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Political Cultures: Cyprus between "Hellenism" and "Barbarism" in Isocrates' *Evagoras*

The invention of the "barbarian" by fifth-century Greeks has now been analyzed with reference to historiography, tragedy and material culture of the post-Persian Wars period. The fourth-century material has received much less attention on the assumption that such overtly Panhellenic texts as Isocrates' *Panegyricus* or even the *Evagoras* merely confirm what is already known about Classical Greek ethnocentrism. Yet the constructs of the barbarian "other" and the Greek "self," built on the juxtaposition of democratic Athens and despotic Persia and exploited so skillfully in the propaganda of the Athenian empire, did not have the same purchase following that empire's collapse. The experience of Greek imperialism forced intellectuals to reevaluate the exclusive connection between *despoteia* and barbarian ethos, and to redefine what constituted "Greek character" when the old essentialism of the early fifth century was no longer adequate. Perhaps the greatest challenge faced by Panhellenic writers was the primacy of localized identities in the post-Peloponnesian War Greek world, where the notions of autonomy and autochthony were on occasion also deeply entangled with that of hegemony. The near impossibility of reconciling these ideals with that of *homonoia* - the central concept of fourth-century Panhellenic thought - is reflected in Gorgias' avoidance of any reference to Greek unity in his Athenian oration (Philostratus 493). By contrast, the writings of Isocrates, who uniquely combined Athenocentric and Panhellenic perspectives and was forced to confront the challenges involved in reconciling them, offer a genuinely new contribution to the contemporary intellectual debate on the relationship between Greek and barbarian identity, *homonoia* and hegemony.

Though ostensibly a Cypriot oration, Isocrates' *Evagoras* echoes many of the motifs from the *Panegyricus* - including even its most central question about the nature of benevolent leadership - and thus Cyprus can be interpreted here as the microcosm of Greece, with Salamis as its Athens. At first sight, the encomium seems deceptively traditional: in his description of the political changes in Salamis following the city's capture by a Phoenician usurper, Isocrates introduced a rare term *exebarbarose* to encapsulate the essence of these changes. However, he then argued that just as the Phoenician tyrant barbarized the Cypriots, the benevolent monarchy of Evagoras quickly restored them back to Hellenism. By demonstrating that political changes alone could culturally transform the people of Salamis, Isocrates effectively invalidated the idea of a natural boundary between "Greekness" and "barbarism." Paradoxically, it was this step which allowed him to find a compromise between hegemony and *homonoia*. Since he reversed the causal relationship between culture and politics, suggesting that political leadership shaped cultural identities rather than was shaped by them, he could argue that the rule of a single leader was not inherently "barbaric" and when exercised correctly could have Hellenizing effect. Thus for Isocrates, it was the political, not the ethnic, cultures of the Cypriot rulers, and by extension Panhellenic hegemons, which were responsible for the Hellenization or barbarization of his world.