

Travelers to an Antique Land: Imperialism, Ethnography, and Cultural Identity in
Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*.

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The proposed paper examines Apollonius' travels to India in Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* and argues that India and Paraca in particular, the home of the Indian Brahmans, function as a space to articulate a pure Hellenic identity. Ancient ethnographers and geographers conceptualize the limits of the world as utopian vistas.¹ Philostratus marks Paraca as a space no Greek prior to Apollonius has ever reached, and his description of Paraca uses utopian imagery that familiarizes the *terra incognita* of the Indian space. Throughout Apollonius' journey through India, he comes across a land that is remarkably reminiscent of a classical Greek past. Philostratus changes the prior ethnographic tradition of India by Hellenizing it in a way that makes it the ideal space for the negotiation of a Second Sophistic Greek identity. Philostratus' Brahmans are both keenly aware of the classical Greek past cherished by Second Sophistic writers while at the same time completely untouched by the Roman Empire. This lack of contact with the Roman Empire gives the Brahmans an Hellenic identity that is pure; they do not have to negotiate between the competing forces of Imperial subjectivity and Greek ethnicity. Through his studies with the Brahmans, Apollonius likewise attains this pure Hellenism, which allows him to correct Greek religious and cultural practices and challenge Roman imperial rule. Philostratus' Hellenization of India not only solidifies Apollonius' own identity as Hellenist *par excellence* but also works to reconceptualize the entire world as Greek.

¹ Romm, *The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought* (Princeton, 1992) 82ff.