Panhellenism and Athenian Athletics

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Introduction

After the extensive destructions of Sulla and the following decline during the Roman Civil Wars, Athens saw a great part of its former glory being restored at the times of Hadrian. Under the successor of Trajan, the Athenians enjoyed a kind of renaissance in the great city of Pericles, both from a cultural and a political point of view. The new Emperor put his signature by completing the Temple of Olympian Zeus and with the foundation of the Panhellenion in 131 CE. As Panhellenion, we identify the League of Greek cities that was initiated by emperor Hadrian and it was located on the perimeter of the temple of Olympian Zeus. Once again, Athens was the center of the Greek world, with the major difference that this time, it was in a Roman universe. Of course, the Panhellenion was not the first foundation ever in history for the sake of networking the Greek cities. "Koina" and other leagues were instituted immediately with August aiming at the celebration of the imperial cult. Athletic competitions, exclusively for Greeks, were still held at this time and very often Greek representatives were meeting with each other in important religious places such as Olympia, Delphi, Delos or Eleusis.

However, the case of the Hadrianic Panhellenion is quite a unique one. Not everything is known for the actions and the reasons why this league was founded, and especially for the participation of those specific cities that we shall examine later. The works of Spawforth & Walker[1] and those of Oliver[2] can give us a good introduction into what we actually know until now. Archaeology has also discovered very important leads that provide us names of member-cities and reveal

[1] Spawforth & Walker 1985.

[2] Oliver 1978, 1981. For the area of Peloponnese especially see also Kantirea and Camia 2010.

a strong bondage of the Pan-Hellenes and the imperial cult of the Antonines. If we add the ancient texts of the 2nd's century CE writers, we get a much better view of this league. Benjamin's work on the altars of Hadrian in Athens includes also a large collection of inscriptions from the members of the league that keep referring to the emperor Hadrian as Olympios, Savior and Founder.[3]

There follows a catalogue of the Panhellenion cities-members based on the current evidence available the scholars have found, a list that includes the following cities:

[3] Benjamin 1963.

1. Athens (Attica)
2. Sparta (Laconia)
3. Argos (Argolis)
4. Epidaurus (Argolis)
5. Methana (Argolis)
6. Corinth (Corinthia)
7. Megara (Megarid)
8. Chalcis (Euboea)
9. Akraiphiai (Boeotia)
10. Amphikleia (Boeotia)
11. Naryka (Locris)
12. Hypata (Thessaly)
13. Demetrias (Thessaly)
14. Thessalonica (Macedonia)
15. Perinthus (Thrace)
16. Aizanoi (Phrygia)
17. Synnada (Phrygia)
18. Eumeneia (?) (Phrygia)
19. Cibyra (Lycia/Phrygia)
20. Magnesia ad Maeandrum (Caria)
21. Tralles (Caria)
22. Miletus (Caria)
23. Thyateira (Lydia)
24. Sardis (Lydia)
25. Rhodes (Rhodes)
26. Samos (?) (Samos)
27. Apameia (Phrygia)
28. Lyttos (Crete)
29. Gortyn (Crete)
30. Hierapytna (Crete)
31. Cyrene (Cyrenaica)
32. Apollonia (Cyrenaica)
33. Ptolemais Barke (Cyrenaica

This is the complete list of the certified cities members as it was originally published by Romeo.[4] So far, the previous bibliography has not given a certain verdict as to what where the reasons behind the foundation of the Panhellenion and the membership of those specific cities. We will try to give answers as far as the real criteria are concerned. It looks like a network of mother-cities and their colonies that includes major Ionian (Athens), Doric (Sparta, Argos, Corinth) and Aeolian (Demetrias, the former city of Iolkos and Hypata) metropoleis and their apoikoi poleis at the other side of the Aegean. It is certainly clear that cities like Synnada and Cibyra in Phrygia had never been colonies of Sparta or of Athens. However, they also claim that their genealogy starts from mainland Greece. A further research in this strange persistence of those fake colonies must be done in order to understand what urges them to demonstrate such genealogies and origins.

The best description for the Panhellenion in Athens belongs to Pausanias. He describes in his *Attica* (18.6.1–8.9) the temples of Zeus Olympios and Zeus Panhellenios and informs the reader about the altars and statues of Hadrian. He also mentions temples for Saturn, Rea, Gaia Olympia, Athena, Hera, a statue of Isocrates (the first rhetor who inspired the union of all the Greeks against the barbarians—under the Athenians though), a hundred columns from Phrygian (Synnadian) marble, a catalogue of the apoikoi poleis (colonies) of Athens and finally includes a tradition about the foundation of an ancient temple of Olympian Zeus from the mythical Deucalion, father of Hellen which also was the founder of the Greek nation according to mythology. All these monuments are to be located in the newly built part of Athens which

[4] Romeo 2002, p. 23.

was called "Hadrian's polis" except from the hundred columns that belong with the Library of Hadrian, close to the Agora.[5]

Beyond the athletic events, which shall be the focus of this paper, a lesser known and far more dubious activity of the Panhellenion is none other than the alleged persecution of Christians in the area of Asia. According to the Apology towards Marcus Aurelius from the bishop of Sardis Meliton (c. 160 CE), preserved by Eusebius in his Ecclesiastical History, they (the Panhellenes) were openly looting and harassing his flock, even against the orders of emperor Antoninus Pius.

> ταῖς πόλεσι περὶ τοῦ μηδὲν νεωτερίζειν περὶ ἡμῶν ἔγραψεν, ἐν οἷς καὶ πρὸς Λαρισαίους καὶ πρὸς Θεσσαλονικεῖς καὶ Ἀθηναίους καὶ πρὸς πάντας Ἕλληνας.
>
> ...
>
> τὸ γὰρ οὐδεπώποτε γενόμενον, νῦν διώκεται τὸ τῶν θεοσεβῶν γένος καινοῖς ἐλαυνόμενον δόγμασιν κατὰ τὴν Ἀσίαν. οἱ γὰρ ἀναιδεῖς συκοφάνται καὶ τῶν ἀλλοτρίων ἐρασταὶ τὴν ἐκ τῶν διαταγμάτων ἔχοντες ἀφορμήν, φανερῶς λῃστεύουσι, νύκτωρ καὶ μεθ' ἡμέραν διαρπάζοντες τοὺς μηδὲν ἀδικοῦντας.

> (Antoninus Pius) wrote to the cities, forbidding them to take any new measures against us; among the rest to the Larissaeans, to the Thessalonians, to the Athenians, and to all the Greeks.
>
> ...

[5] Travlos 2005, p. 111.

> For, what never before happened, the race of the pious is now suffering persecution, being driven about in Asia by new decrees. For the shameless informers and coveters of the property of others, taking occasion from the decrees, openly carry-on robbery night and day, despoiling those who are guilty of no wrong.
>
> Eusebius, *Historiae Ecclesiasticae, Book IV, chapter 26*

Whether Antoninus Pius did gave such an order or not, it seems as an undenied fact that the Panhellenes were indeed promoting, perhaps even with the use of violence, the Hellenic culture and religion against the Christians.[6] Furthermore, there seems to be a very close relation between the selection of some particular cities as members, given that they were previously chosen by Paul during his Apostolic Travels.[7] Cities with established Jewish communities, who now already had their own Christian bishops! After this brief but necessary introduction we may now proceed to our main topic, the Panhellenia and the Athenian athletics during the second century CE.

Panhellenia and Athenian Athletics

Athletics in the Roman province of Achaia, even from the late Hellenistic era, had lost a big amount of the "allure" that Pindar so vigorously once described. As the cities-states of Classical Greece begun to decline and the mega-cities of the Hellenistic kingdoms rose, the events that they hosted depended more and more on the benevolence of a monarch or of a local, striving oligarchic elite. Furthermore, the repeated disasters from the wars against the Romans and the following era of the Republican civil wars left Greece ruined and strived from

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[6] Spawforth & Walker 1985, p. 84.

[7] A deeper analysis can be found in Laura Nasrallah's: "The Acts of Apostles, Greek Cities and Hadrian's Panhellenion," *Journal of Biblical Studies*, no. 3, 2008, pp. 533–566.

treasures and resources, both human and material. As a result, sport activities and panhellenic festivals fell also victims to the crisis throughout the newly formed province of Achaia (mostly agreed to have been founded in 27 BCE[8]). Ironically enough, Rome officially started to dictate Greek politics during the famous panhellenic athletic festival of Isthmia (196 BCE) where consul Titus Quintus Flamininus "declared the freedom" of every Greek city, as a result of the Third Macedonian War.

The decline of the Athenian might led to the abolition of army service for the epheboi, somewhere during the late second century BCE.[9] As a result, the few teens of the elite families of Athens who volunteered for service had a short term into the gymnasia. There, instead of exercising and train for war as it was accustomed, they attended philosophical lectures (except of those of the Epicureans[10]). Schools like the Platonic Academia, the Aristotelic Lyceum and the new Platonic school of Charmadas were in fact located into gymnasiums, where athletics gave their place to the teachings of Philosophers. Among the students were also wealthy Romans who had a chance of receiving the Greek education while strolling into the *xystos* and the *palaistrai*.

These activities barely continued after the city was sieged and plundered by Sulla, in 86 BCE. The subsequent poverty and unrest during the roman civil wars (all three of them taking place in Greece) were obviously serious obstacles for a large-scale celebration of events like the Panathenaia. We happen to know that a similar event, the Theseia, cost during the 2nd century BCE to the agonethetes the sum of one talanton (*IG* II^2 956, 18–19; 958, 15–16). Like every other major Greek city, Athens was looking for benefactors to fund the construction and the repairs of its monuments, as for example Ptolemy the 3rd Euergetes did, with a gymnasium close to

[8] Alcock 1996, p. 9

[9] Habicht 1998, p. 150

[10] Id.

the Agora (Paus. 1.17.2). The collapse of the Hellenistic kingdoms and the indifference of the Senate and the first emperors meant that the city would have to survive without expecting such donations from the imperial *fiscus*, especially when it came to spectacles. Perhaps emperor's Nero presence and participation at Olympia and Isthmia, along with the "liberation" and tax immunity of Greece, in 67 CE could be a good starting point for the revival of Athenian athletics. However, the subsequent rule of the Flavii returned Achaia to its former, conquered, status.

As a part of the Hadrianic revival of Greek cities, Athens did not only express her gratitude towards the philhellene Emperor with monuments[11] but also with a series of events, many of them being athletic competitions. Those competitions are mostly testified by epigraphic evidence and were introduced by or for Hadrian, mainly during the last decade of his reign. Next to the traditional and revived Panathenaia, Roman Athens has a wide variety of games to present to its wealthy tourists and pilgrims from the Empire. We are able to name spectacles like the Germanikeia, Hadrianeia, Athenaia,[12] Thesia and the Antinoeia in Eleusis. For the sake of brevity, focus shall be given mainly but not exclusively on the Panhellenia.

The Panhellenia remain as obscure as the rest of the nature of the whole Panhellenion initiative. What we know for certain is that they were held every four years, also called as "the Great Panhellenia" (μεγάλα Πανελλήνια), and they were under the supervision of some certain "agonothetes."[13] This however leaves open the possibility (though small) of the existence of "minor or lesser Panhellenia," as it was the case of the "Dionysia." No epigraphical evidence exists so far to support or contradict this case. What matters is that they were eventually part of a four-year circle of Athenian events, with the most important of them being the

[11] Camp 2005, pp. 225–235. Travlos 2005, pp. 110–116

[12] Athenaia seem to be the rebranding of the Panathenaia under Commodus, Newby 2005, p. 178 n. 23

[13] Oliver 1970, no. 19

Panhellenia, the Hadrianeia, the Olympeia and of course the Panathenaia,[14] the three of them being held most probably in the area of the newly restored by Hadrian, Temple of Olympian Zeus and shrine of the Panhellenion. Furthermore, emperor "Hadrian Zeus Olympios Savior Panhellenios," as he is frequently called by the inscriptions dedicated to him in Athens,[15] is the honorary person/deity of those events, the individual that turned the city into an athletic Metropolis of the Mediterranean.[16]

The program of the Panhellenia can be partially reconstructed by some inscriptions that James H. Oliver has collected. There was a *dolichos* race[17] and this leave open the possibility of other running contests, as it was accustomed in every other major athletic event. A runner from Abada in Pisidia is mentioned, which was not a city member in the Panhellenion. Wrestling is also attested[18] in the gravestone of a professional athlete in Naples. Rome is also represented by her champion Hermodoros, a pancratiast who won not only in the Panhellenia but in four other occasions in Athens.[19] Another pancratiast and frequent visitor in Athens was M. Aurelius Demostratus Damas. He also won as a pugilist and he came from the city member of Sardis.[20] Finally, there was also a contest for heralds as we found out by dedications of two winners.[21] Those few evidence spread from the second half of the second century until probably the destruction by the Heruli, in 267. The Panhellenia, contrary to participation to the League, were not a closed event for members only, as the participation of professional

[14] Boatwright 2000, p. 145–147

[15] Benjamin 1963, pp. 57–86

[16] Spawforth & Walker 1985, p. 91

[17] Oliver 1970, no. 53

[18] Id, no. 54

[19] Id, no. 55

[20] Id, no. 56

[21] Id, no. 52 and 58

athletes from Rome, Naples and Abada make clear. Those participations however, are until c. 200 and the rest of the attested participants represent cities members. This must have been a major blow for the popularity of the Panhellenia and the League made an official protest towards emperor Septimius Severus (193–211) because the champions that draw the crowds were now skipping the city during their tours.[22]

The city could not attract them anymore because of the luck of monetary support, not only due to the death of the great Panhellene Herod the Atticus but also because Septimius Severus recalled much of the imperial support towards Athens. Financial resources played a huge role in every aspect of public life. For the city to become able to host all those major athletics events, large sums of money were to be spent; not only for the gymnastic infrastructures but also for the prizes and the accommodation of the participants, especially the champions that were mentioned above. The Panhellenion was paying for all these but who was paying Panhellenion? Emperor Hadrian, as the founder of the event and as he presided at the inauguration of the League, was the donator and the sponsor for the festivities, at least until his death 7 years after, at 138 CE. Antoninus Pius's financial approach led the cities to depend more on their own resources than to expect annual imperial donations, at least not for all of their activities. The Emperor's *fiscus* was soon replaced by the donations of wealthy Panhellenes and other benefactors who were eager to show their *philotimia*.[23] Most prominent of them was the sophist and agonothetes of the first games of the League at 131 CE, Herod the Atticus.[24] After this, he became also the agonothetes of the Panathenaia in 142–143 (for both

[22] Id, no. 21–22

[23] Spawforth & Walker 1985, p. 99

[24] Oliver 1970, nos. 129–130.

games see also Philostratos, *VS*, 550) and thus sponsored the construction of a marble stadium, known broadly as the Panathenaic stadium, the home of the first modern Olympics![25]

Another resource for those events was the spectators. Not only Athens but also many famous cities of the province of Achaia became famous destinations for the pilgrims and the tourists of the antiquity, even before the Antonines.[26] Traditional Greek athletics were obviously one of the things that those travelers would like to witness during their journeys, especially when we consider the almost "anti-athletic" attitude of Romans and of those who occupied the western provinces of the Empire.[27] Athenians may not have gone so far as to publicly flog their teens, like Spartans did,[28] but they also invested on displaying their gymnastic culture. Though famous professional athletes were a major attraction for the Athenian festivals (at least until the Severan era), they were still only some of the participants of the Panhellenia since we do know that the *epheboi* of the city were also somehow involved with this League. Even if they did not compete in such a young age, they were bred to be able later to represent their city, next to those professionals. Still, we must not consider ever for moment the Panhellenion as a "tourists' attraction."[29]

The Athenian institution of the *ephebeia* had a deeply militarized focus, especially after the law of Epicrates in 336/365 BCE where all the capable teens had to be trained in the use of various weapons and maneuvers so that they can defend their Democracy.[30] This romantic memory of the Athenian past was revived by Hadrian and the Panhellenes. As S. Follet[31]

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[25] Philostratus *VS*, 549. Pausanias I, 19.6. Graindor 1930, note 182 and Ameling 1983 I. p. 89.

[26] Alcock 1996, pp. 215–230

[27] Newby 2005, p. 144

[28] Cartledge & Spawforth 2002, pp. 176–211

[29] Swain 1996, p. 76.

[30] Habicht 1998, pp. 34–35.

[31] Follet 1976.

demonstrated, the *ephebeia* in Roman Athens was actually rejuvenated, proving that the mentions into the texts of the Second Sophistic were not exaggerations but closer than we ever thought to reality. An extended research through dedicatory inscriptions and reliefs from second century Athens indicate a plethora of teens honoring and being honored for winning in competitions or for holding related ranks. As Philostratus describes in his Life of Herod the Atticus, the sophist constantly took care of their training and education. Also, the events, where the *epheboi* participated, had the same competitions in their program that were mentioned above and more. We can now return to the program of Panhellenia and construct a more complete image through games similar to them, such as the Hadrianeia, the Antinoeia, the Germaniceia, the Theseia and the Athenaia, based on the lists of their winners (e.g., *IG* ii2.2119, ll. 126–222 and *IG* ii2. 2024, ll. 135). What is worth noticing is the fact that there were athletic but also artistic challenges. Zahra Newby briefly gathered in the following words:

> "For the majority of festivals, the contests consisted of the following: heraldry, encomium, poetry, long-distance race (dolichos), three categories of the stade foot race, double stade race, three categories of wrestling, three categories of the pancratium, and the race in armour (hoplos)"[32]

She also mentions the possibility of the *epheboi* competing against older athletes[33] and this perhaps might give them the right to participate in the Panhellenia as well, especially when other, careerist athletes, started to ignore Athens.

We may now turn our attention to the Hadrianic and later Antonine revival of the Athenian *ephebeia* and its connection with the Panhellenion as a broader institution of promoting hellenicity for the service of Rome. This point of view is based on archaeological

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[32] Newby 2005, p. 178.

[33] Id.

discoveries, on parallel activities of other cities members (mainly Sparta) and on the related texts of the Second Sophistic. What needs to be further discussed is that after Hadrian, the training of the *epheboi* in Athens and in other cities members of the Panhellenion had a second (but not secondary), military aspect which was not for the sake of tradition or athletics; rather it was developed for real-life emergencies. This aspect was manifested from the first visits of Hadrian in Athens until even the 3rd century, according to inscriptions on dedications of the *epheboi*. In one instance, they march with full armor all the way to Eleusis to witness the Mysteries (*IG* ii2. 1078). In others, there is a constant presence of officers like *hoplomachoi*, *systremmatarchai*, *kastrofylax*, *strategos*, *polemarchos*, *astynomos*, (e.g., *IG* II² 2104 where there is also a clear association of the above with the Panhellenes). They were found in proximity to the Diogeneion and in some cases we are able to identify names of non-Athenian citizens that still participate into those exercises and activities.

Parallel events to the Panhellenia were inaugurated in Sparta. They were named Euryclea[34] and later we learn about a new festivity, the Commodea.[35] But why does Sparta matter so much? It is because the city of Lakedaimon, being the second pillar of the Metropoleis of the Panhellenion, was also tasked by Hadrian to promote the militarization of the youngsters. Aspects of the Spartan *Agoge* were still surviving through the famous cult of Artemis Orthia and the "fights" between the teams of the *epheboi*; still, by this era only for the pleasure of the curious Roman tourists who were visiting the city. However, things changed for Sparta after 131 CE, when C. Iulius Eurycles Herculanus L. Vibullius Pius, senator and descendant of the city's wealthiest family, constructed a great gymnasium (witnessed by Pausanias III, 14.6)

[34] Cartledge & Spawforth 2002, pp. 110–111.

[35] Cartledge & Spawforth 2002, pp. 117–118.

which was inaugurated with the festivity of Euryclea, after his death on 136 CE.[36] Another "warlike" revival, was the Platanistas, the place where groups of teens fought against each other, only that this time, military drills and tactics were involved.[37] Hadrian himself praises this (re)turn of the *Agoge* in one of edicts towards Cyrene (member of Panhellenion as a Spartan colony), mentioning their "Laconian self-discipline and training."[38] As it was proven, it was a sincere movement towards the training of new Spartan soldiers. We are able to trace among the trainers of the ephebes of Hadrian's era names of drill-masters (*hoplomakhoi*[39]). Those armed Spartans, during peaceful times they acted as local *vigiles* or gendarmerie but they were also involved into the Parthian Campaigns of 163–166 and 215–217 CE.[40] This role of "local police by traditionalists" and their presence into Sardis during the Parthian War of L. Verus fits strangely well into the accusations towards the Panhellenes that we saw earlier by bishop Meliton. Before returning to Athens and the Panhellenic projects we must note the fact that not only Spartans could be trained into the Hadrianic version of Agoge but also prominent youths of other cities, such as the young rhetor, sophist and *agonothetes* of the Panhellenia, Herod the Atticus, along with his fellow *synephebe* and also Panhellen Corinthas, son of Nicephorus.[41]

The dedicatory inscriptions, the lists of the *epheboi* and the decrees concerning the Panhellenia are only one aspect of the Athenian Athletics during the second century CE. Through the texts of the Second Sophistic Movement, we are able to understand how those previously presented activities were seen by the Greek elites and philosophers of the Empire.

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[36] Cartledge & Spawforth 2002, p. 186.

[37] Newby 2005, p. 156.

[38] Reynolds 1978, especially lines 39–40.

[39] Cartledge & Spawforth 2002, p. 205.

[40] Id, p. 115.

[41] Cartledge & Spawforth 2002, pp. 113 and 167.

Their implication with the League and the games started already with the inauguration of the Olympeion and the first Panhellenia of 131 where the great sophist Polemo of Laodicea made a ceremonial speech by the order of Hadrian (*Lives of the Sophists* I, 533). The speech has not survived to our days but Philostratus described it as "godly inspired" and the moment where Hadrian reconciled him with his successor Antoninus Pius. However, and in accordance to the fragments of his work "*Physiognomica*" (transmitted only in an Arabic version, published on R. Forster's Teubner edition of *Scriptores Physiognomici*), we cannot ignore the fact that this great orator was famous for expressing extremely "racist" opinions in favor of the Greek nationals, opinions that were possibly a sort of ideological background of the newly founded League and even maybe Hadrian himself.[42] Roughly the same time, two other major constructions linked to the ephebic education were presented to the Athenians. The Gymnasium of Hadrian,[43] behind the Stoa of Attalos and his Library,[44] two indispensable buildings for the physical, as well as the mental training of every true Greek.

Philostratus lived in Athens during the first half of the third century, and as subjective as he may was towards some of his favorite sophists, he shares valuable information on the new approaches on the ephebic education after Hadrian's and Antoninus's innovations. Through his first major biography about Lollianus from Ephesus, we learn that during their reign (most probably during the latter's[45]) he became the first owner of the "throne" or more accurately, the seat of Rhetoric into a unified Philosophy School of Athens (*Lives of the Sophists*, 526). It must not be confused neither with the Imperial seat of Philosophy that was created by Marcus

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[42] Isaac 2004. It comes as no surprise the fact that close to Hadrian in Rome thrived the Epicurean philosopher Epictetus who has deviously uttered the question "Why are you impersonating Greeks when you are a Jew?" (*Discourses* 2.9.19). On this passage see Stern 1974, p. 543.

[43] Thompson 1950, p. 326.

[44] Sisson 1929, pp. 50–72. Travlos 2005, pp. 41–63.

[45] Avotins 1975, pp. 313–324:313. cf Hadot 2006, pp. 227–230.

Aurelius, nor with the later Neoplatonic Academy, as Marco Di Branco carefully noticed.[46] For the time being, the throne was appointed directly by the city of Athens and it came along with the office of "General of the Arms" (*Strategos hepi ton Hoplon*). Di Branco reassures us that this title had nothing to do with warfare[47] and it was the Athenian equivalent to the *aediles* or the agoranomos. At this point, I must insist on my firm belief that this office was not just a sign of Antoninian antiquarianism but that it also could mean the existence of a body of armed (young?) men who protected the General while he was sharing the *annonae* of grain. Those guardians would be certainly very useful for Lollianus when in a case of public unrest from hungry Athenians he almost got killed (*Lives of the Sophists*, 526). Despite the cultural revival, Athenians were still facing the poverty and famine that haunted them even from the second century BCE.

Student of Polemo, prominent figure of the Panhellenion and the greatest supporter of the Athenian youth, Herod the Atticus, is also extensively presented by Philostratus in his Lives of the Sophists. His life and works are too extended for this paper but we shall concentrate on his actions concerning the ephebic and gymnastic activities. An initiative with a huge symbolism was that he provided the *epheboi*, for the first time in the Athenian history, white tunics, instead of the traditional black (*Lives of the Sophists*, 550). The black tunic, sign of grief and exclusion from the society, was associated with the Athenian initiation into the body of young soldiers who guarded the northern frontiers of Attica.[48] However, the white tunic, though a striking antithesis to the past, is also the most probable dressing of the legionnaires! The military duty that was in decline after the first century BCE, as we saw earlier, was now being reformed, and I cannot see a way of this reformation to be a total demilitarization but, on the

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[46] Di Branco 2006, pp. 20–21. See note 16 for further bibliography on this matter.

[47] Id, p. 21

[48] Vidal-Naquet 1981, pp. 160–174.

contrary, an approach to the new, military institutions of Rome, projected into the Athenian values.

The association of the *epheboi* with the (Pan)Hellenism of Herod is also attested during the reign of Marcus Aurelius. When the sophist Alexander was sent by the emperor to Athens, he demanded Herod to return from Marathon (in N.E. Attica) and to bring with him his Greeks, meaning all the Athenian youths that had followed him to his estate to become his students. Herod replied that he and his Greeks would indeed return and meet him for a contest of speeches in the Theatre of Agrippa (*Lives of the Sophists*, 571). Indeed, he was so adored by his pupils that even at his funeral they stormed the procession and grabbed his body from his freedmen in order to bury it at the Panathenaic stadium (*Lives of the Sophists*, 566)! Nonetheless, when Marcus Aurelius decided the creation of an Imperial Seat of Philosophy in Athens[49] he did not award it to Herod but to his rival, Theodotus,[50] at least until 175/176 AD, during the revolt of Avidius Cassius, when the seat went to Herod's student Hadrian. This strange change of hearts against Herod on behalf of Marcus is probably connected to the accusations against the great sophist for conspiring against the emperor with Lucius Verus during the latter's visit in Greece in 162 CE[51] (where he raised troops from Sparta) and for an overall anti-roman attitude,[52] an attitude certainly dangerous if it was taught to the *epheboi* of the city.

When Avidius Cassius proclaimed himself as an emperor, Marcus Aurelius hastily promoted his son Commodus in the same rank and the Panhellenes remained loyal to him. We know of Spartan and other Greeks volunteers (most worth mentioning among them, 80 Thespians!)

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[49] It must not be mistaken with the previous throne of Lollianus which was controlled by the city of Athens.

[50] For the exact year, see Oliver 1970, pp. 80–84 and Avotins 1975, p. 322.

[51] Historia Augusta, *Verus*, 5.8

[52] Di Branco 2006, pp. 25–35.

who joined the emperor as he was in a great need for new recruits.[53] Later, the Spartans celebrated the ascension of Commodus with a great series of athletic games, the Olympia Commodea.[54] The name Olympia indicates that those games, exactly like the Panhellenenia and the other Hadrianic games of Athens, were also dedicated to Zeus Olympios, the cult that assimilated the imperial cult and the roman version of Jupiter Optimus Maximus Capitolinus. Marcus Aurelius was officially reconciled with Herod at his last visit in Athens, in the year 176 when he was initiated to the Eleusinian Mysteries in order to show that he was innocent for the death of the pretender Avidius (*Historia Augusta* XXVII, 1).[55] While doing this he also assisted the Panhellenes to restore and rebuild the area around the Telesterion.[56] The area was utterly destroyed six years earlier when the barbaric tribe of Costoboci raided Eleusis and was finally repelled by an "army of volunteers" from the city member of the Panhellenion, Amphikleia and the nearby Elateia (Pausanias 8.34.5).

A brief mention must be made as well to another book of Philostratus, the *Gymnasticus*. For its writer it is clear that the proper Greek education is incomplete without a "scientific" (*Gymnasticus* 1, περὶ δὲ γυμναστικῆς, σοφίαν λέγωμεν οὐδεμιᾶς ἐλάττω τέχνης) and a professional knowledge of the training of the body. Therefore, the antiquarianism of Philostratus does not include only the Second Sophistic Movement but also the need to reinstitute the training methods of the "old times." He refers to his current times (contrary to the *Lives of Sophists* which is a work of 242/243[57] but describes mostly personalities of the previous century) as an era when athletics are in a decline and the youths no longer know how

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[53] Cartledge & Spawforth 2002, p. 116.

[54] Id. pp. 117 and 187.

[55] Herod had done the same thing when he was accused of murdering his own wife Regilla.

[56] Spawforth & Walker 1985, pp. 102–103.

[57] Jones 2002.

to perform them. It is difficult to establish the exact date of this work, even if it is a product of the same Philostratus of the Lives, due to references in Suda Lexicon of various authors under this name who lived almost at the same time. But it is safe enough to claim that the era of the declining is after the death of Antoninus Severus (217), most probably after 219 too.[58] If our Philostratus lived indeed in Athens then he would still find the Panhellenia being held, though without the participations of professional athletes as it was mentioned but merely with the local athletes available. Despite the absence of political (and paramilitary) potent of the Panhellenion, as a result of the Constitutio Antoniniana (212 CE), there is always a military perspective in this work. Philostratus admits that those athletes of the old times could excel in sports as well as in the battlefield (*Gymnasticus* 43, ἀλλ᾽ ἀριστείων τε ἀξιούμενοι καὶ τροπαίων, καὶ μελέτην ποιούμενοι πολεμικὰ μὲν γυμναστικῶν, γυμναστικὰ δὲ πολεμικῶν ἔργα.).

Pugilism and Hoplite Race have obvious military connotations (*Gymnasticus* 7–9), especially with the Persian Wars,[59] but Philostratus will specifically mention the case of Platea, where the Hoplite Race is dedicated to the victory against the Persians (*Gymnsticus* 8). The celebration of this event endured and survived without ever losing its Panhellenic aspect. This memory of the Spartan and Athenian coalition was honored through the cult of Zeus Eleutherios, hosted by the Common of the Concord of the Greeks. Hadrian and Tiberius Claudius Attalus Andragathos, an ambassador of the Panhellenion[60] from Synnada—famous for inventing a descendance of his city from Sparta *IG* V 1.452[61]—will infiltrate into these festivities. The emperor will be venerated with a statue into the sanctuary (*IG* VII 1675) and Andragathos will

[58] Bowie & Elsner 2009, p. 30.

[59] Newby 2005, p. 170.

[60] Spawforth & Walker 1985, pp. 91–92.

[61] More for the meaning of this inscription on Müller 1980, p. 464, note 56.

become the priest of the Concord of the Greeks and Zeus Eleutherios in Platea.[62] This cult of Zeus included games called the *Eleutheria* and in those games we now know that the Athenian ephebes participated.[63] Furthermore, not only Andragathos but also another, anonymous priest of Hadrian Panhellenios became priest of Concord.[64] The winner of the *Eleutheria*, according to Pausanias (9.2.6), was called the "Best of the Hellenes," another reason according to Newby for associating them with broader Panhellenic contexts,[65] similar to those that were founded by Hadrian.

Another parallel image of the second century Athenian gymnastic education of the ephebes as a practice for war against a barbarian invader is located in Lucian.[66] Despite being born in Syria (circa 120 CE) and learning later Greek, Lucian, the great absent of the *Lives of the Sophists*, spent most of his adult life in Athens. His heritage and his satiric attitude towards almost everything and everyone would make him certainly not the ideal Panhellen. He does not ever mention directly the League or the Panhellenia but his dialog *Anacharsis* (dated between 157–161 CE[67]) echoes the athletic struggles of the ephebes of his era and places them back to the idealized years of Solon.[68] It is indeed somewhere in the early 6th century, in Lyceum, the gymnasium of Lycian Apollo (since the Diogenium and the Ptolemaic/Hadrianic gymnasiums are later constructions) where the state of Athens is training its future soldiers. We must also keep in mind that the three gymnasiums of the Solonean city, the one of Akademos, the Academia, the one of Kynossarges and Lykeion were outside of the city walls,

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[62] Nafissi 1995, pp. 119–136.

[63] Gaegan 1972, pp. 152–158.

[64] Spawforth & Walker 1985, p. 92.

[65] Newby 2005, p. 170.

[66] See Delz 1950, pp. 91–95.

[67] Schwartz 1965, p. 45.

[68] Newby 2005, p. 171.

therefore equally ideal for Lucian to place his dialog; since all of them were places of the ephebic training.[69] Furthermore, this is not the era of the Athenian Republic; it is still a *timokrateia*, the regime where rights and offices are appointed according to the income of each citizen. As far as it concerns Roman Athens, this constitution must feel quite familiar to the institutions of Lucian's times.

Contrary to the scarce references to the military values of *Gymnasticus*, the dialog *Anacharsis* as a whole, praises the lessons that the young soldiers will gain into the gymnasium.[70] Therefore, there is no reason for mentioning specific phrases from it. Instead, I want to focus on the institutors of this education. Solon and Lycurgus (present through Solon's words in his absentia) need no introductions to Lucian's audience. They are already considered as ideal and semi-mythical lawgivers, famous for their wisdom and the legacy of their cities. The memory and the glory gained in the battlefields by Athens and Sparta are also undisputed and well known to everyone. But in the case of Athens, those credits of virtue are given to Solon unjustly. All the major victories of the city were in fact products of the post-solonian Democracy. During the 6th century, when Sparta and Argos dominated the battlefields, Athens was a minor, second-class power. Lucian however, with the excuse of placing *Anacharsis* before the Cleisthenian regime that won the Persian Wars, avoids praise to a constitution that it was perhaps unwise to feel nostalgic for. The Lycurgean Sparta, a continuous oligarchy, can keep its heritage intact through the Antonine Revival of Hellenicity. But Athens is found in the awkward place of erasing any direct homage to Democracy (and through it to the Res Publica) for those few glorious centuries that it lasted. This is perhaps the reason behind Lucian calling

[69] Travlos 2005, p. 46.

[70] Newby 2005, p. 169.

Solon in *Skytha* (a book with obvious similarities to *Anacharsis*, dated between 165–170 CE[71]), as "everything of Athens and Greece,"[72] a phrase where Panhellenism is now more than certain. Finally, I feel obliged to mention History's irony, since we must not forget that the Costoboci pillagers of Greece in 170 CE could be very easily described by later ancient historians as "Skythians" like Anacharsis himself!

For the last part of this research, we are examining the case of Pausanias, a proud Greek who wrote at the times of Marcus Aurelius.[73] Throughout his work he will not make any further mention of the Panhellenion or any at all of the winners of the Panhellenia, even when visiting cities members. He may not reject panhellenism as an ideal but my interpretation on this matter is that he does not fully agree with Hadrian's vision, at least as it was praised by the members of the League. He has indeed a plan of describing "everything that is Greek" (πάντα ὁμοίως ἐπεξιόντα τὰ Ἑλληνικά, 1.26.4) but with a different point of view. For Pausanias, only Peloponnese and most of Central Greece, what it then was the Roman Province of "Achaia," is worth for accounting. Certainly, we can neither blame the describer of places like Olympia, Isthmos and Delphi for lack of enthusiasm in athletics, nor for not expressing, perhaps better than everyone, the antiquarianism of the second century CE. As he walks around the temple of Zeus in Olympia, he makes extended accounts of the statues that athletes and cities dedicated, either for victories in the Games or for actual battles during wars. For Pausanias, the Altis is a holy place where athletic and martial excellence are commemorated next to each other.[74] For us, the most important exhibit among those is another statue of Zeus, the one that the Greeks who fought in Plataea dedicated there (5.23.1–3). The same League of Greeks that was

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[71] Schwarz 1965, p. 129.

[72] Lucian, *Skytha*, VII: ὦ Ἀνάχαρσι, πάντα ἑώρακας ἤδη Σόλωνα ἰδών· τοῦτο αἱ Ἀθῆναι, τοῦτο ἡ Ἑλλάς.

[73] On the dating of his work see Habicht 1988, pp. 9–12 and Arafat 2004, p. 8.

[74] Newby 2005, p. 209.

rejuvenated by Hadrian and the Panhellenion. I firmly believe that it is by no coincidence the fact that the surrounding area of the Olympeion in Athens, with the altars of Hadrian and the cities members, echoes this image of Olympia in the land of Theseus. Herod the Atticus will construct a monumental Nymphaeum close to the temple of Hera and the Philippeion, the latter being a symbol of the Panhellenism of Phillip of Macedon, exactly as Isocrates hoped for. Even the Roman dominion over the Greeks is present in Olympia, not just with a Roman gate but most surprisingly, with a dedication from general Mummius for his victory in battle against the Greeks (5.24.4)!

However, for Pausanias, Olympia (and then Delphi) must remain the first and main cradle of every union among the Greeks, not Athens, as it was the vision of Hadrian.[75] He prefers telling us about the archaic and classical victors and he seems uninterested for those of the last centuries.[76] I agree once more with Z. Newby on the reasons why and how this happens, as I quote:[77]

> So Book 1 is dominated by the discussion of Athens, while Book 10 includes the description of the important Panhellenic sanctuary of Delphi, though without the lavish detail which Pausanias expends on Olympia. Each of these sites could have asserted an equal claim to be seen as the heart of Greece—Athens as the centre of the new Panhellenion and a focal city in the world of the Second Sophistic, and Delphi as the key oracular sanctuary of the ancient world, fount of the many oracles which pepper the narrative. Yet Pausanias chooses instead to place Olympia at the centre of his vision of Greece. We can perhaps see this as

[75] Newby 2005, pp. 210–211.

[76] Scanlon 2002, pp. 40–63.

[77] Newby 2005, p. 210.

an indication of a Greek view of Greece, as opposed to the imperial view suggested by the activities of some Roman emperors. The Panhellenion is a key institution to consider here.

Under these remarks I may now draw my final conclusions.

Conclusions

The final questions that will now attempted to be answered are “why” and “for whom.” Why did Hadrian and his successors bothered to make Athens an athletic metropolis for all the Greeks? Who were those that should witness and presumably be impressed by all those great athletic festivities? The Panhellenia and every similar Athenian event were certainly not a spectacle for a few selected guests. They were not even just for the Athenians. Such activities had to be shown and demonstrated to as many spectators as possible. The quintessence of Greek culture, athletic and rhetoric excellence were performed in order to impress, not only “every Greek” but quite certainly and every non-Greek who inhabited the more and more multicultural Greek cities of the post Hellenistic world. Athens, Sparta, Corinth, Sardis, Synnada, Cyrene were not an exception. As it was mentioned in the introduction, the Panhellenion must be closely related and contrasted to the Jewish and Christian communities of its members. Hadrian himself is known for his anti-Jewish policies, throughout his reign. There is no doubt that he can be compared to Antiochos IV Epiphanes, the Seleucid kind who tried to complete the temple of Olympian Zeus and at the peak of his anti-Jewish policies he held “nude athletics” for Olympian Zeus into Jerusalem, now called Aelia Capitolina, a city that no Jew was permitted.

It comes as no surprise for modern audiences that athletics can be used for the promotion of ideologies or as a demonstration of one nation’s power. Even under the iron fist or the benevolent Pax of the Roman Empire, notions like national pride and the conflict between

opposing cultures never really stopped. Given the chance, those feelings would explode and express themselves violently, as it happened during the Diaspora War of 117 CE, between Jews and their Greek and Roman adversaries. It is vital to understand that this idea of the Panhellenion came directly from the mind of Hadrian. The Panhellenion was made from the Romans, through the Greeks, with their collaboration but for the Roman needs. Hadrian's exhausted legions are in an ongoing war with internal and (potential) external enemies at the eastern frontier of the Empire and cannot reassure peace into the Greek-speaking provinces. Hadrian is rightfully afraid of another Jewish rebellion and seeks ways to reinforce the loyal to him Greeks, wherever such a need existed. Having them to bring ambassadors and discuss or perform cults in Greece is one thing. Another thing is to organize through this League the cities-members for something bigger and far more important than themselves, the needs of the Empire. Let us not forget that Hadrian is a Roman Emperor, not a Greek. A cultural renaissance of Greeks is meaningless if it cannot assist to the unity and the empowerment of the state. Since Hadrian was indeed afraid that his eastern, inner provinces, where no legions are to be stationed, are under threat from cults and religions that do not accept his authority, he then needs to keep them under control. He found loyal allies against the Jews and the Christians into his beloved Greeks and decided to reinforce them against what he perceived as a common enemy. Therefore, the performance of those athletics makes even greater sense if it is viewed under this new perspective. On a first level we are able to witness the well-being of Athens, the capital of this endeavor, by the plethora of spectacles. But on a deeper level, the ephebes that are trained in body and mind for participating later into the Panhellenia etc. may also become the new auxiliary forces, the local protectors of loyalism into the cities that radical cults are seemed to grow stronger and stronger.

As it was pointed out, athletic festivities and Greek education under the sophists became the two mail pillars of Antoninean Athens, both serving the cause of Hadrian's Panhellenism. The allure of the Greek past was revived and became relevant again as if the Roman conquest was something like a blessing. The sophists and the rhetors of the city made a great effort to establish this into their speeches. Though the Second Sophistic was a movement before and beyond Hadrian's philhellenism, nonetheless, it became one of the most useful tools of his policies for promoting and spreading Hellenicity. Therefore, I wish to conclude with the same thoughts as Zanker expressed, in his view over the cultural renaissance of second century of the Greeks under the Antonines.[78]

While the earlier period perceived an unbroken continuity and sought only to reactivate, embellish, and broadcast its cultural legacy, the Romans had to invent a tradition that in fact never existed in Classical Greece. The forging of a national identity that would help unify the imperium Romanum would not have been possible without an acknowledged set of shared values and lifestyles. The cult of imperial power and its attendant myths were not sufficient to fill this need. The Romans needed a common language, a shared vocabulary of visual imagery.

What began in Hadrianic Athens as a game of taking on Classical costumes and faces grew into a personal statement, a kind of religion of high culture whose rituals aimed at appropriating the classical tradition and turning it into a palpable entity throughout the Empire. The manifold range of activities and forms of participation in this cult—costumed performances, formal orations, learned dinner-table conversation, pictorial imagery—add up to an extraordinary collective effort to bring the past into the present. In essence these activities were nothing more than a selective restructuring of what had been standard cultural practice in the cities of Classical and Hellenistic Greece. But by a process of separating these

[78] Zanker 1995, p. 339.

off, multiplying them, and stressing certain elements, there arose a pure and depoliticized "classical" tradition that outdid the authentic Greek culture now long past. This and the imperial cult were the two forces that together laid the foundations for that sense of belonging and shared identity that united all the inhabitants of the Empire.

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