship, e.g.: Janni 1984; Hartog 1988, 2001; Jacob 1991; Nicolet 1991; Romm 1992; Clarke 1999.

²¹ E.g. Elsner 1992, 1994, 1995, 2001b. Hartog 2001.

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identity for Greek-speaking people in general and Pausanias in particular was religion; and as Elsner has pointed out, Pausanias, who not only shows a deep interest in sanctuaries, temples, and religious artworks but also records his own participation in certain cult rituals in the places he travels to, can usefully be considered a pilgrim.²² An especially fertile field of research within the realm of travel literature in recent years has been on the literature of pilgrimage,²³ and Pausanias can play a role in that field in a way few other ancient Greek (or Latin) authors can.

At this point, some disclaimers are in order: while my analysis depends on the premise that an author's observation and recording of space is not a matter free from complications and ambiguities, I do not contend, in the manner of the jejune caricature of the postmodern critic, that there are no real landscapes to which Pausanias' text refers. Nor do I argue that Pausanias is a disingenuous reporter or an unreliable source for the reconstruction of Greek antiquity. Like most scholars who concern themselves with the topography and monuments of Greece, I believe Pausanias to be a more trustworthy and conscientious reporter of the realities of Greece than we have any right to expect. One of the things I will try to show, in fact, is that this quality of Pausanias' account – its meticulous and accurate relation of the realities of Greece as they actually existed in the author's own day – is one of the distinguishing features that must be studied and understood in context.

What will be an important premise of this work, however, is that Pausanias is not merely a passive recorder of information. Even the most guileless description of a place does more than record the shape of the landscape; it also has a shape of its own that arises from the confluence of a number of factors: the physical contours of the landscape; the cognitive predilections of the mind that perceives the landscape, and the structure of the narrative form in which the author chooses to communicate his perceptions. Study of how this process works in the case of Pausanias involves the consideration of how his outlook is influenced by the various social economies in which the author partakes. As a result, this approach can be rewarding not only for our understanding of Pausanias, but also for our

²² Elsner 1992: 8; 1995: 130. Cf. Rutherford 2001; Hutton 2005b pp. 291–299. Some examples of Pausanias' participation in cult or expressions of religious belief (often taking the form of an observance of ritual silence about certain topics in his writing): 1.37.4; 2.3.4; 2.17.4; 2.30.4; 2.35.8; 2.37.6; 5.15.11; 8.37.9; 8.42.11; 9.25.5; 9.39.5–14. The issue of Pausanias as "pilgrim" will be examined in greater detail in the final chapter.

²³ Eade and Sallnow (eds.) 1991; Morinis (ed) 1992, and for classical Greece, Dillon 1997. Naturally, a good deal of the literature on this topic for antiquity deals with early Christian pilgrimage and pilgrimage literature: Turner and Turner 1978 Hunt 1982, 1984; Campbell 1988; Sivan 1988a, 1988b; Holm 1990; MacCormack 1990; Westra 1995; Leyerle 1996; Frank 2000.

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understanding of the period in which he wrote. Pausanias' literary aims and methods are not only essential things to understand as background for an interpretation of his account; those aims and methods are, in their own right, illuminating artifacts of the time in which Pausanias lived.

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT PAUSANIAS

Pausanias is an obscure enough figure that each major study of his work is compelled to rehash the few things we know about him.²⁴ Pausanias does not talk about himself very much, and even when he does it is rarely for the purpose of giving us biographical details. The earliest datable events and artifacts he ascribes to his own period are from the 120s CE, and the latest are from the 170s.²⁵ Most – if not all – of his adult lifetime, therefore, fell within the reigns of Hadrian (117–138 CE), Antoninus Pius (138–161), and Marcus Aurelius (161–180).

Pausanias never explicitly tells us where he was born or where he resided, but the most likely candidate for his place of origin is the city of Magnesia-on-Sipylos (modern Manisa in Turkey) in the ancient Anatolian land of Lydia.²⁶ We surmise this primarily from his statement that certain monuments on Mt. Sipylos relating to the mythical figures of Tantalos and Pelops are located “among us.”²⁷ This reference hardly guarantees that Pausanias was born near Mt. Sipylos, nor that he resided there for most of his life, but it is the only clue that he gives us as to what land he considered home. The only reason for denying the obvious inference of this passage has stemmed from a fruitless effort to identify our Pausanias with one of a handful of contemporary Pausaniases that were known to have come from places other than Magnesia.²⁸ In the course of his account, Pausanias reveals more familiarity with the area of Magnesia than with any other place outside of the

²⁴ Basic discussions of biographical issues: Gurlitt 1890: 1–55; Frazer 1898: l.xiii–xcvi (esp. xv–xxii); Regenbogen 1956: 1012–1014; Habicht 1998: 1–27; Arafat 1996: 8–12; Bowie 2001: 20–25.

²⁵ Gurlitt 1890: 58–61; Frazer 1898: l.xv–xviii; Comfort 1931: Habicht 1998: 9–12. Bowie 2001: 20–24; 120s: addition of the tribe Hadrianis in Athens (1.5.5); 170s: Marcus Aurelius' victory over German tribes (8.43.6 [dating uncertain but see also 5.1.2, 10.34.5]). Habicht has a useful discussion of Pausanias' use of the phrase “in our time” and similar expressions (ibid.: 176–179; cf. Musti 2001). Nothing to which Pausanias so refers can be dated outside of what would be a plausible life span, although one must still be aware of the fact that such expressions can connote “in the modern era” rather than “while I have been alive.” See Potthecary 1997.

²⁶ For some thought-provoking observations about what it meant to be a “Lydian” in this period, see Spawforth 2001.

²⁷ παρ' ἡμῶν (5.13.7).

²⁸ For a survey of the possibilities, see Diller 1955, also Gurlitt 1890: 56–57; Frazer 1898: l.xix; Regenbogen 1956: 1012; Habicht 1998: 13–17; Arafat 1996: 8. Pausanias is one of the more common personal names in Greek, so the existence of two or more contemporary writers of that name would hardly be surprising.



Figure 1.2. Map showing the location of Magnesia-on-Sipylus, in relation to other major cities of Roman Greece and Asia Minor.