

Public Abstract

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Title:CENTERED ON THE PERIPHERY: THE CHANGING DYNAMIC BETWEEN IONIA AND IMPERIAL POWERS 454-C.294 BCE

Consisting of twelve cities on the coast of Asia Minor and proximate islands, Ionia is commonly thought to have flourished in the Archaic period, only to go into decline after the Persian conquest in 540 BCE before suffering through a long, fallow Classical period. In this interpretation, Ionia was reborn in the early Hellenistic period. In the intervening years, the standard narrative goes, Ionia was a prize to be won by imperial contenders in the Aegean, and peripheral to both Greek and Persian history. Thus, Ionia is marginalized from histories of Classical Greece.

This dissertation demonstrates that the traditional view of Ionia is far from true. The region was one of the nodes that connected East and West in the ancient world and thus was a frequent site of conflict. Ionians remained deeply embedded in Aegean networks, with their merchants playing a central role in the Aegean economy and their intellectuals playing critical roles both in local politics and in the evolution of Greek literature. I focus on the political, social, and economic situation of the Ionian cities along two axes of networks: one, regional interaction between Ionian communities, and another, how these regional relationships intersected with the broader imperial interaction in the Mediterranean world. By centering the narrative for Greek history on Ionia, I demonstrate that these communities and their inhabitants continually negotiated their position within the restrictions of larger conflicts. The Ionian cities played a critical role in Mediterranean history as active partners in the imperial projects of the states that subjugated the region.