On his round trip of the Black Sea the Roman senator and legatus Augusti of Cappadocia, L. Flavius Arrianus from Nicomedia in Bithynia, wrote an account of the area to the emperor Hadrian. His Periplus is styled as a letter. In it, Arrian describes the physical and human geography of the eastern seaboard of the Black Sea, from the south round to the east, and northwards to Pantikapaion on the Crimea. If Hadrian had commissioned the report and was expecting a reliable account of contemporary affairs in the region, he would have been disappointed. Arrian’s Periplus draws its inspiration from Xenophon’s Anabasis, written more than five centuries previously; Xenophon is almost the only reference point in the Periplus, and provides the authority and model for Arrian. Less than a contemporary document, the Periplus reads as a work of archaising literature. But some exceptions work their way in. Like Xenophon before him, Arrian reached the Black Sea coast at the city of Trapezus (modern Trabzon), where he reported to Hadrian on some recent religious monuments, including two altars.

καὶ οἱ βωμοὶ ἀνεστάσιν ἦδη, λίθου μέντοι γε τοῦ τραχέος, καὶ τὰ γράμματα διὰ τούτο σύχι εὐδηλα κεχάρακταί τό δὲ Ἑλληνικόν ἐπίγραμμα καὶ ἡμαρτημένως γέγραπται, οἷα δὴ ὑπὸ βαρβάρων γραφέν. ἔγνωκα οὖν τοὺς τε βωμοὺς λίθου λευκοῦ ἀναθεῖναι, καὶ τὰ ἐπιγράμματα ἐγχαράξαι εὐσήμοις τοῖς γράμμασιν.

The altars are already set up, through in rather rough stone, and as such the inscribed letters are not particularly clear; the Greek inscription is also inaccurately carved, such as that written by barbarians. I therefore decided to rebuild the altars in white stone, and to carve the inscriptions in clear letters (Arrian, Periplus, 1.1–4.; translation Liddle, adapted)

1 The texts opens Αὐτοκράτορι Καίσαρι Τραϊανῷ Ἀδριανῷ Σεβαστῷ Ἀρριανὸς χαίρειν (‘Arrian sends greetings to the Emperor Caesar Trajan Hadrian Augustus’); on Arrian’s minor works, see Bosworth (1993); on epistolary formulae, see Gibson and Morrison 2007: 3.

2 See e.g. Periplus 1 (bis).

3 Arrian even styles himself ‘Xenophon’ in his Order of Battle against the Alans. See Carlsen in chapter nine below.
Arrian's description offers a revealing insight into the thoughts and priorities of a member of the Empire's educated elite. He actively promotes his own commitment to and participation in the machinery of Empire, casting himself as a dedicated governor, keen to represent the Emperor's interests. But what is perhaps more surprising is Arrian's remark about the inaccurate inscription, where those responsible, the craftsmen of course, but also implicitly the political elite of Trapezus, are effectively characterised as barbaric. The loyal governor Arrian, attentive to the emperor's public image, thus casts himself in opposition to the population of Trapezus, including the elite, and as a well-equipped judge of the differences between civilised and barbarian. The Greek governor writes to a philhellenic Hispanic emperor of Rome about the cultural competence of the elite in an old Milesian colony. The *Periplus* will not yield a tidy distinction between Greek and Roman.

Arrian's commitment to the imperial project is perhaps even more explicitly witnessed in his comments on military matters.

τῇ στρατιᾷ ἔδωκα καὶ τὰ ὅπλα εἶδον καὶ τὸ τεῖχος καὶ τὴν τάφρον καὶ τοὺς κάμνοντας καὶ τὸ σῖτον τὴν παρασκευὴν τὴν ἐνοῦσαν. ἤντινα δὲ ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν τὴν γνώην ἔσχον, ἐν τοῖς Ῥωμαϊκοῖς γράμμασιν γέγραπται.

I gave the army its pay and inspected its weapons, the walls, the trench, the sick, and the supply of food that was there. My opinion about these is written up in the Latin report (Arrian, *Periplus*, 6.2.)

The Roman army was of course one of the most conspicuous demonstrations of imperial power, and by documenting his own role in the efficient management of its operations in Trapezus, Arrian plainly advertises his loyalty to the Empire. His commitment to a core institution of Roman imperial ideology finds Greek voice in a combination we might wonder was intended for wider distribution than for the emperor alone: the Latin report seems to have contained Arrian's recommendations to Hadrian on military affairs, but the *Periplus* itself has little in the way of useful information for practical application in the service of the emperor, but much in the way of literary posturing. That it survives, and the Latin report does not, suggests Arrian had a different—or expanded—readership in mind. That readership must have shared Arrian's taste for classicising prose from centuries before. Even if Hadrian

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4 On Arrian's career, see Syme (1982a).