Introduction

> It is no disadvantage to be born of an obscure and mean city (*patridos*) any more than to be born of a small and ugly mother . . . But as for me, I live in a small city and I prefer to dwell there so that it may not become smaller still.
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> Plutarch, *Demosthenes* 1

Plutarch jokingly likened his home town, the unexceptional Chaironeia, to a small and ugly mother. It was, in his words, just as nurturing and conducive to happiness as any other. The great Alexander historian Arrian of Nicomedia reserved his mature energies for writing a history of his home city and region, the region of Bithynia, from the myths to its last independent ruler before the Romans. He dedicated the work to his homeland (τῆι πατρίδι).[1] The monumental fourth-century historian Ephoros was mocked by Strabo for inserting at regular intervals in his wide-ranging history of the Greek world a bulletin about his sleepy home polis of Kyme, even when all he could say was that 'at about the same time the Kymaeans were at peace'.[2] He wrote a history of Kyme that has not survived. The recently discovered inscription from Salmakis, Halikarnassos, offers a poem answering the question, 'What is the pride [τὸ τίμιον] of Halikarnassos?', and the inscription explains in a poetic nutshell the myths, the local achievements and the great writers who have hailed from Halikarnassos.[3] Such is the polis-pride and love of 'homeland' or city which abides throughout antiquity.

The subject of this book is political community, especially the city-state, but also the islands (which are often poleis) and ethnos states, and why people wrote about them: how they wrote, what they wrote, when they

[1] Phot. *Bibl.* 93, 73a32 = *FGrH* 156, F 14 (but better read in Photius); to 74 B.C. He was not the first to write on Bithynia or the cities there (see for example *FGrH* 111C, 697–702). Cf. Dana 2016.
[2] At Strabo 13.3.6, Ephoros' history of Kyme: *FGrH* 70, F 1, 97–103. See Samuel 1968, Breglia 1996.
[3] Isager 1998 for *editio princeps*.

wrote and especially what inspired them to write histories of their communities.[4] Why do citizens of a place that is presumably very familiar feel that they must write about it, its geography, its religious cults, its past? To what extent do these histories offer a self-definition of their polis? In particular, why do we seem to see a massive flowering of local history (as it is conventionally but misleadingly called) in the period stretching from the late classical period into the Hellenistic period? For local historiography was the most common form of history-writing in these centuries. This was a period in which the powerful certainties of the two outstanding and admired city-states Sparta and Athens, and the Persian Empire, gave way to more of a level playing field among the very numerous city-states, to the rise of the superpower of Macedon, and then with Alexander and the Successors, the Greek conquest of the Middle East and a break-up into huge (if fluid) power blocks ruled by monarchs. In the surge of research into the polis as an institution, remarkably little attention has been paid to the histories devoted to such political units.[5] Nor do studies of historiography give much time to them.[6] And while historians no longer believe in the 'decline of the city-state' as a blanket phenomenon accompanying Philip's and Alexander's conquests, since the polis units continued to act as political units, one might nonetheless ask how, or in what respects, matters changed for the many city-states, and how far their senses of statehood might have been diminished when, for instance, they had a Macedonian garrison in town or called upon their cultural achievements when negotiating with Hellenistic kings. In terms of self-conception or self-affirmation, city-state histories written by their own historians would be an obvious place to look.[7] One returns to certain questions. Why write about your home town? Does the way you write about it reflect a particular conception of the place? Or does it in fact help to crystallize (or articulate) a particular conception?

The local historians have played surprisingly little part in this discussion. Yet here we enter the realm of the imagination and *mentalité*, the mental image, construction and reconstruction of each community in question and its past (however selective) – whether you wish to call these 'imagined

[4] I concentrate here mostly on poleis and islands, but ethnos states also enter the discussion.
[5] I think particularly of the Copenhagen Polis Project and its accompanying influences and spin-offs. For example, Whitmarsh's 2010 volume on *Local Knowledge* has nothing on local histories; nor does Zuiderhoek 2017.
[6] As Schepens commented sharply (2001, 3–9); Clarke 2008, especially chapters 4 and 6, is thus most welcome.
[7] Schepens 2001, a masterly overview, called for further research into this.

communities', 'social imaginaries' or the constructions of social memory, or anything else, to convey the fact that such images are not coextensive with the formal apparatus of state such as offices or institutions.[8] These questions are not easy to answer, especially from the kinds of evidence available, yet they are essential, for they touch on central issues in ancient history and the history of historiography: the survival or changing nature of the Greek city-states, the character and rationale for a major portion of Greek historical writing, and the conception or conceptions of such communities within the wider Greek and later Graeco-Roman world. A recent study makes a telling contrast between the Ptolemaic control of the state apparatus of the Cycladic island of Thera in the Hellenistic period and the continuity of the 'real' local, non-Ptolemaic Thera presented through the statues of local Therans in public spaces.[9] As in Thera, local polis histories may have been clinging to what they conceived as their abiding continuity and character, and they offer a different arena or image to that of the official polis inscriptions. In more modern historiography, there seems also to be a surge of interest in the writing of 'local histories' – not as instances of simple antiquarianism, but in contexts of wider political and social change, or as responses of smaller-scale communities to larger national or regional change or to globalization. I hope that an analysis of the Greek situation will contribute to some of these wider discussions.

It also speaks to our visions of Hellenism and the Greeks; far from focusing, like so many ancient history courses, on Athens, Sparta and then (perhaps reluctantly?) Macedon, the local histories seem to reflect precisely the kaleidoscope of small and large city-states that the Copenhagen Polis Project has catalogued and analysed, but they do so with the self-presentation and self-assertion of a new localized literature, entirely focused on one polis, island or ethnos and its place in the wider Greek world and Greek culture.

These are the poleis we often wish we had more evidence for – Kyzikos or Kyme, Erythrai or Phigaleia, Herakleia or Sicyon, the citizens of which feature in numerous narratives in Herodotus, Xenophon, Thucydides and Ephoros, or which are described by Pausanias. They are also the poleis which belonged largely to the world that gained a mention in the canon of Greek literature (i.e., mainly 'old Greece'), and they went on being read and consulted, either for their own sake or to elucidate some item in the

[8] Anderson, 2nd edition, 2006; Charles Taylor's 'social imaginary' was meant to convey the everyday, widely accepted value systems of a whole society (2004). Note also Lefebvre 1991 on 'social space'.
[9] Ma 2013, 220, and many more examples.

literary canon. These histories, a phenomenon of some considerable complexity (and not a little frustration), can offer interesting angles on the questions of polis identity, regional identity, the transformation of conceptions of the polis and the role of historiography in preserving, fostering and even creating the mental ties of imagination and tradition that helped to give each polis a sense of its uniqueness. By mental ties of imagination, I mean the tales and traditions, cults and rituals, attached to the place, as well as other intangible, non-concrete embodiments of the actions, practices and *nomoi* of the citizens and their territory that lay alongside the physical place. The symbolic capital of a place rests on these elements. It is possible, to judge from epigraphic evidence, that such historians gained a local status in their own community; other rising political communities, such as the Aitolians, imported others to tell them about their history.[10]

Polis patriotism is not new in the late classical period, of course, and we are aware of different nuances and implications in later Greek self-presentation during the Roman period. We may think of the Carian from Mylasa, writer of local histories (*epichoriai historiai*) of the second century AD, who was praised for having 'revealed the excellences of his *patris* to the centre of the Hellenes so as to make them more renowned'.[11] But what form does polis patriotism take in earlier centuries? A major question concerns the relation between the local histories and the communities, and between past history (past glory, but also past cults, past writers) and present status. How far did these histories create or crystallize a vision of the vast scatter of political communities (and no longer political communities) that made up the world of cultivated Greek culture, making sure that they remained on the map of significant and respected cities?[12]

The phenomenon of globalization has engendered a recent resurgence of interest in the 'local', the smaller units as opposed to the larger, and a surge of 'localism' (a vague and conveniently misleading word). It has not gone unnoticed that the fear of an all-enveloping globalization, with its conformist forces, has been connected with the rise of powerful anti-globalization forces on various local levels. Yet this is not completely new, though the components are modern, and it alerts us afresh to the

[10] Schepens 2006b; Clarke 2005 and 2008; and Chapter 1.

[11] From Spawforth 2001, 390; and note 388ff. for Pausanias' pride in his native Lydia (he came from Magnesia by Mount Sipylos). Carian *grammatikos* and historian: Crampa 1972, no. 66, lines 20ff.; *BE* 1972, no. 66.

[12] They do not include villages or subsections of poleis, nor, on the whole, new Hellenistic foundations. I avoid the word 'identity' as much as possible, as too vague and over-used (see Gillis 1994), though the components that make up a city's identity are indeed much present and discussed.

powers of local resistance – whatever 'local' means in each context – and the varieties that this might take. The writing of histories of place are implicated in this, and it is the strong contention of this book that, far from being simply learned emanations of scholarship, the historiography of place can be seen in many interesting ways as some form of response – from practical needs in negotiation to vaguer cultural pride or anxieties, or crises of identity, to larger political and social developments or to perceived threats from outside.

Examples of the sociopolitical contexts of written local history outside the Greek and ancient world are highly suggestive. In the high fastnesses of Nepal, learned writers of Kathmandu in the nineteenth century produced numerous chronicles that laid out the ancient origins of their customs and practices; this was a response to conquest in 1769, and the chroniclers wrote in the language of the conquerors (Nepali), precisely in order to set out their rights and customs and persuade the new rulers to respect their ways.[13] Closer to hand, it is difficult for anyone who spends any time in Ireland to miss the intense activity devoted to local history, Irish history, history of each region and county, histories of villages and communities, histories of the famine in each area, histories of emigration. In Irish bookshops one is confronted by an impressive number of shelves of local publishing houses devoted to such Irish history. This speaks of sheer love of place, devotion to country or village, and one would hesitate to attribute to it the deadening description of antiquarianism; for of course love of place, which can take so many forms, can be propelled into self-assertion, pride and self-defence, or an energetic desire to prevent the disappearance of local identity, customs and habits, as well as ancient lore and traditions. There is no need to elaborate here on the imperatives of the Irish to maintain their own particular memories, traditions and history in the face of British political and cultural dominance; and certain periods of particular significance for patriotic Irish history are revisited in each locality and local manifestation.

Or we can contemplate the extraordinary resurgence in nineteenth-century France of what contemporaries called the 'cult of local memories'. It was carefully and deliberately cultivated, and the 'cult' sought, among many things, to foster and stoke love of and pride in region, city and *pays*, qualities reckoned to be essential in the periods of instability and re-formation of nation after the French Revolution and especially during

[13] Gellner and Quigley 1995, 7f.: they call these chronicles 'a kind of Malinowskian charter of present-day Newar practices', referring to Sylvain Lévi. With thanks to David Gellner for alerting me to this. Cf. the effect of Persian domination of Egypt on Egyptian cultivation of traditions (Moyer 2011).

the July Monarchy of 1830–48. In a period of widening political participation by the citizen body, such regional history might also have helped educate and foster civic awareness, or so it was hoped, and therefore boost municipal self-determination and self-government.[14] The period saw the franchise widening and then contracting, oscillating along with political regime. Amidst the conflicting views about centralizing versus localism, the sense of the past in each region could be seized upon for various and conflicting purposes – whether for stabilizing society via a sense of continuity, for protecting 'provincial originalities' against threatening centralization, or for anti-Parisian, anti-centralizing sentiment. Local elites and the remains of the old aristocracy no doubt gained considerably in these exuberant pageants and displays of the great and the good of *pays* or town. A sentiment that was often articulated was that French society was disintegrating and the French needed to know who they were and what place they were destined to occupy in Europe and the world.

But this is to get ahead of ourselves. I do not wish to imply that local historiography is to be understood only as resistance to some external force or to perceived (or actual) social disintegration; simply that the varieties and social implications of any local history-writing are extremely complex and that these brief sketches from elsewhere should make one wary of seeing Greek historiography of place in simple one-dimensional terms. As Schepens has pointed out, local historiography urgently needs to be brought into discussion of polis identities (2001). Clarke's book (2008), concentrating upon chronological schemata and time systems, has done much to show how local histories were definitely part of a wider Greek historical consciousness and not cut off from the larger Greece. In the Greek world, the city-states were living communities with political pasts, often a proud history of autonomy and continuing autonomy that they wished to preserve, within various constraints and sometimes negotiable limits. The polis histories also explained, and boasted of, important cultural and religious contributions. They described cult and ritual activities, appearances of their main patron deity and customs, as well as narratives of wars and conflicts: the accoutrements of polis-pride and patriotism and much else.

This can come under the umbrella of questions about identity. Recent study of Greeks and barbarians, especially the Persians, has often focused on the importance of observing and describing the 'other' as part of

[14] See Gerson 2003; Ploux 2011, stressing the importance of the *petite patrie communale* for France; also Parsis-Barubé 2011.

a process of defining and refining what is thought to constitute Hellenism. The study of the barbarian could contribute to an interest in what made the Greeks themselves special, and it could refine an awareness of the particular, valued traits of Hellenism; indeed, it could be mainly propelled by this.[15] What led to Greek success against the Persians? (for example). But what about self-image as created by the historian of a city-state? What about looking at yourself, your city, your region, directly? Many of the same insights and methods used in research on ethnicity and ethnic identity in relations of Greeks and barbarians can be turned back on the many Greek writings about themselves,[16] and this is where the numerous polis and island histories have a part to play. Alongside the self-fashioning of a city's visual appearance, the polis histories have a good claim to be central in the preservation, concoction and even creation of a polis' vision of itself (at least as presented by one of its elite authors).

It is therefore an important argument of this book that Greek historiography devoted to one place or region should be thought about partly in terms of the contemporary concerns of writer and audience (for as we shall see, they were popular), and that such polis, island and regional histories both reflected and in some way created or recreated a focused statement about who they were, who their ancestors were (closely connected), and what made them – this particular community – special, even unique, worth of respect and consideration in the wider Greek world. Epigraphic discoveries and research based on epigraphy have radically changed our understanding – Chaniotis' collection (1988) is fundamental – but historiography here is neglected. It seems inconceivable that these researched works – and they *were* researched (see Chapter 1) – did not bear some relation to the concerns, ambitions and anxieties of the time, and that means not only the type of party-political differences within the city-state that Jacoby had famously argued for Athens.[17] This might be a concern for polis-assertion in the face of larger political forces, or nostalgia for a greater past which might yet give the citizen body confidence, and imply hope for the future, or simply a singing of local praises and special possessions and habits that was borne out of affection for the place.

[15] Most influentially, E. Hall 1989; J. Hall 2002; though many Greek writers were also interested in non-Greeks for other reasons.

[16] Malkin, ed., 2001, tries to redress this imbalance, looking at the different divisions and perceived divisions among the Greeks themselves.

[17] Jacoby knew well that they also treated 'wide domains' not linked to political struggles, but in his critique of Wilamowitz allowed that his argument was 'deliberately one-sided' (1949, 77).

There have been some tentative suggestions to this effect, and they can be elaborated much further. In an important article on historical narratives that occur in public inscriptions of Hellenistic cities, Boffo stressed the increasing importance of historical memory for social cohesion and for affirming self-identity in the Greek cities as the problems of cities multiplied and a general crisis could be perceived.[18] Focusing on epigraphic historiography and related genres, Chaniotis also insisted on the relation to a wider process of political change, especially the tension arising from the rise of world empires and fierce local patriotism at the polis level.[19] Similarly Wiemer, who has studied intensively the island histories of Rhodes, thought that the rise of local historiography after Alexander the Great must be 'closely connected to an intensified concern for defining collective identities, and for upholding what was regarded as the basis for living together in a polis: the heritage of the forefathers'. He added that competition between communities demanded that they demonstrated that their polis has contributed to the more general Greek world or Greek culture, historiography increasingly being part of the proof of this.[20] Schepens also suggested that 'local history' was a product of a period in which citizens needed to look back at a better past all the more urgently as the 'political heydays' of the polis were over: 'the need for people to define themselves with reference to their local roots may have been felt more intensely as the οἰκουμένη . . . was growing too vast too quickly for many'.[21] This is more complex and therefore more plausible than Jacoby's original explanation (a growing historical sense, a need to correct Herodotus and to put a city within the history of Greek peoples).[22] More recent studies of ethnicity help refine the questions here.

It is therefore hard to agree with Harding's argument, which saw 'the impulse of a community (polis or ethnos) to establish its identity' as reaching right back to the time of colonization, because this becomes far too broad and diffuse and begs the question why such a concern might need to involve historiography. Why do we not get local histories earlier, and why do so many of them emerge in the fourth to second centuries BC?[23] Traditions and memorials would indeed help boost a sense of identity. Yet why, in particular, do the polis histories that we know most about, those of Athens, emerge at the point when Athenians knew absolutely that they were in

[18] Boffo 1988, 38f., 41ff., especially 43, 48; with Herrmann 1984. [19] Chaniotis 1988, 135–7.
[20] Wiemer 2013, 280; Wiemer 2001.
[21] Schepens 2001, 14. Clarke 2008, 315, 319, stresses, too, the political value of 'heightened sense of identity', against Jacoby's competition *within* a city, not in relation to wider Hellenistic difficulties.
[22] For example, 1949, 184f.; also 68 with long note 111; see also Note 24. [23] Harding 2007, 187.

a period of relative decline and powerlessness in comparison with past greatness?[24] Modern studies of ethnicity tend to show that people busy themselves with establishing their identity, or discussing their ethnic identity, not in the normal course of life but when there are problems, questions, complications and conflicts that bring the question to a matter of urgency or a state of uncertainty. Besides, while talk of 'identity' can sound vague and fuzzy, for a Greek polis it involved the concrete and tangible matter of land and territory, and this too was clearly treated in various city-histories that told of wars and border disputes, the most famous example being the dispute adjudicated between Priene and Samos.[25]

Why show love of place in this literary form in particular? Prose was the form for fact, *akribeia*, science. Historical prose avoided the implications of eulogy and partiality that would be conventional in rhetorical speeches and might easily turn to facile jingoism. Archaic poetry's role in preserving tradition was by now taken over by prose. In more general terms, one may suspect that the style of serious prose, with its aura of scientific fact-finding and objectivity, would be particularly suitable for anything that one might fear could be lost. Or we might simply consider the importance of writing to preserve something you fear is threatened – compare the spate of books in recent years on (for instance) wilderness, silence and on books themselves. But once one history has been written, it may prompt others to improve, correct, add and elaborate; hence we find the phenomenon of clusters of polis histories from certain places – Argos, Rhodes, Samos, for example. Polis histories, we presume, become statements of that polis at that time.

The three main strands of this study, then, are the following:

(1) the nature and changing character of the Greek city-states, a contribution to the study of the polis/poleis and their changing conceptions
(2) the phenomenon of Greek historiography of place: polis and island histories (primarily) and their relation to larger 'great' historiography
(3) the argument that historiography should be seen as contingent, connected in complex ways to the preoccupations and concerns of writer and audience, rather than seen primarily or solely in terms of the development of a literary genre or as a series of works responding to previous historians (though such rivalry is also important).

[24] Jacoby gave various answers: Athenians wrote history *because* (and while) they were making it (meaning the fourth century) (1949, 73f.); closely connected to Philip's rise, 'political by its very nature, arising as a weapon in party strife' (79, with 77); cf. more generally on Ionian histories and correcting Herodotus, as in Note 22 above.
[25] See *IPriene*[2] 132 and Chapter 5.

Evidence

This is all very well, but, someone might ask, have we really got any evidence from the ancient Greeks? The answer is that the evidence for such histories is difficult to interpret, it remains mostly in fragments, but it is very extensive. We know that of the vast historiographical output of the Greek world we have remaining only a small portion – 'the ruins' of ancient historiography (Strasburger 1990). But that is a challenge rather than a reason to ignore them. Obviously, I would not have written this book had I thought we could do little with the fragments. Clarke's recent book has opened up new avenues in this region, and we notice the calls for urgent work in this area by Schepens and others. There is a complex story here, both about the original authors and about how the fragments have come down to us via a process of reading and rereading by other Greek writers, which opens up another discussion about their perceived importance in the Greek world itself. We possess two complete local histories: one by Dionysios of Halikarnassos, an outsider, on Rome, and one by Josephus about the Jews, written in the language that would attract the conquerors.

We have around 530-odd works attested of named writers of local histories of either polis, island or ethnos for the central areas of the Greek world. This number does not include those histories of areas that came to Mediterranean prominence in the Roman period, such as Bithynia, or of Cyprus and Macedonia (see Chapter 1). Yet thirty-five writers of polis histories are attested for Rhodes (mostly pre-99 BC), six for the curious island of Samothrace, five for Kyzikos (plus one very late), thirteen for Samos and six for Pontic Herakleia (see Appendix 3). Some authors are mere names, but names mentioned as writers of local history by some later writers who used their work. Others have fragments that are more or less extensive. Any research must start with the monumental work of Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (*FGrH*), which remains absolutely fundamental and has not been surpassed.[26] The *New Brill Jacoby* (*BNJ*, online) is issuing new commentaries by numerous scholars and keeping the same numbering system as *FGrH*. The remaining volumes of *FGrH* are being continued, as far as Part IV is concerned, by an international team of scholars based in Belgium, and these include much

[26] Local historians in *FGrH* 111A and 111B; 111C covers non-Greek areas. Marincola 1999 is essential on the problems of organization and conception (I use *FGrH* for simplicity, rather than *FGrHist* as Jacoby himself instructed).