

Polybios to Pausanias: Arkadian Identity in the Roman Empire

Maria Pretzler

Many ancient statements about Arkadia date from the Roman period, and most of what we hear from Arkadians themselves, directly from Polybios, and indirectly via Pausanias, belongs in this context. This source material combines references back to earlier 'classical' texts with the new need to position the region in the Roman empire. A few aspects of Arkadian life and culture, such as poverty, piety and a very ancient ancestry, make up a stereotype that was recognisable and could therefore be put to good use. With few exceptions this Arkadian image is positive and it could give Arkadian communities an advantage in dealing with the outside world, especially because some outsiders were keen to have a part in this illustrious heritage.

The ancients knew what to expect of Arkadia and of Arkadians. Some of its most commonly known characteristics are already described in the Catalogue of Ships in the *Iliad*, which may well have defined how educated inhabitants of the ancient world saw the region.¹ This passage lists contingents from northern and western Arkadia, which is described as a mountainous area where men are good at fighting but not versed in using ships. The Arkadians themselves were well aware of how they were seen by outsiders, and the widely known stereotypes played a role in the definition of Arkadian identity.

The formation of Arkadian identity during the archaic and classical period has been thoroughly studied, most notably by Nielsen.² By the 4th century B.C., when Arkadian identity became the base for a new federal state, the boundaries of the region were somewhat better defined than they had been in the *Iliad*, although it was still possible to adapt Arkadian identity to include new areas, in

1. Hom. *Il.* 2.603-614. The passage includes Pheneos, Orchomenos, the three unknown cities Rhipse, Stratia and Enispe, and Tegea, Mantinea, Stymphalos and Parrhasia.

2. Nielsen 1999; *id.* 2002, 52-88.

particular Triphylia. Arkadian studies often cover the region only up to the late classical period, to the time of the short-lived Arkadian league. Arkadia never again functioned as a political entity, and after the battle of Mantinea, and especially with Alexander, the main focus of the historiographical texts shifts away from the Peloponnese and then from Greece as a whole, only to return for the few decades of the heyday of the Achaian league.

The real test of regional identity, however, came in the centuries that followed. Cities and regions were now faced with larger powers such as the Hellenistic kingdoms and the rapidly growing Roman empire. Identities became more fluid and the whole hierarchy of group identities that Greeks had always had at their disposal, for example families, local communities, civic subdivisions, cities, regions and tribes or ethnic subgroups of Greece such as Arkadia, or Dorians and Ionians, were now increasingly rivalled by entities that made sense on a 'global' scale, such as the generic Greek cultural identity or, increasingly accessible at least for the elite, Roman citizenship.³ Individuals and whole communities would make use of these different levels of identity if they had some meaning or, even better, if they could be seen as an advantage. Regional identity which is not connected with a political entity or with active participation in common activities was therefore at a greater risk of losing its significance.

In this paper I investigate how a sense of Arkadian identity survived well into the Roman imperial period and why the reputation of the region was an asset for its communities. Roman Arkadia is covered by two remarkable authors, Polybios and Pausanias, who both offer a special insight into Arkadian identity. Pausanias provides the latest extensive primary source for central and southern Greece, and, due to the history and political geography of Arkadia, his description of the region is especially rich in detailed information that reflects a variety of viewpoints. Much of the information collected by Pausanias is based on autopsy and local, oral tradition, and he therefore does record how at least some Arkadians of the 2nd century A.D. presented themselves to an outsider.⁴

The beginning of the Roman period in Greece is recorded by Polybios, an Arkadian who lived through times when regional identity, and especially his personal attitude towards Arkadia, was severely put to the test. In the late 3rd and early 2nd century the Achaian league, a federal state that outgrew its original 'ethnic' territory, dominated the Peloponnese before it was conquered by the Romans and the region became a Roman province.

Polybios in particular would have needed to reconsider his own identity, because during his long stay abroad he would have to explain his background to a variety of people. He clearly identified with the Achaian league and his work

3. Jenkins 1997, 40; Smith 1986, 62, 83-4.

4. Pretzler 2005.

reflects his pride in Achaian achievements, especially their success in uniting nearly the whole peninsula in one state.⁵ At times he takes sides with the Achaians against Arkadian cities, especially when he considers the actions of his compatriots morally untenable. For example, he disapproved of the cruel civil wars at Kynaitha and he was ready to accept the sack of Mantinea in 222 B.C. on the grounds that that city had treated the Achaians unfairly.⁶

Polybios' opinions, however pro-Achaian, still represent a specifically Arkadian point of view. The compliment for the achievements of the Achaian state, for example, is emphasized by a reference to the strength and importance of Arkadians (together with Lakonians). When he calls Triphylia Arkadian, based on a genealogical construction of the early 4th century, he makes territorial claims for Arkadia that were probably quite out of date in his own time.⁷ In spite of his strong sense of identity Polybios saw the benefits of including Arkadia in larger political units, and he criticises Demosthenes for his harsh words against the pro-Macedonian policy of Arkadia, Messenia and Argos.⁸ After all, this connection with Philip and Alexander gave them an advantage against their perpetual enemy Sparta. In Megalopolis, panhellenic patriotism looked different from the ideals of the 4th century Athenian.

Polybios was especially proud of Arkadian culture, and in his famous passage on Kynaitha⁹ he sets out some of its main characteristics. Typical regional traits are closely linked to the rough landscape and the rough climate.¹⁰ Arkadian life as described by the Arkadian Polybios is frugal and austere, and without considerable care the harsh conditions might result in an abandonment of Greek culture and a descent into savagery, just as in the civil war at Kynaitha. It seems that Polybios felt a real need to explain how fellow-Arkadians could resort to the worst atrocities, and his comments show that he identified with the whole region, not just with his own city, Megalopolis. He explains that Arkadians practiced music in order to keep the influence of their environment under control. Musical training and performance is shown as part of life in an Arkadian city, a cultural

5. Polyb. 2.38.

6. Polyb. 4.17-18, 20-21 (Kynaitha), 2.56-58 (Mantineia).

7. Polyb. 4.77.8; cf. Paus. 10.9.5-6 on the Arkadian monument in Delphi, see Bourguet 1929, 3.1.3-11; Paus. 5.5.3, Strabo 8.3.26; cf. Xen. *Hell.* 7.1.26; Nielsen 1997; 2002, 229-69. Before the 5th century the region apparently belonged to Elis; the genealogical construction that makes Triphylos a son of Arkas was used by the Arkadians in the 360s and it may date back to the period before the battle of Leuktra.

8. Polyb. 18.14.1-9. Dem. 19.10-11, cf. 18.295.

9. Polyb. 4.20-21.

10. Cf. [Hippocrates] *On airs, waters and places*. For more references see Walbank 1970.1, 465-6, on Polyb. 4.20-21.

necessity rather than a luxury which, in Polybios' view, was closely linked to warfare and religion. Mountains, military strength, piety, simplicity and a frugal life are an integral part of Polybios' Arkadian self-image, and all these characteristics feature prominently in ancient references to Arkadia. In fact, it is common that communities fashion the 'public face' of their identity around stereotypes they expect outsiders to recognise as characteristic.¹¹

Polybios played an important part in the re-organization of Greece as a Roman province, although it is not clear whether the Arkadians specifically benefited from the exalted position of one of their compatriots. Over three centuries later Pausanias found a number of memorials in honour of Polybios in Arkadia, and, only there. Polybios himself reports honours he received from the Greeks, but if this was the case, it seems that in Arkadia his monuments were kept with more care than elsewhere.¹² It may well be that this famous Arkadian himself had become a significant and unifying part of regional history.

As part of a Roman province Arkadia had to function within a new framework. Regional leagues were initially prohibited, but when they were permitted again many cities joined such mainly ceremonial but symbolically important organizations. There was an Arkadian league in the Roman period, but, compared to the extensive epigraphic record of other such organisations, the evidence for its activities is extremely poor: it is mentioned in one inscription of the early 3rd century A.D.¹³ This does not, however, mean that Arkadia was no longer important. Pausanias' definition of the region provides good evidence for this. He refuses to define the region according to contemporary league divisions which included Stymphalos and Alea in the Argolid.¹⁴ For Pausanias Arkadia is so well defined that mere recent changes appear insignificant. It is not clear whether this particular decision depends on local information, since both cities were perhaps already abandoned when he visited the region.¹⁵ Classical literature, and in the case of Stymphalos particularly the *Iliad*, probably were a sufficient reason for including the two cities in his Arkadian book instead of presenting them as part of the Argolid. The western border is also defined in a conventional way that excludes Triphylia, although both Strabo and Pausanias

11. Cohen 1985, 74.

12. Polyb. 39.3.3-5.6. Paus. 8.30.8-9, 8.9.2, 8.37.2, 8.44.5, 8.48.8. Cf. *IG V.2*, 370 (Kleitor) and 304 (Mantineia); Dittenberger and Purgold 1896, 302. Cf. Jost 1973, 259.

13. Paus. 7.16.9-10 notes that the Romans abolished the leagues in 146 but later allowed them to be re-established. Larsen 1955, 106-25; Bowersock 1965, 91-9; Deininger 1965, 88-91; Alcock 1993, 152-3, 165-6. The only epigraphical evidence for the Roman Arkadian league is Dittenberger and Purgold 1896, 473 (212/13 A.D.)

14. Paus. 8.22.1, 23.1.

15. Stymphalos: Williams *et al.* 1997, 43.

report that some Triphylians, especially the people of Lepreon, still claimed to be Arkadian.¹⁶

Pausanias' Arkadians clearly had a regional identity. Some cities had monuments that express a connection with the region¹⁷ and they all shared a common early history. Most Arkadian cities had an eponymous founder who was in some way connected to the family of Lykaon and Arkas. Even the many small places that were integrated in Megalopolis could claim such links and, as James Roy has shown,¹⁸ Pausanias' collection of founding heroes may well have been compiled from information he heard on his travels, which means that the locals were still telling these stories. Roman Arkadia as described by Polybios and Pausanias still shows all the characteristics of an ethnic group analysed by Nielsen for archaic and classical Arkadia.¹⁹ In fact, common culture and history appear even more strongly expressed than in earlier periods, but this is possibly due to the special interests of the two authors who provide most of the evidence. At the same time city identity is also very strongly developed,²⁰ but this coexistence of strong regional and local identities is typical for the Greek world and it is closely linked to the enduring importance of the *polis*. It is, however, intriguing that even without strong regional institutions, and squeezed between civic units and larger identities such as the entire Greek world, the Achaian league and the Roman empire, Arkadia remained so important that even some outsiders wanted to claim a part in it. The characteristics specifically linked to Arkadia by outsiders probably played a crucial role in this development. Arkadian stereotypes recur in many ancient texts and they can be grouped into a few main regional traits, some of which may well have developed from the short passage in the *Iliad*.

Ancient tradition more or less agrees that the Arkadians were aboriginals who did not share a common ancestry with other Greeks.²¹ The name of the earliest ancestor of the Arkadians, Pelasgos, conjured up associations of extreme antiquity. As a consequence Arkadians were seen as a primordial people, older than the moon even, with a suitable early history in Pausanias who reports how Pelasgos taught the Arkadians a number of primordial skills such as gathering food, building huts and wearing skins as clothing when agriculture was still a thing of the future. Lykaon, the son of Pelasgos, then took this a step further and

16. Paus. 5.5.3, Strabo 8.3.3 and 17.

17. *E.g.* Paus. 8.9.3-4, 36.8, 53.9.

18. Roy 1968.

19. Nielsen 1999, using the model suggested by Smith 1986, 24-31.

20. Pretzler 1999 on Tegea, using the same model.

21. Paus. 8.1.4-6; Hesiod, frgs. 9, 10 a (West); Apollod. 1.7.3; Strabo 8.8.1; Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 76 (*Mor.* 282 A), 92 (*Mor.* 286 A); Luc. *Astrol.* 26; Nonnus *Dion.* 89-90; Apoll. Rhod. 4.261-266.

founded the world's first city, Lykosoura, and he was also among the first to worship the gods.²² In some way Arkadia could therefore claim to be the cradle of human civilisation, although Lykaon incurred the wrath of the gods by practising human sacrifice. These stories can be traced back at least into the classical period and they were still attractive at the time of the Roman empire. The reason for this long survival is that many stories remained relevant to communities, and others could be re-interpreted to fit new circumstances.²³ For example, during the long periods when Arkadians were in conflict with Sparta autochthony provided a good contrast to the 'recently' immigrated Dorians, while in the Roman period the emphasis could shift to exploit the increased interest in the past and the widely held awe of places with a long and illustrious history.²⁴

Arkadian religion was one of the features that distinguished a truly ancient, aboriginal people: Polybios is clearly proud of Arkadian piety, and Pausanias' description of cults and sanctuaries often betrays a reaction between awe and puzzlement. His extensive report shows what variety of active cults could be found in Roman Arkadia, and many had special Arkadian features.²⁵

Polybios was not the only ancient author for whom the mountainous landscape defined Arkadian culture and lifestyle. The life of a mountain people might seem romantic and blissfully simple, but it could also be presented as backward and unsophisticated,²⁶ and even Polybios thought that without careful education the influence of the environment would threaten Arkadian civilisation.²⁷ Outsiders who lived in less extreme areas had preconceptions about how one could eke out a living under such circumstances. A list of typical occupations includes cutting wood and herding goats, pigs, sheep, horses and oxen.²⁸ On the other

22. Paus. 8.1.4-4.2.

23. Cohen 1985, 99-102.

24. Autochthony as argument against Dorians: e.g. Xen. *Hell.* 7.1.23-24. Dorians and Herakleidai: Hall 1997, 59-60; Malkin 1994, 38-43; Hdt. 8.73, 2.171; Thuc. 1.2.3; Diod. Sic. 7.9.1; Paus. 5.1.1-2, 5.4.1. Continued use of the myth under different circumstances: see Hall 1997, 51-6, on Athenian autochthony and Alty 1982 on Dorian and Ionian 'ethnic' stereotypes; on the importance of such claims in the Roman period see Alcock 1993, 162-4.

25. Special Arkadian festivals: Hdt. 2.171. Pausanias on Arkadian religion: book 8 *passim*, and see Jost 1985. Arkadian piety: Polyb. 4.20.1, cf. 4.21.3-4. 'Arkadian born' gods: Zeus: Paus. 8.38.2-4; Kallim. 1.4-40; cf. Paus. 4.33.1, and Jost 1985, 241-9. Hermes: Paus. 8.16.1, 8.17.5; *Hymn. Hom. Merc.*; Jost 1985, 443-4. Pan: Hdt. 6.105; Paus. 8.54.6, cf. 1.28.4; Borgeaud 1988, 48.

26. Philostr. *VA* 8.7.12; Joseph *Ap.* 1.21-22 (but note Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.33.4 where Arkadians bring civilisation to early Rome: letters, music, laws etc.); Ath. 13.607 c.

27. Polyb. 4.20.1-21.12.

28. Philostr. *VA* 8.7.12. On agriculture and pasture see Roy 1999. Bad land prevents immigration: Paus. 5.4.1, Thuc. 1.2.3.

hand, the simple pastoral life can also inspire romantic images, be it Dio who sets a part of his first discourse on kingship in an idyllic Arkadian landscape, or Vergil who introduces Arkadia into his *Eclogues*. Vergil's few references to the region inspired the tradition of the romantic Arkadia in European literature, but Arkadia as presented by ancient authors is harsher than the creations of Renaissance literature. In the ancient texts literary Arkadia is a wild and uncultivated mountain territory with inclement weather rather than a gentle pastoral landscape.²⁹

The poor and hardy Arkadians also had a special reputation as good warriors, a regional characteristic already mentioned in the *Iliad*. Arkadians were especially known for their mercenary services from the late archaic and early classical period onwards. At times, significant proportions of Arkadians were employed abroad. Polybios shows considerable pride in the military exploits of his region, while by the time of Pausanias this aspect of Arkadian life had become less significant, although it was still part of the glorious Arkadian past.³⁰

At the same time Arkadians were known to be inexperienced in naval matters. The *Iliad* reports that the Arkadians had to borrow ships even for the Trojan War. References to the Arkadian ignorance of ships, the sea and sea-food recur in the ancient literature, and it is clear that an author could expect an audience to understand. One of the most prominent Arkadians, Philopoimen, fully lived up to the stereotype when he was given a Roman fleet which he decided to use against the Spartans. He did not only lose a battle against the Spartans, but entered himself an old and leaky trireme and nearly lost his crew.³¹

It does, therefore, seem a bit surprising that we hear of a fairly large number of Arkadian overseas colonies in various places around the Mediterranean. In fact, the Arkadians claimed that they had founded the first colony ever, when Oinotros, son of Lykaon, moved to Italy. Although not all cities agreed with the Arkadian claim to their foundation, most were proud of this connection.³² Two

29. Vergil, *Eclogues* (only Eclogue 10 is set in Arkadia). Possible reasons for this choice: Levi 1967-68, Kennedy 1987, Jenkyns 1989. Cf. Snell 1975. Summary of the development of the romantic Arkadia: Beard and Henderson 1995, 99-119. Wild Arkadian landscape: e.g. Ael. *VH* 13.1.

30. For Arkadian mercenaries see Hdt. 8.26; Thuc. 7.57.9, see also 3.34.1-3, 7.19.4. Arkadian boasting: Hdt. 9.26; Xen. *Hell.* 7.1.23. The Ten Thousand: Xen. *An.* 6.2.9-12; Roy 1972.

31. Ath. 4.132 e; Lucian, *Navigium* 8; Ath. 7.283 a; *IG* V.2, 268, lines 23-27: the Manti-neans praise a fellow-citizen for sailing to Italy twice, and they point out that this was a special feat for a man from the inland. Philopoimen's failed attempt at a naval battle: Paus. 8.50.7; cf. Plut. *Phil.* 14.3.

32. Earliest colonisation: Paus. 8.3.5, cf. Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.11.1-3 (he dates the event 17 generations before the Trojan War). Arkadian colonies: Cyprus, Paus. 8.5.2-3, 53.7, see also Hdt. 7.90; Kydon, Archedios and Gortyna in Crete, Paus. 8.53.4; Trapezous, 8.27.6; Phrygia,

of the most eminent cities of the Roman empire, Pergamon and Rome herself, claimed that their founders had come from this unlikely colonising region.

Ancient Arkadian stereotypes probably played an important role in the development and maintenance of these connections between various cities and mainland Greece. Simplicity, piety, valour and an illustrious past were a set of virtues that the ancients liked to claim for their ancestors. Both Strabo and Dionysios of Halikarnassos describe the life of the early Arkadian settlers in Rome. They conjure up images of an ancient people which showed its piety by founding a number of temples and leading a simple life while still enjoying the positive aspects of Roman lifestyle. Vergil's description of life in the settlement of Evander, the Arkadian foundation Aeneas encountered on the site of later Rome, also reflects this idea. It is surely no coincidence that the best evidence for traditions about Arkadians in Rome is supplied by three Augustan authors. The Arkadian stereotype was perfectly suited to the ideals propagated by Augustus since it made early Rome a place such as he wanted it to be.³³

Pergamon claimed the Tegean Telephos as its founder and this link was appreciated by both cities. At Tegea Pausanias found a number of monuments connected with the story of Telephos, and the Pergamenians of his time were proud of their share in the Arkadian aboriginal ancestry, in spite of the fact that even the most ancient people should lose its claim to autochthony when it leaves its original homeland.³⁴

Greeks and Romans took such relations between cities very seriously and they could prove very advantageous. A number of Arkadian cities benefited from fortunate 'colonial' connections. In the Hellenistic period Pergamon gave the Tegeans special privileges which included the grant of citizenship to Tegeans moving into their 'colony', which had become a great city and the centre of the Attalid kingdom. Pallantion had lost all significance when Antoninus Pius made it an independent city and, more important, granted it freedom from taxation because he saw it as the home of Evander and therefore the metropolis of Rome.³⁵

Paus. 8.4.3, 10.32.3. Also note Hdt. 1.146, unspecified Arkadian settlers in Ionia; Iambl. *VP* 2.3, Arkadian roots of Pythagoras and Samos. Not overseas: Elateia in Boiotia, Paus. 10.34.2; see Habicht 1985, 67-9; *SEG* 11.2, 1954, no. 1107; Täuber and Thür 1994, 18.

33. Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.60.3-61.1, overview of immigration waves; see also 1.31.1-4. Trojans, 1.61.1-62.2. Arkadians as ancestors of some Italian mountain peoples, 1.13.3, cf. Strabo 6.3.8. See also Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 76 (*Mor.* 282 A). Verg. *Aen.* 8.51-55, 97-184, 306-396, 454-462; Jenkyns 1989, 36-7. See also Ov. *Fast.* 2.271-282.

34. Paus. 8.45.7, 48.7, 54.6; Curty 1995, 86-7, n. 41. Claim to autochthony: Aristeides 23.15, 26 (Behr); see also Paus. 1.4.6, and Strabo 13.1.69. Other Arkadians in Asia Minor: Aristeides 23.26, 23.60 (Behr). Cf. Hdt. 1.146.

35. Pallantion, Paus. 8.43.1-2; Tegea, Paus. 1.4.6, 5.13.3, 3.26.10; see Fränkel 1890, 156. Curty 1995, 86-87, n. 41. Cf. Kosmetatou 1995, 138-44, on myths employed by the Attalids.

This means that being Arkadian could bring real benefits, but the attractions of being part of this particular ethnic group clearly went beyond the rare occasions when local history became a factor in relations between cities, or in the communication with Rome. The traits that went with being Arkadian were attractive for individual Arkadians as well as for whole communities. This was a good incentive for keeping Arkadian identity alive. Different individuals and communities may have interpreted it in their own way, but all seemed confident that it was a great thing to be an Arkadian.

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Maria Pretzler

Department of Classics and Ancient History

University of Wales Swansea

Swansea SA2 8PP

Wales, Great Britain

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